

". . . literary criticism is after all one of my permanent occupations":

Eric Voegelin's literary criticism in the Heilman-Voegelin Correspondence

Copyright 2004 Charles R. Embry

On December 19, 1955, Voegelin wrote Heilman:

Your letter of Dec. 11th came just in time this morning, for I wanted to write you today anyway to thank you for the delightful review of Critics and Criticism. It had thrown me into a mood of indecision, because your refined politeness left me in doubt whether I should not read the volume, because literary criticism is after all one of my permanent occupations. (Letter 57, 142)¹ [1]

Why and in what ways does Voegelin consider literary criticism as one of his "permanent occupations?" If literary criticism *was* one of Voegelin's permanent occupations, how did he understand literary criticism and what hermeneutic principles did he follow?

A brief examination of Voegelin's correspondence with his friend and colleague, the English literature scholar and literary critic, Robert B. Heilman will provide a glimpse into Voegelin's occupation and vocation. As might be expected, this correspondence contains many references to literary topics, broadly defined to include references to writers, lists of current readings, inquiries after Heilman's work on Shakespeare, commentaries on Heilman's publications and issues or ideas raised in his letters, explications of critical principles, and

¹ [1] References to letters in the correspondence will be made by Letter number and page number within parentheses as they appear in Charles R. Embry, editor, *Robert B. Heilman and Eric Voegelin: A Friendship in Letters, 1944-1984* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004).

allusions to a philosophy of language. A brief sketch of the correspondence as it focuses on literary themes will be helpful at this point.

The Correspondence

The correspondence contains 151 letters;² [2] seventy-eight were written by Heilman and seventy-three by Voegelin. While the correspondence records a lifelong friendship, literary topics account for a large portion of the total volume. Of the seventy-eight letters that Heilman wrote sixty-two contain at least one literary reference--ranging from relatively minor inquiries after Voegelin's work to discourses on literary topics; of the seventy-three letters Voegelin wrote forty-eight contain such references.

In the course of the seventy-three letters that he wrote to Heilman, Voegelin mentions thirty-two literary figures of the modern era to include writers like Hermann Broch, Heimito von Doderer, Dostoevsky, Eliot, Flaubert, Joyce, Miguel Unamuno, and Paul Valéry (among others). While eighteen of these receive a brief mention in only one letter, eleven of the thirty-two are accompanied by substantive comments. Thomas Mann falls into this group; Voegelin writes in Letter 22

I just finished reading Thomas Mann's Doctor Faustus. With mixed feelings. It will interest you as a further experiment in writing a novel, without a society of which one could write an epic, using mystical symbols as the instrument for interpreting the German catastrophe. While the thing as a whole is an awe-inspiring performance, I am not quite happy about this simplification of the German problem into a daemonic Germany whose story is written [by] the humanistic German Mann. The weakness of Mann begins to show more than in earlier works. There is, for instance, a conversation between the hero and the devil; it invites comparison between the similar conversations

² [2] An additional letter from Lissy Voegelin to Heilman granting him permission to dedicate his book *Magic in the Web: Action and Language in Othello* to Eric and thanking him for so honoring her husband is included in the book. Consequently, the book contains a total of 152 letters.

in the Karamazovs and in Unamuno's Nivola--and the comparison is not too good for Mann. (77)

Others, such as D.H. Lawrence (Letter 91, 209-211) and Gustave Flaubert (Letter 107, 233), appear in this group of eleven mentioned in only one letter.

Nine ancient or medieval writers are mentioned and include Aeschylus, Aristotle, Dante, Euripides, Heraclitus, Herodotus, Hesiod, Homer, Plato. One of Voegelin's more interesting comments on Homer comes in July 1951 while he is in the midst of writing and revising his work on Homer for the planned *History of Political Ideas*. He writes:

I am teaching summer-school this year because the revision work that I am doing now can be done best at home. Still, some new items have to be added. Just now it is the turn of Homer who hitherto did not have a chapter because I had not developed the methods for analyzing the very complicated psychology in which divine inspirations, predictions of fate, dreams, conferences among the gods, etc., function as the unconscious. But now I can do it--or at least I fondly believe I can. The wrath of Achilles is already dissected to its last corner; and the fascination of Helena (a juicy morsel) is practically cleared up. In the course of this work I have become a firm believer in the existence of Homer; somebody *must* have written these intricately constructed works; they cannot have grown like Topsy³ [3] as German philologists still maintain. (Letter 31, 93)

As could be expected in a correspondence with a Shakespeare scholar, Shakespeare appears in many of Voegelin's letters. Finally, Henry James benefits from an extensive commentary in an early letter on *The Turn of the Screw* (Letter 11), with brief mentions during

3 [3] Topsy is a reference to Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life among the Lowly, chapter XX, in Harriet Beecher Stowe, Three Novels: Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly; The Minister's Wooing; Oldtown Folks (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, Inc., 1982).

the period that Voegelin was writing a Postscript to the letter that would be published in the *Southern Review*.⁴ [4]

From a different perspective, various clusters of letters that contain significant and extensive commentary on literary topics or commentary growing from literary stimuli emerge during the course of the correspondence. There is one major exchange of letters--Letters 63-66--where Voegelin in Letters 63 and 65 substantively responds to Heilman's dedication of his book *Magic in the Web: Action and Language in Othello* to him. In these two letters Voegelin articulates many of the principles upon which he relies when he interprets literature.⁵ [5] I focus on these letters below. There are four exchanges of letters that contain significant statements by Voegelin on literature; in most of these exchanges Voegelin articulates his ideas as responses to various stimuli provided by Heilman in one of his letters. These four exchanges include:

Letters 35-**366** [6] (1952) occasioned by Heilman's proposal of a "higher" or "transcendental pragmatism," Voegelin's letter includes references to Aristotle's *bios theoretikos*, Hebrews 11:1, "things unseen of Solonic and Heraclitean origin," and the Thomistic *analogia entis*.

Letters **37-38-39** (1952) occasioned by Heilman's close, editorial reading of a manuscript that four years later would be published as "Introduction: The Symbolization of

4 [4] Voegelin, "The Turn of the Screw," *Southern Review*, n.s., 7 (1971): 9-48. This lead article contained: Donald E. Stanford, "A Prefatory Note"; Robert B. Heilman, "Foreword"; Voegelin's "A Letter to Robert B. Heilman"; and Voegelin's postscript, "On Paradise and Revolution."

5 [5] Excerpts from this exchange have already been included in introductions to volumes in the *Collected Works*. See Thomas Hollweck and Ellis Sandoz, General Introduction to the Series, *History of Political Ideas*, volume I, *Hellenism, Rome, and Early Christianity*, edited with introduction by Athanasios Moulakis, *Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, volume 19 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 28. See also Introduction, *Anamnesis*, edited with introduction by David Walsh, volume 6, *Collected Works of Eric Voegelin* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 15.

6 [6] Voegelin letter numbers appear in boldface type.

Order," to *Order and History* as well as to volume I, *Israel and Revelation*,⁷ [7] Voegelin refers to Descartes' *Cogito ergo sum*, Baader's *Cogitor ergo sum*, and to the conflict between literary convention and philosophical language.

Letters 83-~~84~~-85 (1959) occasioned by Heilman's publication, "Fashions in Melodrama," Voegelin addresses Heilman's statement that "War is all melodrama; so is politics." He mentions Carl Schmitt, *philia politike*, the psychology of passion, the Hobbesian fallacy that the life of passion is the essence of man, passion and spirit, and his visit to the Cimetière Marin of Paul Valéry

Letters 106-~~107~~-108 (1965) occasioned by Heilman's discussion of his work on *Tragedy and Melodrama* and his comments on "expressionistic morality," Voegelin includes references to Orwell, Dostoevsky, Doderer, Max Frisch, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, the *burlesque* & the *grotesque*, Flaubert, Sartre, and Brecht.

There are three minor exchanges--"exchanges" that either deal with specifically narrow topics arising out of a publication or that do not seem to be contributing to a conversation on complementary themes being developed in each man's research. These include:

Letters ~~48~~-49 (1954) focused on a specific reaction to the manner of Voegelin's portrayal of Homer's characters in his publication "The World of Homer."

Letters ~~103~~-104 (1964) were occasioned by Voegelin's report to Heilman on his lecture, "Versuch zu einer Philosophie der Geschichte," to Institut für Politische Wissenschaften, Salzburg, Austria.⁸ [8] Other persons mentioned include Proust and Shakespeare (*Richard II*). More on this letter below.

Letters 122-~~123~~ (1969) focused on issues arising from Voegelin's "Postscript: On Paradise and Revolution" for publication in the *Southern Review*. This exchange resulted in Voegelin's interesting exposition on the origins of the phenomenon of understatement in English philosophy and thought. Persons that he mentions include Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Thomas Reid, John Dewey, and Edmund Burke.

⁷ [7] Cf. Note 11.

⁸ [8] Discussion notes and correspondence relating to this speech may be found in Eric Voegelin Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, box 72, file 4.

Finally, there are several letters in which Voegelin makes significant remarks about literature that do not result in a written response from Heilman. These include:

Letter **9** (1946). Commentary on Heilman's *Lear* manuscript. Includes six quotations, apparently translated by Voegelin, from Goethe's *Shakespeare und kein Ende* (1813).

Letter **11** (1947). Commentary on Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*.

Letter **91** (1961). Voegelin comments extensively on D.H. Lawrence and related issues after he had read a review by Heilman of Eliseo Vivas, *D.H. Lawrence: The Failure and the Triumph of Art*. Other persons mentioned include Hölderlin (Odes), Frank Wedekind (*Frühlingserwachen*, *Lulu*, or *Minnehaha*), Spengler (*Decline of the West*), Alfred Kinsey, and Aristotle (*Poetics*).

Letter **110** (1966). Voegelin reports to Heilman on the development of his work as it appeared in the German publication of *Anamnesis*.

While Voegelin's comments on literature in his letters to Heilman provide many tantalizing topics that invite exploration, I limit my focus to two specific areas, to wit, two 1956 letters (Letter 63 and 65) in which Voegelin articulates principles of his hermeneutics in the course of discussing Heilman's *Magic in the Web*, and, a tantalizing statement that has provided the title for this panel in Letter 103. Before I focus on these letters, several general observations about Voegelin's literary criticism are in order.

First, the ideas Voegelin expressed in his correspondence with Heilman reflect, reference, and sometimes amplify the research he was conducting at the time of writing a particular letter; therefore, his remarks on works of literature or writers are better understood against the backdrop of his developing philosophy. In Letter 65, for example, Voegelin writes: "The occupation with works of art, poetry, philosophy, mythical imagination, and so forth, makes sense only, if it is conducted as an inquiry into the nature of man. . . . [and] it is peculiar to the nature of man that it unfolds its potentialities historically." I insert it here only to illustrate the connection between

Voegelin's work as a historian or philosopher of history and his understanding of art that includes an expansive and comprehensive view of "literature."

Second, when Voegelin uses the term, "literary criticism," it seems to me, he assumes it to rest upon either a narrow or expansive definition of "literature." On the one hand, "literary criticism" may mean the principles used in the interpretation of literature that falls into the modern disciplinary divisions of knowledge such as "English literature," "the history of literature," or "Shakespeare studies." On the other hand, "literary criticism" may refer to the hermeneutical principles for interpreting literature that is broadly understood to include any written document that articulates or expresses human experience symbolically and that relies upon the imaginative skills of individual human beings to create. Material that may be understood as "literature" in this second sense thus may include not only modern novels, plays and poems, but also epic poems, ancient tragedies and dramas, the Gospels, and analyses of language such as those of Karl Kraus or George Orwell. Early in his correspondence with Heilman, especially in Letters 9 (a commentary on Heilman's *Lear* manuscript) and Letter 11 (the now famous commentary on *The Turn of the Screw* commentary), he expresses a reticence to interlope into the specialized areas of Shakespeare or James studies. On April 9, 1946, Voegelin asserts that "you will not expect a dilettante to indulge in a critical evaluation of details. Only to prove the carefulness of my reading let me relate some of the notes which I penciled down while going through the MS." (Letter 9, 31) Later, on December 30, 1969, Voegelin writes a response to Heilman's comments on the *Turn* Postscript: "I am greatly relieved that you have no major objection to what I did with the Postscript. It seems that what you did when you initiated me to Henry James has come to a happy end after all. Of course, that is still not the last word about James by far, but I am quite content if you say that my effort is at least ahead of the

current treatment of James in the expert literature." (Letter 123, 218) On other occasions, Voegelin freely and without concern for such disciplinary boundaries drew symbols created by artists into his philosophical work. Examples abound. From Heimito von Doderer's novel, *Die Dämonen*,⁹ [9] he adopted the symbol "second reality," and from Flaubert he adopted "the grotesque" to replace "the burlesque" (that he had taken from his study of novels and dramas by Doderer, Frisch and Dürrenmatt), as a symbol for adequately representing a distortion of reality through the use of obsessive language. (Letter 107, 233) From Munich in August 1958, Voegelin wrote Heilman that "at present I am struggling with the literary form of the Gospels which, as always, is inseparable from its content--but at least some notable results are in sight now. When I have finished that section, I shall be greatly relieved, for the Gospels are, after all, a cornerstone in the spiritual history of the West." (Letter 79, 183) It is important to emphasize, however, that Voegelin's principles of literary criticism are equally applicable to both the narrow and expansive understanding of literature.

Third, the principles of Voegelin's literary criticism are rooted in a commonsensical approach to the texts of the human spirit and to experiences of reality that these texts symbolize. Or, as Voegelin himself expressed it to Ellis Sandoz: "the men who have the experiences express themselves through symbols; and symbols are the key to understanding the experience expressed."¹⁰ [10] The common sense approach to literary texts is rooted in Voegelin's

9 [9] Eric Voegelin, "Autobiographical Statement at Age 82," in *The Beginning and the Beyond: Papers from the Gadamer and Voegelin Conferences*, Supplementary Issue of *Lonergan Workshop*, Volume 4, ed. Fred Lawrence (Chico, California: Scholars Press, Boston College, 1984), 113.

10 [10] Quoted from *Autobiographical Memoir*, 81, in Ellis Sandoz, *The Voegelinian Revolution: A Biographical Introduction*, second edition, with a new preface and epilogue by the author and a new foreword by Michael Henry (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2000), 22.

respect for the text and the author who wrote the text, as well as a scholar's humility and refusal to privilege his own existence as a "modern" man. Moreover, as Voegelin argues in Letter 65 it would be impossible to understand historical texts if the contemporary critic did not share his own nature with that of the creators of historical symbolizations.

Fourth, several crucial statements in Voegelin's work provide the empirical-theoretical attitude that grounds his literary criticism. Two of these statements come from *Israel and Revelation*. Voegelin opens his Preface with the statement that "The order of history emerges from the history of order" and thereby establishes the empirical-historical intention of his work. A startlingly bold declarative sentence--"God and man, world and society form a primordial community of being"--announces both an empirical conclusion based upon his vast studies for the History of Political Ideas project and the range of Voegelin's inquiry that would occupy his energies throughout the remainder of his life.¹¹ [11] After this initial opening, Voegelin

11 [11] This sentence opened the manuscript that Voegelin asked Heilman to read in 1952 and was retained as the opening sentence of the introduction when *Israel and Revelation* was published in 1956. Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, volume 14, *Israel and Revelation*, edited with introduction by Maurice P. Hogan, volume I, *Order and History* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001), 19. Heilman provided tremendous help to Voegelin by reading this manuscript and correcting Voegelin's developing English style. In Letter 37, written May 3, 1952, Voegelin asked Heilman to read and edit the manuscript. He wrote: "I am coming with a humble request today. Enclosed you will find the MS of the first chapter of the *History of Political Ideas*, which [is] supposed to develop the principles of interpretation for the whole subsequent study. The chapter, thus, has a certain importance, both as the first one and as the statement of principles. Hence, I should like to have it written as well as my inevitable shortcomings will allow. I wonder whether you would read it (it has only thirteen pages), and while reading it mark on the margin any awkwardness that still will need ironing out." (p. 107) Later, in *Autobiographical Reflections*, Voegelin remembers this help: "I especially want to mention the help extended by Robert B. Heilman, who introduced me to certain secrets of the American history of literature and who was kind enough to help me with my difficulties in acquiring an idiomatic English style. I still remember as most important one occasion when he went through a manuscript of mine, of about twenty pages, and marked off every single idiomatic mistake, so that I had a good list of the mistakes that I had to improve generally. Heilman's analysis, I must say, was the turning point in my understanding of English and helped me gradually to acquire a moderate mastery of the language." Eric

continued: "The community with its quaternarian structure is, and is not, a datum of human experience. It is a datum of experience in so far as it is known to man by virtue of his participation in the mystery of its being. It is not a datum of experience in so far as it is not given in the manner of an object of the external world but is knowable only from the perspective of participation in it."¹² [12] It should be noted that by the time Voegelin writes the 1956 letters that are discussed below, he has already established the fundamental principles of his philosophy: that human existence is historical existence, that the reality to be understood through history is the community of being, that human existence is to be understood in the context of the community of being, and that human experience of that reality can only be known from the perspective of human participation in that community of being. These emphases focus attention upon the exploration of human nature and thus human consciousness, and art--to include literature--provides an invaluable resource for the philosopher who would understand human consciousness as it manifests itself historically in the biographies of concrete human beings.

For Voegelin, then, "literature," narrowly and broadly understood, supplies evidence that empirically grounds his inquiry into the historical existence of human being as a partner in the community of being. But literature, and thus literary criticism, occupies an even more personal place in the constellation of Voegelin's thought. And here it becomes rather difficult to delineate between Voegelin's philosophical enterprise and the personal quest that lies at the heart of that enterprise. It is in the person Eric Voegelin that vocation and philosophical inquiry intersect and come to be understood as rooted in the Platonic articulation of philosophy as the love of

Voegelin, *Autobiographical Reflections*, edited with introduction by Ellis Sandoz, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 59. Hereafter referred to as *Autobiographical Reflections*.

¹² [12] *Israel and Revelation*, 39.

wisdom.¹³ [13] In an August 1956 letter Voegelin wrote to Heilman that "the study of the classics is the principal instrument of self-education; and if one studies them with loving care, as you most truly observe, one all of a sudden discovers that one's understanding of a great work increases (and also one's ability to communicate such understanding) for the good reason that the student has increased through the process of study--and that after all is the purpose of the enterprise. [And then he adds, parenthetically,] (At least it is my purpose in spending the time of my life in the study of prophets, philosophers, and saints)." (Letter 65, 157) Let me repeat and emphasize several phrases in this remarkable confession to Heilman. Note that "self-education" can occur through "the study of the classics." This statement must be understood against the backdrop of Voegelin's experience in Vienna during his early years, an experience that witnessed the breakdown of institutions and linguistic integrity. When the literary culture and the educational institutions upon which literacy depends are compromised and even destroyed, a man must look to the classics to recover his humanity.

Self education, however, can only occur if one approaches the classics with a reverent attitude of "loving care." This approach results in a sudden discovery: "one all of a sudden discovers that one's understanding of a great work increases (and also one's ability to communicate such understanding) for the good reason that the student has increased through the process of study." The result--the increase in the student's spiritual stature--rewards the purpose for which one engaged in the study initially. And then Voegelin, even though he buries it in parentheses, makes his remarkable confession that becomes the articulation of his vocation: "(At

13 [13] The philosopher's consciousness, like that of any other human being, is historically formed and thus rooted in the biography of the philosopher. For the complete development of this insight of Voegelin see *Anamnesis*.

least it is my purpose in spending the time of my life in the study of prophets, philosophers, and saints)."


Finally, we must note that in this final confessional statement art, the arts, and thus literature, are absent from the final list of sources--the prophets, philosophers, and saints--that Voegelin spends the time of his life studying. Why? The quick response is that philosophy itself, as a symbolic form developed by Plato, relies upon the literary forms of dialogue, myth, or the anamnestic meditation (among others) to articulate experiences of the philosopher.

The hermeneutical principles of Letters 63 and 65

The year 1956 was very important not only for the friendship between Heilman and Voegelin, but also for their work as scholars. Heilman published his study of *Othello, Magic in the Web*, which he had been working on at least since 1951, and had dedicated it to Voegelin. Voegelin published the first volume of *Order and History*, the first book length study to result from *The History of Political Ideas* upon which he had worked since 1939. Heilman's *Magic*, however, provided the vehicle for one of the most important exchanges of ideas in the entire correspondence, as well as an opportunity for each to acknowledge publicly the influence and contributions of the other.¹⁴ [14]

Voegelin's practice of literary criticism is reducible basically to three "simple," interwoven and dependent precepts. Principle One: The literary critic must exhaust the source of his attention. This principle is easy enough to understand as rooted in a common sense approach to literary texts. Of course, one must first give precedence to the text itself. In order to exhaust

¹⁴ [14] Their friendship was also renewed when the Heilmans visited the Voegelins in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the first time they had seen each other since 1948.

the source, however, the critic must assume "the role of the disciple who has everything to learn from the master." The corollary to this assumption--that the critic must recognize that the author knew what he was doing when he wrote the text--is in turn rooted not only in common sense, but (it seems to me) in a basic humility with which Voegelin approaches literature, especially "the classics." This first principle, with its assumptions and elaborations emerge in the context of Voegelin's letter dated July 24, 1956. He wrote to Heilman in order to convey his gratitude for the dedication: "Last night I finished reading your *Magic in the Web*--and at last I can thank you for the dedication in the only way I can thank, by response to the contents." (Letter 63, 150) His response to the contents opens with the observation that the formal quality of the book--its construction, which requires the reader "to read from the beginning in order to get its full import"--"is intimately bound up with your method and your philosophical position." Voegelin then proceeded to identify "exhaustion of the source" as the first principle of Magic, and explained that this formal principle represents the fundamental attitude with which he approached classical literary texts himself, for "no adequate interpretation of a major work is possible, unless the interpreter assumes the role of the disciple who has everything to learn from the master." Exhaustion of the source is grounded by several assumptions: (1) that the author "knew" what he was doing; (2) that the parts of the text work together; and (3) that the "texture of the linguistic corpus" gives rise to meaning thus precluding any preconceptions vis--vis characters or motifs brought to the work by the interpreter. (Letter 63, 150)

Principle Two: The literary critic must rely upon an interpretive terminology that is consistent with the language symbols of the source itself.

This second principle grows from the first. The critic who submits to the master as a disciple, must discipline himself if he is to understand the words of the master. This discipline imposes upon such a critic an interpretive terminology consistent with the language symbols of the source and will insure, as far as possible, that an interpretive scheme that is external to the source itself will obscure neither the meanings embedded in the text nor the intentions of its author. The critic, extending the interpretation as far as the symbols will allow, thus fulfills the primary directive to "exhaust the source." In the letter Voegelin argued that exhaustion of the source requires that "the terminology of the interpretation, if not identical with the language symbols of the source (a condition that can frequently be fulfilled in the case of first-rate philosophers, but rarely in the case of a poem or a myth), must not be introduced from the 'outside', but be developed in close contact with the source itself for the purpose of differentiating the meanings which are apparent in the work." (Letter 63, 151) Rigorously following this second principle will enable the critic to avoid imposing an interpretation on the work that the work itself will not sustain.

At this point, Voegelin maintained that the work of the literary critic is simply an analytical, rational continuation of the poet's work along the tracks laid out in the work of art itself. The discipline, in Heilman's case, of rigorously adhering to the language of the play (*Othello*) extended from a "strand of compact motifs to the more immediate differentiations and distinctions in terms of a phenomenology of morals." Due to the compactness of the symbolic language of the poet, the literary critic can only rely upon the "linguistic corpus" until he has exhausted the meanings embedded therein. At that point the critic must develop a "system" of interpretation that extends the poet's compact symbolizations in the same direction indicated by the poet into a philosophically critical language thereby leading to the final principle.

Principle Three: The critic must develop a "system" of interpretation that extends the poet's compact symbolizations in the same direction indicated by the poet into a *philosophically critical language*.

After exhausting the source by following the author's symbols as far as they can be extended in interpretation, the critic must now translate the analytical immediacy of the poet's compact symbolism "of the whole of human nature carried by the magic in the web," into the rational order of his work in which the "whole of human nature" must "now be carried by the magic of the system." "And here," Voegelin praised Heilman for his work, "I am now full of admiration for your qualities as a philosopher. For you have arranged the problem of human nature in the technically perfect order of progress from the peripheral to the center of personality. . . . You begin with . . . the problem of appearance and reality; and you end with the categories of existence and spiritual order." (Letter 63. 152)

This final, seemingly "simple," principle of literary criticism itself only goes to the heart of the human understanding of reality and to the heart of the philosophical enterprise. Moreover, it is not simple.

Here, in 1956, Voegelin is beginning to articulate the importance of a critical-analytical consciousness--especially important in cases where the artist creates works that symbolize deformations of human consciousness and/or the quaternarian structure of reality--that is necessary so that a philosopher or literary critic may understand literature. Although this critical awareness is formulated as "reflective distance" in his late work, in "Postscript: On Paradise and Revolution"--finished in December 1969--to the letter on Henry James's The Turn of the Screw

Voegelin was already moving toward formulating a symbol for denoting this awareness.¹⁵ [15]

"Reflective distance" is articulated in the posthumous last volume of *Order and History* as part of the complex "Reflective Distance-Remembrance-Oblivion" discovered in the philosopher's meditation. In this late work "reflective distance" appears to be equivalent to what Voegelin designates as "critical distance" in the Postscript. Writing there about the "dustiness" of James's garden and its deformed humanity, Voegelin says that "the existential defect one senses in symbolist works of art cannot be dissolved into questions of 'content' and 'form'. . . . The defect of the work reflects a warping in the author's consciousness of reality, while the mode of closure in the author's existence translates itself into a want of critical distance in the work. . . . Even in an extreme case, however, the critical distance cannot be abolished altogether; for if there were no distance at all, there would be no work of art but only a man's syndrome of his pathological state."¹⁶ [16]

Voegelin proceeds to argue that if the "critical distance" of the artist is partially eclipsed, then the critical reader who "is not afflicted with contraction of existence" and is, therefore, "not obliged to pretend that disease is health," soon realizes that the problem lies not in the work of

15 [15] Cf. especially, Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, volume 18, *In Search of Order*, ed. with introduction by Ellis Sandoz, volume V, *Order and History* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 54-56, 58-59. Already in *Plato and Aristotle*, volume III of *Order and History*, published in 1957, Voegelin noted that Plato's "*Timaeus* marks an epoch in the history of mankind insofar as in this work the psyche has reached *the critical consciousness of the methods* by which it symbolizes its own experiences. As a consequence, no philosophy of order and symbols can be adequate unless the Platonic philosophy of the myth has been substantially absorbed into its own principles." Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, volume 16, *Plato and Aristotle*, edited with Introduction by Dante Germino, volume III, *Order and History*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 237. See also, Cf. *The Southern Review*, n.s., VII (1971), pp. 27, 39-40.

16 [16] "Postscript: On Paradise and Revolution," in Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, volume 12, *Published Essays, 1966-1985*, ed. with introduction by Ellis Sandoz (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 162, 163.

art, but in the existential condition of the author himself.¹⁷ [17] This discussion, however, aimed by Voegelin at the problems arising out of interpreting *The Turn of the Screw* also provides a clue to the approach that a literary critic must take when confronted with a work of art where the artist has not arrived at the "critical distance" necessary for adequately symbolizing human experience in openness to reality. In other words, a philosophy of existence that remains open to the community of being and the ground of Being is necessary for any literary critic.

The principles of Voegelin's literary criticism thus were articulated within a larger framework that included philosophical and historical issues, and whenever Voegelin discoursed on literary issues in his letters to Heilman, he almost always placed these issues within a philosophical or historical context. While in Letter 57, Voegelin had asserted that literary criticism was one of his permanent occupations (almost in an off-handed remark), we learn in Letter 65 that literary criticism "makes sense only if it is conducted as an inquiry into the nature of man." For Voegelin, to inquire into the nature of man, however, necessarily involves the literary critic in historical inquiry. It is clear that he understands Heilman's vocation in this way because he consistently refers to him as a historian of literature and not as a literary critic. Responding specifically to Heilman's comments in Letter 64 that focused on the historical relativism characteristic of the academic debates within the narrower discipline of literary criticism itself,¹⁸ [18] Voegelin articulates his position that human existence is historical

¹⁷ [17] Ibid., 164.

¹⁸ [18] See Letter 64 where Heilman writes: "I was driven [to distinguish two aspects of a work--the ♦was' and the ♦is'] by the dominance of historical studies, in which it is assumed that the work has a single reality which is derivable only from the historical context. This seems dangerous nonsense to me (and I need not explain to you that I do not condemn historical studies), for it appears to deny the existence of a non-historical permanence which I find inseparable from myth, fable, the artistic formulations of the imagination, etc. Maybe "is" is too tricky a metaphor for this; I'm not sure. The

existence, that human nature is revealed in the historical documents (literature) of the past, and the revelation of human nature in the literature of the past is thus the basis for his literary criticism. "Your letter," Voegelin writes, supplies at least some of the items that were beyond my diagnostic abilities--and I can summarize them now as the historicism apparently rampant in literary criticism. . . . The various questions which you indicate in your letter seem to me to be all connected with the effort to find the critical basis beyond historical relativism, and by that token they are connected with each other. Let me dwell a bit on this issue, because it is after all the central issue of my life as a scholar and apparently yours, too. (Letter 65, 156)

Dwelling upon this issue of historicism, Voegelin seems to argue that the revelation of human nature in various literary forms is the *raison d'être* of literary criticism itself. In the same letter, dated August 22, 1956, Voegelin asserts:

The occupation with works of art, poetry, philosophy, mythical imagination, and so forth, makes sense only, if it is conducted as an inquiry into the nature of man. That sentence, while it excludes historicism, does not exclude history, for it is peculiar to the nature of man that it unfolds its potentialities historically. Not that historically anything "new" comes up--human nature is always wholly present--but there are modes of clarity and degrees of comprehensiveness in man's understanding of his self and his position in the world. . . . Hence, the study of the classics is the principal instrument of self-education; and if one studies them with loving care, as you most truly observe, one all of a sudden discovers that one's understanding of a great work increases (and also one's ability to communicate such understanding) for the good reason that the student has

second point followed from this: my assumption of the power of the critic to view the work, at least in part, non-historically, i.e., to transcend the intellectual and cultural climate of his own time and thus to be able to identify in the work those elements that conform to the eternal truth of things. The historical relativists argue, of course, not only that the work is relative only to its times, but that the mind of the critic is relative only to his own times, in which he is hopelessly enclosed. Therefore the practice of literary history is the only true humility in the literary student; the critic who pretends to be doing anything but historicizing is an egomaniac. So I postulate his share in the divine power to see all times simultaneity. Frivolous? Reckless?" (Letter 64, 155)

increased through the process of study--and that after all is the purpose of the enterprise. (At least it is my purpose in spending the time of my life in the study of prophets, philosophers, and saints). . . . History is the unfolding of the human Psyche; historiography is the reconstruction of the unfolding through the psyche of the historian. The basis of historical interpretation is the identity of substance (the psyche) in the object and the subject of interpretation; and its purpose is participation in the great dialogue that goes through the centuries among men about their nature and destiny. And participation is impossible without growth in stature (within the personal limitations) toward the rank of the best; and that growth is impossible unless one recognizes authority and surrenders to it. (Letter 65, 157)

The human psyche unfolds in history and thus the work of the historian is to reconstruct this unfolding of the psyche. That the historian can reconstruct the historical unfolding of the psyche is dependent upon the reality that the substance of the human psyche is shared by both the object--the writer or rather the human being who articulated in language his experiences in language--of the interpretation and the subject--the historian of literature/literary critic--of the interpretation. The shared spiritual substance of the writer and the historian/critic make possible the participation of the historian (as well as all future historians) in "the great dialogue that goes through the centuries among men about their nature and destiny." Participation in the great dialogue makes personal spiritual growth possible, but this growth is impossible unless the historian/critic "recognizes authority and surrenders to it." Thus we return full circle to Voegelin's first principle of literary criticism--"Exhaustion of the source" and the critic's assumption of the "role of the disciple who has everything to learn from the master."

The Time of the Tale: Letter 103

Now we come to the passage that provoked me to organize this panel on the Time of the Tale and modern literature. Initially, I connected the Time of the Tale with modern literature for the simple reason that Voegelin uses Proust in his letter to illustrate one of his points. If it can be applied to Proust, does it work for other modern novelists? If it works for novelists, does it work

for poets and dramatists? I became very excited when I first read the following passage in the letters, for I knew that it embodied a way of understanding modern literature within a larger, philosophical framework, a way of understanding literature that was equal to the great modern artists like Joyce or Proust or Mann or even Faulkner (even though Voegelin did not think that he rose to the rank of the greatest!). Despite the fact that Voegelin gives us everything in this passage, I still struggle with how to approach and understand literature using the insight and the implications of the insight that lie at the heart of this passage.

On August 13, 1964, Voegelin wrote from Munich that

There was a point in my Salzburg lecture that might interest you as an historian of literature: The basic form of myth, the "tale" in the widest sense, including the epic as well as the dramatic account of happenings, has a specific time, immanent to the tale, whose specific character consists in the ability to combine human, cosmic and divine elements into one story. I have called it, already in *Order and History*, the Time of the Tale. It expresses the experience of Being (that embraces all sorts of reality, the cosmos) in flux. This Tale with its Time seems to me the primary literary form, peculiar to cosmological civilizations. Primary in the sense, that it precedes all literary form developed under conditions of differentiating experiences: If man becomes differentiated with any degree of autonomy from the cosmic context, then, and only then, will develop specifically human forms of literature: The story of human events, lyric, empirical history, the drama and tragedy of human action, the meditative dialogue in the Platonic sense, etc. Underlying all later, differentiated forms, however, there remains the basic Tale which expresses Being in flux. Time, then, would not be an empty container into which you can fill any content, but there would be as many times as there are types of differentiated content. Think for instance of Proust's *temps perdu* and *temps retrouv* as times which correspond to the loss and rediscovery of self, the action of rediscovery through a monumental literary work of remembrance being the atonement for the loss of time through personal guilt--very similar to cosmological rituals of restoring order that has been lost through lapse of time. I believe the regrets of Richard II (I wasted time and now does time waste me) touch the same problem. This reflexion would lead into a philosophy of language, in which the basic Tale would appear as the instrument of man's dealing with reality through language--and adequately at that. Form and content, thus, would be inseparable: The Tale, if it is any good, has to deal with Being in flux, however much differentiated the insights into the complex structures of reality may be. (Letter 103. 223)

The "Time of the Tale" grants us access into Voegelin's late work and the ways in which, in a sense, the insights of his late meditations are prefigured in his earlier work, in addition to supplying a way of thinking about modern literary art. Therefore, I would like to sketch out a research strategy for drawing out the various dimensions of Voegelin's work to which this passage points, for the paragraph opens up a truly panoramic perspective on Voegelin's late-mature work, and how that late work fits with his early work, *Order and History*.

Initially, one may search out the various uses that Voegelin makes of the term, "Time of the Tale." And, indeed, Voegelin himself points us to *Order and History*. But which volume of *Order and History*? Searching two admittedly fallible sources--the new indexes of volumes I, II, and III (all published prior to this letter) in the University of Missouri Press's Collected Works edition and my own memory--I find only references to the phrase in volume III. In *Plato and Aristotle*, published in 1957, Voegelin uses the phrase "time of the tale" without benefit of the capitalization he uses in Letter 103 and in later works. This seems to be the earliest use of the term. He uses it again in an article "What is Nature?"¹⁹ [19] first published in 1965 and later published as a chapter in *Anamnesis*, 1966. While the phrase itself does not appear there, an essay--"Anxiety and Reason"--completed about 1968 deals with cognate problems that are associated with the experience symbolized by the "Time of the Tale."²⁰ [20] The term appears again in volume IV of *Order and History*, *The Ecumenic Age*, published in 1974. Finally, the

19 [19] *Historica, Studien zum geschichtlichen Denken und Forschen*, ed. H. Hantsh, E. Voegelin, and F. Valsecchi (Festschrift for Friedrich Engel-Janosi.) (Vienna: Herder, 1965), 1-18.

20 [20] Eric Voegelin, "Anxiety and Reason," in Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, volume 28, *What is History? And Other Late Unpublished Writings*, edited with Introduction by Thomas A. Hollweck and Paul Caringella (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 52-110. Hereafter cited as "Anxiety and Reason."

term is used once again in another unpublished manuscript, "The Beginning and Beyond: A *Meditation on Truth*," finished in 1977.²¹ [21]

As one begins to read and study these various passages, the concerns of Voegelin's late work become apparent. But one must also note that the actual use of the term spans a period of twenty years--insofar as I have been able to determine--and that Voegelin continues to explore the complexes of reality that underlie the use of the term into his last works such as *In Search of Order*. For example, in the unfinished *In Search of Order*, Voegelin meditates on myth and mytho-speculation, on the Beginning, and on Plato's *Timaeus*, a work that figured prominently in the first use of the term in *Plato and Aristotle*. If one looks at the places where the term itself is actually used the contexts reflect the topics that we can identify from the paragraph in Letter 103, to include:

1. myth as the primary literary form of cosmological civilizations
2. differentiation of insights into the structures of reality and subsequent literary forms
3. the relation between myth (Time of the Tale) and other literary forms
4. the Time of the Tale in relation to other types of time
5. the Time of the Tale and Being in flux.
6. the persistence of the Time of the Tale after differentiation of insights into other complex structures of reality
7. the merger of form and content in the basic Tale

21 [21] Eric Voegelin, "The Beginning and the Beyond: A *Meditation on Truth*," in *Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, volume 28, *What is History? And Other Late Unpublished Writings*, edited with Introduction by Thomas A. Hollweck and Paul Caringella (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 173-232. Hereafter cited as "The Beginning and the Beyond."173-232

8. a philosophy of language

These discussions in turn lead one to other cognate, yet intimately interrelated topics--especially the primary experience of the cosmos, styles of truth, types of myth, historiogenesis, equivalences of symbolic expressions, the Beginning and the ground of Being, the truth of the myth, observations on language and imagination, and interrelationships between myth and other the other symbolic forms of philosophy and revelation.

It only remains to reflect briefly upon modern literature and the Time of the Tale, and I would like to begin with two passages from Voegelin. In "In Search of the Ground" (1965), Voegelin replied, in response to a question wondering about the identification of a ground in relation to aesthetic preoccupations, that "All art, if it is any good, is some sort of myth in the sense that it becomes what I call a cosmion, a reflection of the unity of the cosmos as a whole. . . . It's much closer to cosmological thinking than anything else."²² [22] About three years later, in "Anxiety and Reason" (finished ca. 1968) Voegelin writes that "the myth has not remained a mere object of inquiry but has become an active force in the creation of new symbols expressing the human condition. The new situation will be suggested if there be named representatively the work of James Joyce, William Butler Yeats, and Thomas Mann. In relation to the perversions both of transcendence and immanence, the revival must be acknowledged as a ritual restoration of order. The truth of the cosmos full of gods reasserts itself."²³ [23]

²² [22] "In Search of the Ground," Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, volume 11, *Published Essays, 1953-1965*, edited with Introduction by Ellis Sandoz (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 240. Hereafter cited as "In Search of the Ground."

²³ [23] "Anxiety and Reason," 84.

It is clear that for Voegelin literature--both in terms of experiential origin as well as symbolization--is generically related to myth. That Voegelin understood a work of art as a cosmion reflecting the "unity of the cosmos as a whole" clearly connects it with a cosmological style of truth and myth that are both rooted in compact experiences of reality--the primary cosmic experience. Furthermore, storytelling and mythmaking are, in turn, connected with "the Time of the Tale" or the "Tale with its Time" that Voegelin understood to be the "primary literary form, peculiar to cosmological civilizations." Finally, Voegelin understood the Time of the Tale to be the primary literary form in two senses: primary as prior to other literary forms and primary as foundational to and underlying all later literary forms that respond to human understanding of differentiated reality. Literature, at least as we know it in the modern era, is created in a time after the differentiation of reality into immanence and transcendence.²⁴ [24] The imagination, which is necessary for the creation of literature with its locus in an embodied human being who is in turn a composite human being experiencing both "immanent" and "transcendent" reality in his consciousness, may be used to create symbolic forms expressing or rather articulating either the immanent dimension or the transcendent dimension.²⁵ [25] Only when the tale being told combines human, cosmic, and divine elements does it approach the status of myth or Tale with its Time that is out of time.

24 [24] There are certainly writers, who have adopted the west European novel form, from traditions in which differentiation has not "occurred" or rather has occurred only externally to the tradition as an alien force. This issue certainly would raise a number of interesting questions for exploration. For example, Tim Hoyer's work on Japanese novelists, yield interesting observations about the "place" of literature (and hence modern novels) occupies in Japanese society and culture.

25 [25] Cf. Voegelin's comments on imagination in *In Search of Order*, pp. 51-54.

My primary task, in this last section, has been to provide a foundation for answering the question of whether or not Voegelin's formulation of "the Time of Tale" can provide a critical aid for our understanding of the human experience as symbolized in modern literature. I think that we must answer in the affirmative.²⁶ [26] Once we have answered yes, however, the problem of "where do we go from here?" raises its querulous head. And, in answer to this question, I close with a few observations.

If a work of art is a cosmion, I think that we are more likely to find that the literary corpora of modern novelists and poets, rather than single works, may provide more fruitful expanses for Voegelinian prospecting. This qualification will most probably apply to poets such as Eliot and Yeats (both of whom Voegelin was fond), perhaps Wallace Stevens and Robert Penn Warren among others, but it must also be modified by excluding certain writers--Joyce, Proust, Mann, Dostoevsky--and their "single" works from its sweeping generality. There are several

26 [26] Heilman was clearly interested in this formulation of Time of the Tale, but it also raised questions for him also. He responded: "I was much interested in the section (from your Salzburg lecture) on 'the tale' in the widest sense; I would like to think that in a small way I have been working in a fashion parallel to yours, i.e., thinking of the tale (whether novel, drama, etc.) as having two aspects--those which are characteristic of the differentiated age or culture (when man becomes differentiated with any degree of autonomy from the cosmic context') and those which I have called the 'constants' ('Underlying all later, differentiated forms, however, there remains the basic Tale which expresses Being in flux' and 'The Tale, if it is any good, has to deal with Being in flux'). But I have some fear that instead of gaining fresh enlightenment from you, I am twisting you to my own ends. The possibility of fresh enlightenment, I see, lies in your placing of time at the center of, or making it the essence of, the tale; I am wrestling with this for-me-new translation of the 'constant' into temporal terms; I suppose it is that, in narrative terms, being has to be conceived of as movement or succession (unless 'being in flux' has some other connotation that I am failing to get). Yet I don't think I am quite accurate here, for Time seems to become a different thing in your admirable treatment of Proust: what you say there is to me more enlightening than anything else I have read about Proust ('atonement for the loss of time through personal guilt'--i.e., the loss of time is the loss of contact with or knowledge of the essential movements of Being?). Well, I should spare you these notes on my reflections, which may be even less competent than I think they are; but they show you I am wrestling with the new concept." Letter 104, 224-225.

writers, in addition to those mentioned above, whose work I intuitively "suspect" would be fruitful to explore in conjunction with the Time of the Tale; these include Jos  Saramago, Gabriel Garc a M rquez, Federico Garc a Lorca, Flannery O'Connor, Herman Melville, Walker Percy, among many others. In selecting an artist for study, it also seems to me that the critic will have to become thoroughly familiar with Voegelin's analyses of myth, cosmological styles of truth, the primary cosmic experience, the human quest for the Ground of Being, and differentiations of reality, that go to the heart of Voegelin's meditations near the end of his life.

At this point I simply stop writing. The following APPENDIX sketches some directions (inevitably missing others) for future exploration.

APPENDIX

The Time of the Tale:

a tentative outline

Preface: "In his search of the divine ground, man can do no more than move either in the time dimension of the cosmos or through the hierarchy of being from inorganic matter to his own questioning existence, in order to find it either in an event preceding the present state of things or in a place higher than the known hierarchy of things." ("The Beginning and the Beyond," 174)

"This Tale with its Time seems to me the primary literary form, peculiar to cosmological civilizations."

I. The Philosophy of Myth

A. Inner distance and Reflective Distance. The philosopher's myth as a work of art. That the myth is a work of art does not destroy the truth of the myth.

B. Plato's *Timaeus*: The philosopher's myth

**

While the inner distance from the myth inevitably destroys the naïveté of the play, and the myth consequently becomes for Plato a work of art, it must not destroy the "truth" of the myth. . . . Plato knows that one myth can and must supersede the other, but he also knows that no other human function, for instance "reason" or "science," can supersede the myth itself. The myth remains the legitimate expression of the fundamental movements of the soul. Only in the shelter of the myth can the sectors of the personality that are closer to the waking consciousness unfold their potentiality; and without the ordering of the whole personality by the truth of the myth the secondary intellectual and moral powers would lose their direction. *Plato and Aristotle*, 240.

**

II. Myth and the Beginning.

"The basic form of myth, the 'tale' in the widest sense, including the epic as well as the dramatic account of happenings, has a specific time, immanent to the tale, whose specific character consists in the ability to combine human, cosmic and divine elements into one story."

"It expresses the experience of being (that embraces all sorts of reality, the cosmos) in flux."

The time out of time, as I called it, is the Time of the Tale, of the cosmogonic myth in the bewildering variety of its manifestations in history. By the analogous Beginning, the cosmogonic myth expresses the experience of a lasting cosmos permeated by the divine mystery of its existence, and articulates the truth of a cosmos that is not altogether of this world. The reality of things, it appears, cannot be fully understood in terms of the world and its time; for the things are circumfused by an ambience of mystery that can be understood only in terms of the Myth. Since the divine Beginning, though experienced as real, is not an event in the time of the world, the imaginative creation story is the symbolism necessary for its expression. "The Beginning and the Beyond," 174-175.

A. Time of the Tale and time of the cosmos.

"The symbol of ♦creation in time,' of a ♦beginning' of the cosmos, is necessitated by the literary form of the mythical ♦tale.' Whatever Plato's ♦doctrine' of creation would have been, if he had ever thought of having one, in the story the creation inevitably must occur as an event in the inner time of the tale." *Plato and Aristotle*, 253.

B. Time of the Tale and Being in flux.

Plato and the myth of the incarnation: Being in flux OR Being and Becoming

The distinction between the time of the tale and the time of the cosmos further clarifies the relations between Being and Becoming, as well as between myth and knowledge of objects. The time of the tale is neither the eternity of the paradigm nor the everlasting time of Becoming. It symbolizes the in-between of time and eternity. Being does not precede Becoming in time; it is eternally present in Becoming. The flux of Becoming with its transitory objects, as we have seen, is not merely a series of data given to belief and sensation; it has a dimension pointing out of time toward eternal Being. Along this dimension moves the process of Incarnation, intersecting at any given time of Becoming at the point of its present, but is not part of the process of Becoming itself, is the process of the psyche; and the time of the tale is the "form of the object" into which consciousness casts this timeless process. *Plato and Aristotle*, 253-254.

C. The primary experience of the cosmos and the Beginning

**

"In the primary cosmic experience, there are no terms for being and its modes. All ♦things' are called directly by their names: heaven and earth, gods and men, country and ruler. They all are ♦real' and ♦true' in a manner that is not specified further. They all are what they are and yet, at the same time, they are consubstantial so that they can stand in a genetic relation to each other, which in turn is expressed in the mythical narrative of their procreation. *Anamnesis*, 359

2. The In-Between of the primary cosmic experience: groundlessness and anxiety

For the primary experience of reality is the experience of a "cosmos" only because the nonexistent ground of existent things becomes, through the universe and the gods, part of a reality that is neither existent nor nonexistent. The tension of reality has been absorbed into the wholeness of the intermediate reality that we call cosmic. The In-Between of cosmic reality encloses in its compactness the tension of existence toward the ground of existence. . . .

. . . The compression of the tension into the In-Between of cosmic reality becomes critically untenable when the astrophysical universe must be recognized as too much existent to function as the nonexistent ground of reality, and the gods are discovered as too little existent to form a realm of intracosmic things. In the hierarchical order of realities that governs the symbolization of kingship there become visible the lines along which the cosmological style will crack until the cosmos dissociates into a dedivinized external world and a world-transcendent God. At this point, however, one must be careful not to overstate the results of differentiation and dissociation. What cracks is the cosmological style of truth as far as it tends to conceive all reality after the model of In-Between reality; and what dissociates is the cosmos of the primary experience. But neither of these consequences of differentiation affects the core of the primary experience, i.e., the experience of an In-Between reality. *The Ecumenic Age*, 127-128.

**

C. Historiogenesis and the Beginning.

**

Historiogenesis is a mytho-speculative extrapolation of pragmatic history toward its cosmic-divine point of origin. . . . [A]s the Israelite case demonstrates, mytho-speculation in the field of history is not . . . abandoned when universal humanity under God has differentiated from the order of the cosmological empire in which it had been compactly contained. God and man, world and society remain united as they are in the primary experience of the cosmos; and the lastingness of cosmic reality continues to find its expression in the cosmic Time of the Tale. By virtue of a revelatory experience of man's existence in society, its time dimension may

be recognized as the history that is transparent for divine order; by virtue of noetic insight, the problem of beginning and end may be recognized as an antinomy attaching to the flux of time; but neither revelation nor philosophy dissolves the time and tale of the cosmos. Even when the realm of universal humanity in time is discerned ever more clearly as the history of man's encounter with God, the mytho-speculative form of historiogenesis survives. *The Ecumenic Age*, 153-154

III. Myth and other literary-symbolic forms.

"Underlying all later, differentiated forms, however, there remains the basic Tale which expresses Being in flux."

A. Two types of myth.

1. Intracosmic, ordinary myth that relies on "the consubstantiality of things supplied by the embracing but non-existent cosmos," and includes such tales as those concerning useful inventions or institutions or powers of a shrine or deity, "genealogies of families who trace their descent from a god," interventions of the divine in human affairs, etc. "Anxiety and Reason, 75.

2. Mytho-speculative varieties of myth that "attempt to extrapolate the genesis of things to an absolute ground."

B. Co-presence of the experiences of a groundless existence and of faith or historical experiences of transcendence.

C. Equivalences

1. Two types of myth are complementary.

2. Immanence and transcendence are differentiated in symbolic form of philosophy.

3. The two types of myth philosophically correspond to the differentiation into

immanence and transcendence.

**

"What happens to the things covered by ordinary intracosmic myth once they have moved into the realm of immanence that differentiates with transcendence?"

As to one part, we know, they will grow into the sciences of the external world or enlarge the range of pragmatic action free from ♦superstition.' As to another part, where man is concerned, they will grow into immanent history, psychology, politics, art, and literature." "Anxiety and Reason," 77.

**

Since human beings are composite beings, can we then classify literary forms as equivalent to the immanent pole of the cosmos (combination of human and cosmic elements) or the transcendent pole of the cosmos (combination of human, cosmic, and divine elements)?

Epic--Myth--Platonic Dialogue--Philosopher's Myth--Tragedy--History--Psalms--Novels (types?)--Japanese "I" Novel--Melodrama--Anamnestic Meditation.

D. De-divinization of the world.

**

"Noetic experience led to the split of the cosmos of the primary experience, which was full of gods, into a de-divinized world and the divine ground of being. During the same process, and because of it, human consciousness comes into view as the reality of experience and the source of the conceptions and images of reality. The insight of noetic experience thus encompasses at once two realms of reality, that of consciousness and that of the termini of noetic participations."
Anamnesis, 372

**

E. The persistence of myth after differentiation.

"Brilliant breakthroughs [in the revolt against the revolt against the divine, transcendent] like Frazer's *Golden Bough* or the work of Freud and Jung have influenced their generations and enlarged the horizon of men in search of order against the waste by time; a whole stratum of reality lost has been regained by adding the dimension of myth and dream again to an understanding of the psyche that had degenerated in the nineteenth century to the antics of a radically immanentist psychology. Moreover, the myth has not remained a mere object of inquiry but has become an active force in the creation of new symbols expressing the human condition. The new situation will be suggested if there be named

representatively the work of James Joyce, William Butler Yeats, and Thomas Mann. In relation to the perversions both of transcendence and immanence, the revival must be acknowledged as a ritual restoration of order. The truth of the cosmos full of gods reasserts itself." "Anxiety and Reason," 84.

"What cracks is the cosmological style of truth as far as it tends to conceive all reality after the model of In-Between reality; and what dissociates is the cosmos of the primary experience. But neither of these consequences of differentiation affects the core of the primary experience, i.e., the experience of an In-Between reality. On the contrary, it is still with us. For in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, in the ◆Conclusion,' Kant must acknowledge: ◆Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe: the starry heaven above me and the moral law within me.' Kant's ◆starry heaven' is the celestial universe transparent for its divine ground, and his ◆moral law' is the presence of a divine reality that has become transmundane in the conscious existence of a man who has become mundane. The In-Between reality of the primary experience has been critically pruned; it is no longer the model for symbolizing all modes of reality; but it is still there. Moreover, the two areas of In-Between reality that resist compliance with the victorious model of existent things are still the same that are accorded higher representative rank in the cosmological symbolization of kingship. Hence, the cosmological style of truth is not simply a flight of imagination to be discarded in the light of later and better insight, but indeed a style of symbolization with a core of reality experienced in truth. And inversely, the differentiated existent thing has become the core of truth in a style that symbolizes all reality after this model; and again the style will crack under the pressure of the reality that remains unrecognized, this time the In-Between reality, as it does in the twentieth century A.D." *The Ecumenic Age*, 127-128.

IV. EVALUATION OF THE TALE.

"The Tale, if it is any good, has to deal with Being in flux, however much differentiated the insights into the complex structures of reality may be."

VI. MYTH AND ART, to include LITERATURE.

"All art, if it is any good, is some sort of myth in the sense that it becomes what I call a cosmion, a reflection of the unity of the cosmos as a whole." "In Search of the Ground," 240.

VII. TOWARD A PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

**

"Underlying all later, differentiated forms, however, there remains the basic Tale which expresses Being in flux. Time, then, would not be an empty container into which you can fill any content, but there would be as many times as there are types of differentiated content. . . . I believe the regrets of Richard II (I wasted time and now does time waste me) touch the same problem. *This reflexion would lead into a philosophy of language, in which the basic Tale would appear as the instrument of man's dealing with reality through language--and adequately at that. Form and content, thus, would be inseparable:* The Tale, if it is any good, has to deal with Being in flux, however much differentiated the insights into the complex structures of reality may be." Letter 103, 223. Emphasis added.

**

**

"The story of the quest for truth speaks a language, the language of the tale, in which the symbols expressing the experiences become subjects in sentences with predicates as if they were ♦things' with properties. If the consciousness of the experiences that have engendered the symbols is not preserved or restored, the narrative-event tension in the story can induce literalist misunderstandings." *In Search of Order*, 81.

**

**

"the adequacy of the symbolism to the experience points to the miracle of a mythical imagination that can produce the adequate Tale. We are touching on the problem . . . of an imagination and a language that is itself perhaps not altogether of this world. "The Beginning and the Beyond," 175.

**

**

"Since the divine Beginning, though experienced as real, is not an event in the time of the world, the imaginative creation story is the symbolism necessary for its expression. Moreover, the adequacy of the symbolism to the experience points to the miracle of a mythical imagination that can produce the adequate Tale. We are touching on the problem . . . of an imagination and a language that is itself perhaps not altogether of this world." "The Beginning and the Beyond," 174-175.

*
