

Narrative and Conversion:

Voegelin and Jonas on Freedom in Augustine

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The writings of Augustine analyzed by Voegelin and Jonas have to do with the transformative liberation of the human race from the disorientation and cupidity due to sin through divine grace. Eric Voegelin refers frequently to a myth in St Augustine's *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 64(65) that, in its lovely compactness, expresses a complete philosophy (and theology, I might add) of history:

Incipit exire qui incipit amare.

Exeunt enim multi latenter,

et exeuntium pedes sunt cordis affectus;

exeunt autem de Babylonia.

This passage from *On the Psalms* takes the form of compact and undifferentiated religious allegory. Hans Jonas's *Augustin und das paulinische Freiheitsproblem: Eine philosophische Studie zum pelagianischen Streit* uncovers a mythico-dogmatic elaboration of elements for a philosophy of the human will's dialectical freedom. In both cases, the effective freedom of the human race is at issue.

Jonas contrasted Augustine's comments on Romans 7 in a pre-Pelagian letter to his friend Simplicianus (396) with those written in the context of anti-Pelagian polemics in the second decade of the fifth century. In these texts, Christian dogmatic concerns about the teaching on saving grace and the need for infant baptism complicate the symbolization of phenomenologically accessible experience, which is itself descriptively thematizable in some measure. These entanglements prompted Jonas to clarify the hermeneutical and methodological issues required to sort out these complications. Just as Voegelin wrote "Equivalences of Experience and Symbolization in History" to elucidate his position, so in "On the Hermeneutic Structure of Dogma" Jonas explained the relationship between realities apprehended experientially and on the other hand, the propositional expression of dogmas, which he there calls

“mythological.” This use of the term ‘myth’ has a more rationalist tone than Voegelin’s; and it is also more pejorative than in his normal usage from the time of his studies of Gnosticism onwards.

Nonetheless, there is much shared in common by Voegelin’s and Jonas’s respective understandings of the relationship between experience and expression, or experience and symbolization. I have discussed Voegelin’s approach elsewhere, so I will concentrate on Jonas’s account here.

Jonas on the Hermeneutical Structure of Dogma

Jonas expresses the core presupposition of his book on Augustine as follows:

All this emerges from an unavoidable basic structure of the human spirit as such: That it interprets itself in objectifying formulae and symbols, that it operates “symbolically,” is most essential to the spirit—and most dangerous as well. In order to come to oneself, one naturally takes this detour through the symbol, in whose enticing whirl of problems one tends to get lost, by regarding the substitutional element absolutely and distancing oneself from the origin symbolically preserved in the symbolism—and only through a long process of reconstruction, in accord with an exhaustive measure-taking of that detour—is a demythologized consciousness capable of approaching with conceptual directness the primordial phenomenon hidden under such a disguise (compare the long path of the dogma of original sin down to Kierkegaard). [82]

According to Jonas, in their outward shape, dogmas possess a rational, propositional structure in what Aristotle and Heidegger called the “apophantic” form of subject-object statements. Such statements locate their propositional contents in the realm of seemingly objective states of affairs that are susceptible of normal logical sorting. However, these statements and their component images actually function as symbolisms reflecting primordial inward and existential events. The imagery in these symbolisms projects objects in the mode of either entities or events perceivable by the senses. Because the symbolisms are analogous to subhuman things and events in space and time, they are more amenable to being integrated into a unified horizon that apparently refers to objective reality. At the same time, unfortunately, it is only by being detached from their originating experiential matrices that the symbols become available for manipulation, as if they were determinate rational structures in the world of theory.

Such symbolisms emerge from a process of objectification of human experience motivated by people's desire to understand and interpret themselves and their experience. However, according to Jonas, the context of the development of dogma adds to this spontaneous and humanly inevitable process a 'transcendentalizing' dimension that makes the objectifying symbolism 'metaphysical' or 'mythological,' because its referent so far surpasses human experience that it is no longer phenomenologically retrievable within the scope of the originating experiences from which the objectification arose. Jonas points out that this transcendentalizing indication of the 'known unknown' plays a crucial role in the attainment of self-knowledge through self-representation. However significant transcendentalized symbolisms are for the knowledge intended by faith, they become fodder for Enlightenment critique.

For Jonas the transcendentalizing dimension of the symbolization involves a basic ontological transformation of the data of both inner and outer experience down to their most elementary structures. As is the case for Voegelin, this translation into another universe of being amounts to a hypostatization of existentially retrievable realities into thing-like and perceivable entities, which can be univocally integrated into a spatialized and externalized thought-world. Hypostatization turns symbolisms into unequivocal, undialectical objective concepts that become the basis for fixed propositions and comprehensive theoretical constructs, whose abstract unity obeys the logical rules of coherence and inference.

Jonas's hermeneutical task, then, is to use his appropriation of the immanent and operative structures of Dasein as a the basis for a version of the *Sachkritik* espoused by his teacher, Rudolf Bultmann, in the wake of the 'hermeneutic revolution' inaugurated by Karl Barth's Römerbrief commentary. *Sachkritik* is indissociably connected with phenomenology's motto about returning to the *Sache selbst*. The point is that you cannot understand what an author means about the reality X unless you understand reality X. Hence, David Levy evokes Jonas's thesis in "Change and Permanence: On the Possibility of Understanding History" that "the possibility of interpretation rests on shared possession by the interpreter and his object of a common human horizon founded in certain foundational and enduring features of human nature and response."

In the case of the *Freiheitsproblem*, Jonas explicates the structure of human freedom—in its inevitably dialectical relationship to moral renunciation and insufficiency—in terms of existential interiority. With this in mind he establishes the core anthropological meaning both of the Stoic position on human freedom and of Paul's teaching about moral insufficiency in Romans 7. This in turn allows him to retrieve

what he considers the creative misinterpretations of this passage by Augustine both before and after the Bishop of Hippo's preoccupation with errors of Pelagius and his followers, and by Pelagius himself.

Jonas, then, translates the dogma of original sin as an attempt to symbolize the mutual mediation of freedom and unfreedom in people's moral experience. Similarly, he construes the dogma of predestination as a symbolization of our human experience of life under the auspices of a fateful dispensation over which we ultimately have no control whatsoever. These dogmas are 'mythological' or 'metaphysical,' symbolizations, which employ terms and relations that are impossible to retrieve within our experience of existential interiority. If, aside from the ecclesial defense of infant baptism, they arose from a need to answer questions about human existence, because of their detachment and displacement away from human experience they lead to such bad questions, whether it be how to reconcile God's action and human freedom, or the notorious issue regarding God's goodness and justice in the face of sin and evil in the world—questions that, according to Jonas, cannot be rationally adjudicated or phenomenologically resolved in terms of the human experience of existential interiority. *Prima facie*, Voegelin possesses a more capacious account of consciousness than Jonas. In the *Freiheitsproblem* Jonas gives a rather Heideggerian and Kantian account of that dynamism of consciousness, which Voegelin identified as "luminosity." Both authors basically agree with Kant in confining the range of the intentional aspect of consciousness to the sense perceptions of objects in the world of space and time; but they are not satisfied with that agreement. Jonas's analysis of the problem of freedom—the theme of his study on contrasting interpretations of Romans 7: 7-25—seems at least to acknowledge consciousness's luminosity implicitly by insisting that an adequate phenomenology of freedom can, and even must, come to terms with interior existential experiences that are antinomous, to use Kant's term. It is impossible to make sense of Jonas's claims without becoming expressly aware of structures in our conscious experience which, even though, because unable to be perceived *ad instar* sensible objects, they cannot be objectively known. For Voegelin, the conditioning of intentional consciousness by luminosity can be responded to in word and deed; for Jonas the emphasis is on rationally thinking through our antinomous experience of freedom and unfreedom in terms of universality and necessity.

In the end, then, there is not much disagreement between the relatively young Jonas and the relatively mature Voegelin on this issue. However, in the specific area of the liberation of human freedom, there are pervasive differences of content and tone. These differences can be provisionally characterized by saying that Jonas is more rationalist in approach than Voegelin.

Jonas and Voegelin on Augustine on the Problem of Freedom

Voegelin

Eric Voegelin's analysis of Augustine's passage in *On the Psalms* 64(65).2 occurs in the essays "Immortality: Experience and Symbol," [*Published Essays 1966-1985 The Collected Works* 12 Ellis Sandoz, ed. (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press 1990) 52-94 at 78] and "Configurations of History" [Ibid. 104-6]; Voegelin explains that Augustine's taking up of the myth of exodus expresses, more clearly and precisely than in *The City of God*, the basic structure of both personal existence and history. At the basis of both Augustine's commentary and Voegelin's retrieval lies the generalization of Augustine's own experience: people need to be loved into knowing that they are loved; but before they actually know, their hearts respond.

The first verse of the Psalm begins, *In finem, psalmus David, canticum Ieremiae et Ezechielis, ex populo transmigrationis, cum inciperent exire*. In the series of Old Testament exoduses (Abraham from the Chaldees, Moses from Egypt), Augustine refers to Israel's and Judah's exodus from the Babylonian exile to Jerusalem. Augustine says Babylon stands for confusion, which Voegelin interprets as disoriented self-love. Jerusalem, to which the one leaving Babylon is returning, is the true goal of the quest for happiness, the *beata visio*, the *beata vita*, abandoning the love of self and turning towards the love of God. Hence,

He begins to leave who begins to love.

Many the leaving who know it not,

for the feet of those leaving are the affections of the heart:

and yet, they are leaving Babylon.

To fail to keep the law, either in the sense of the inner law of nature given with human reason or of the Mosaic Law, is to have fallen away from the love of God above all things into the sinful condition of disordered self-love. For Voegelin it is crucial that escaping from the sinful life (symbolized by departure from Babylon) to life in the light of the love of God (symbolized by turning towards Jerusalem) does not happen to us because of our own knowing and deciding:

It as a subconscious process at first, for the walk of departure, the manner in which they abandon the world, is a movement of the heart toward the love of God. And even if it is so subconscious that perhaps they do not even know it themselves, they nevertheless depart from Babylon, and are engaged in an exodus toward the heavenly Jerusalem. [105-6]

'Subconscious' here means conscious but not yet explicitly known. Even after the soteriological symbolism so prominent in *The New Science of Politics* was dropped, Voegelin still seems to hold that whenever the movement of the heart away from the entanglements of our disordered self-love towards the love of God happens, God's free and undeserved gift becomes consciously effective in our lives even before it is explicitly known ("Many the leaving who know it not."). As the First Letter of John puts it, "This is the revelation of God's love for us, that God sent his only Son into the world that we might have life through him. Love consists in this: it is not we who loved God, but God loved us and sent his Son to expiate our sins." [1 Jn 4.10-11] Paul expresses this dynamic similarly: "For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." [2 Cor 4.6]

The cause of the movement of exodus is conscious because Voegelin calls it a tension toward God. This notion of living in the tension returns like refrains throughout the Voegelin oeuvre, nowhere more tellingly or beautifully than in the artful interweaving of meditations on Plato's dialogues and on the Gospels in "The Gospel and Culture." At the center of the dynamism is mystical experience as shared by noetically differentiated philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, and by pneumatically differentiated religious thinkers such as St Paul and St John. They have in common lives lived in tension towards the divine ground of being. Such mystical experience, while perhaps partially expressed in doctrines or dogmas, is far more profound and existentially primordial, as Voegelin stressed in his discussion of Jean Bodin.

For Voegelin, the politically disruptive derailments of this tension toward the divine ground occur in the apocalyptic replacement of the tension by the objectifying escape into the perfected kingdom of God (whether in religious [Daniel, Apocalypse of John] or in secular [the Jacobins, Comte, Marx] terms); or by the Gnostics' objectifying escape into an otherworldly beyond. Apocalypticism is escape into future time; Gnosticism is escape into future time. A third way of missing the tension is to establish an ecumenic empire. These derailments cannot be explored here, except to say that precisely they are associated by Voegelin with the *Schimpfwort*, objectification.

Jonas

Hans Jonas' groundbreaking interpretation of Augustine on the Pauline problem of freedom was written by an assimilated German Jew. In a way that Voegelin himself explicitly rejected, Jonas maintains the strict distinction between philosophy and theology, between what can be revealed by profound phenomenological reflection on human experience and what is knowable to believers in theologoumena or revealed doctrines/dogmas. In his response to Professor Altizer, Voegelin explains why this distinction only makes sense when philosophy itself is acknowledged to be, in the words of Anselm of Canterbury, *fides quaerens intellectum*.

Like Leo Strauss, his contemporary and fellow Jew who was also deeply influenced by Martin Heidegger, Jonas would never be forgetful of Jerusalem. But, whereas Strauss considered himself a reviver of Platonic rationalism within the vital tension between Athens and Jerusalem, Jonas is distinctly and unapologetically a modern rationalist. His renderings of Paul's attitudes toward the law show how, like Strauss, he prizes above all the rationality of the Mosaic law. Perhaps like his great German Jewish predecessor, Hermann Cohen, Jonas saw no incompatibility between Paul's Torah piety and the Kantian conception of the human being's innate relationship to the moral law. It would appear that for Jonas, to be a good Jew (as Paul had clearly intended to be) was to live one's life in terms of precisely the respect for the law which Kant considered to be the core of human dignity and autonomy. Nevertheless, when he wrote this work for Bultmann before emigrating from Germany, Jonas did not shy away from using Heideggerian language and motifs in his writing.

We must keep clearly in mind Jonas's desire to remain rigorously philosophical (in a sense Voegelin eschews as at best *depassé*) in order to come to terms with the gravamen of Jonas's interpretation of Augustine's comments on Romans 7:7-25. Jonas shows that in each of the two wrestles with Paul's text considered by Jonas, the great Father of the Christian West failed to construe Paul's meaning correctly. As any careful reader of *Confessions* knows, Augustine searches for the truth through philosophical rhetoric, and he commonly subjects the literal meaning of biblical texts to his own pedagogical concerns. In the pre-Pelagian stage of *Ad Simplicianum*, Jonas tells us, Augustine turns into a step-by-step historical and personal mystagogy of conversion Paul's meditation on the relative roles of law and grace in both revealing the human being's insufficiency in the face of God and the law, and in overcoming that insufficiency. Thus Augustine imposes on Paul his own periodization of salvation-history in terms of the stages 'before the law' (the original state of Adam, when man could do either good or evil) 'under the

law' (the fallen state, when man can almost never do anything but evil), 'after the law' (when the moral impotence of fallen man is revealed for what it is), and 'under grace' (which bestows Christian freedom in good, which is charity).

Even more vehemently, then, Jonas insists that Augustine's anti-Pelagian interpretation of Paul's Romans 7 is also flawed by its overwhelming polemical preoccupations, not the least of which is the need to degrade the power of human nature and to magnify the necessity of grace in order to justify infant baptism. Augustine's brief for the primacy of grace leads him to make Paul show how moral impotence so corrupts unaided good will, that even the desire to keep the law—prior both (1) to one's realizing one's moral impotence and (2) to having one's will liberated by grace—can only arise with God's supernatural aid. For Jonas, this was not Paul's concern, so that there is little in the passage to justify Augustine's interpretation.

Moreover, Jonas makes the case as a philosopher that, in terms of *Sachkritik*, the transformative role ascribed to supernatural grace 'doesn't have a leg to stand on.' I have already mentioned Jonas's opinions on the dogmas of original sin and predestination. In the chapter entitled "Critical Remarks on Augustine's Conceptuality," Jonas pours rationalist scorn on the supernatural character of God's election and the "pouring out into our hearts of the Holy Spirit who is given to us," about which Paul writes so forcibly at Romans 5: 5.

At the end of the day, and especially in his third appendix, "Philosophical Reflection on Paul, Romans 7," Jonas admits that all he can do as a philosopher is to prescind from the experience of grace and from whatever light and freedom it bestows on human beings. He turns instead to a phenomenologico-philosophical retrieval of the "will" as

the fundamental mode of being of Dasein in general, ... the formal-structural fact that the being of Dasein is such that in each of its actualities something or other is its concern, and that the final concern in all the variable ones is its own being as the ultimate task of this being itself. In brief, 'will' signifies what Heidegger explicates under the head of 'care.' The formula 'being an issue for itself' circumscribes what we mean by the reflection of the will. ["The Abyss of the Will: Philosophical Meditation on the Seventh Chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans," *Philosophical Essays. From Ancient Creed to Technological Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago, Midway Reprint, 1974) 339.]

So, if the efficacy of supernatural grace is akin to “magic” for Jonas, and if Augustine simply manhandles Paul’s text, what does Jonas believe that Paul’s teaching is all about? It is not about transformation or anything analogous to the myth of exodus in our discussion of Voegelin. For his contribution to the Bultmann Festschrift, Jonas demoted the title of the third appendix of *Freiheitsproblem*, “Philosophical Reflection on the Seventh Chapter of Paul Epistle to the Romans,” to a subtitle for the title, “The Abyss of the Will.” The change is significant. Traditionally, Christians interpreted the symbolism of homo abyssus in light of the effective history of Augustine’s famous evocation of the “restless heart” that can find rest only in the infinite, eternally good God, who transcends created space and time. Here the symbolism of abyss is colored by Nietzsche and Heidegger. They were the first to sublate the Kantian dichotomy of heteronomy/autonomy into deeper perspective provided by the secular contrast between authenticity and unauthenticity.

I have already alluded to the Jonas’s deep reverence for the Kantian respect for the law, which implies that even the most craven criminals know they ought to obey the law coeval with their reason, and who thereby realize that they can freely determine themselves by ‘giving themselves the law.’ This deep appreciation of Kant’s lofty and selfless morality is where Jonas’s Jewishness immunized him from Heidegger’s moral vagaries.

It remains that the young Heidegger apprehended all the basic motifs of *Sein und Zeit* when he interpreted Book X of the *Confessions*: *ipse mihi occurro; quaestio mihi sum; molestia (oneri) mihi sum*; life as a *tentatio*; and *cura* [*Bekümmern*, care]. By equating Augustine’s *molestia* with facticity, Heidegger decisively naturalized sin. This is confirmed when next he turned to interpreting Aristotle’s teaching about the mean in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. There he conflates the ease with which, according to Aristotle, most people miss the mean of excellence by either excess or defect with a regularity akin to sinfulness. In his Aristotle interpretation, Heidegger went on to thematize this innate structure of human facticity in terms of *Ruinanz*: the inevitable human inclination toward self-destructiveness, sometimes exultant, sometimes not.

This teaching seems not to have been lost on Jonas. His absolutely riveting philosophic meditation on Romans 7, as it were, ‘Nietzscheanizes’ his Kantian view of the will’s autonomy by combining it with his own revision of Kant’s teaching on basic evil in *Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*. The body of the essay is devoted to demonstrating the dialectical equiprimordiality of moral renunciation and insufficiency with human freedom. According to Jonas the appropriation of our human existence in

which we freely constitute ourselves and our world reveals that concretely and experientially, human freedom and lack of freedom mutually condition each other.

Although Jonas's teaching has Nietzschean resonances, especially in his agreement about the dubiousness of Christian apologetics' tendency to rub human beings' noses in the panoply of their own baseness, his affinity for Kant's lofty morality elevates his explication of this antinomy into a portrayal of the human condition that echoes Pascal's evocation of the human tension between glory and dust. However noble his meditation on Romans 7, Jonas eliminates what for Voegelin is all-important: the periagoge, conversion, exodus that effects the transformation of the closed soul into an open soul oriented to the divine ground in virtue of the synergy of the divine and human poles of the tension.

Concluding Remarks on Augustine

Neither Voegelin nor Jonas are particularly concerned, as Augustine was, about the intricacies of a Christian theology of grace. Nor did either of them trace in detail the changes Augustine's thought underwent as he worked out the doctrine of grace, which was adopted by the Christian church at what must certainly have seemed to them to be obscure and irrelevant African councils of bishops. However, as Augustine made clear in *De doctrina Christiana*, you have not only to practice the hermeneutics of love—which I have no doubt both Jonas and Voegelin did—but also to practice the hermeneutics of consent to the Church's creeds, which for him is a consent rooted in liturgical practice. Neither Voegelin nor Jonas did that. This is the locus of Christian narrative and conversion.

Only in the context of the union of minds and of hearts constitutive of the ecclesial community can dogmatization be understood to be not just an unfortunate entrapment in a hypostatized dead-end for the philosophically stultified and the mystically deprived, but a concrete solution for a troubled and disturbed community that is undergoing an identity crisis: a common confession of faith, which makes both affirmations of factual truth and judgments of value. As Augustine makes clear in early Christianity's fundamental work on hermeneutics of love just mentioned, such a common confession can guide the community's apprehension of the analogy of faith contained in canonical scriptures. And that is what Augustine openly does.

Augustine was a mind at work. At the time of his *Letter to Simplicianus*, his understanding of the Christian teachings on the necessity of a grace disproportionate to human nature was relatively undeveloped. It was as a churchman and bishop that Augustine found himself forced to develop his self-

understanding. He had to come to terms with, and indeed to develop the explicit formulations for, the liturgical *lex orandi* and the traditional Christian (and Jewish?) belief that the human race's inherited guilt and the dominance of pride and cupidity render unaided human freedom ineffective over the long run, so that without sacramental baptism and the gift of the Spirit, no one can continuously do good and avoid evil.

In the earlier stages of Augustine's understanding (roughly expressed in *ad Simplicianum*), he held that the basic power of natural human desire and of the freedom of the will, as the capacity to do good or evil, were powerfully complemented by a congruous election or vocation on God's part. In the course of the evolution of his thought, he realized that the essence of freedom is voluntariness or antecedent willingness, in the sense that one follows one's delight (*delectatio*) whether in doing good or evil. At last he became convinced that freedom to do the good could only be the result of God's gift of the Spirit; and that free choice without the gift of God's love amounted to no more than servitude in evil.

Augustine radicalized Aristotle's teaching about the three ways of life as philosophical, political, or only interested in security and comfort or pleasure into two options—love of self above all things even to the contempt of God, or love of God above all. There result three fundamental orientations in life: the gift of charity, the love of one's own power (pride), delight in lower things (cupidity). Augustine's acute grasp of the meaning of habit (or what Lonergan later called the law of psychological continuity) led him to articulate the implications of the Pauline 'reign of sin' (which is the probability or expectation of sin doctrinalized under the term original sin): without God's gift of love, pride and cupidity are bolstered by ignorance, blindness of heart due to the needs of the body, and concupiscence or disordered desire.

As Augustine came to understand the Christian narrative more deeply within the framework of the Adamic symbolism of Romans 5: 6-12, the original defection from charity and fall into pride and cupidity occurred in the first Adam of the Garden of Eden. The resultant condition of fallenness makes sin 'second nature' from the onset of each human life. The original reversal and healing of this condition is brought about in history by the second Adam, Jesus Christ, who, as a divine person and the Son of God, "became flesh to suffer and die, and thereby to touch our hard hearts and lead us to eternal life."

Salvation, then, is falling in love with God who is effective in a way that is disproportionate to any merely human acts of knowing, willing, and doing. This conversion is imperfect and gradual in this terrestrial life, and the perfect only in the Beatific Vision. The doctrines of God's election and

predestination are ways of underlining against Pelagianism that such falling in love, the outpouring of the Spirit of charity in our hearts to replace pride and cupidity, overcomes inherited guilt and the probability of sin—the defection of the creature from the love of God to disordered love of self and of creatures—without previous human merits. Even faith (as shown forth in infant baptism) is gratuitous: it is the eyes of being in love with God, since God’s love produces our assent and consent; neither faith nor baptism is a work.

Hence, for Augustine, the dogmas of original sin, election, and predestination simply articulate the grammar of the narrative drama stated in John 3: 16: “For this is how God loved the world: he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.” It remains that the economy of grace has two aspects. Election or predestination chiefly means that the grace of conversion is operative, in the sense that when we are converted our wills are moved and not movers; God does the moving.

Once converted, the pilgrim’s life of grace is imperfect, so there is always need for more operative grace. The Holy Spirit bestows delight in the justice demanded by the law, but not enough to guarantee that every contrary pleasure or pain will be overcome. The gift of grace therefore causes but does not guarantee good choice and performance across the board. Augustine always stressed that God can create us without us, but not save us without us. Our personal consent and effort are integral, so that the grace of final salvation is both operative and cooperative or merited. The key point is that there are no merits prior to the gift of God’s grace, only afterwards. At this stage of Christian thought, Augustine’s notion is that non-Christians may recognize what is good and perform it, but they probably will not have the intentionality and consistency needed for salvation.

For Augustine, in his later comments on Paul, the normal sequence in the narrative drama of salvation is law, Gospel, and charity, and conversion means the reversal of human pride and pretense by accepting God’s offer in Christ of forgiveness and assistance. Stage center is the divine sovereignty of election. But the story is not one of arbitrary rule. Things are in an intractable state because of human evil-doing. What people need is God’s initial gift of creation, and then, because of God’s mercy (Romans 9:16), his decisive gift of vocation to grace, which is the will to accept God’s offer. The story is of a Father who gives the charity which causes love and good performance, and empowers human choice and performance both in believing and in doing good. What Augustine realized in thinking out conversion was that choice recedes into the background in favor of a God-given change in orientation from

demonic or human cupidity to charity. The key to the shift is not simply forgiveness and instruction in goodness, but a gratuity that does not depend on prior choice or performance, and an efficacy that supports us from from the time of our conversion until our final salvation.

He begins to leave who begins to love.

Many the leaving who know it not,

for the feet of those leaving are the affections of the heart:

and yet, they are leaving Babylon.

Mythic Truth and the Art of Science:

Hans Jonas and Eric Voegelin on Gnosticism and the Unease of Modernity

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1952 was a crucial year for those interested in the relevance of the category of Gnosticism to the understanding of the specificity and especially the specifically identifiable political and spiritual disorders of modernity. Most famously it saw the publication of Eric Voegelin's 1951 Charles L. Walgreen lectures, delivered at the University of Chicago, as *The New Science of Politics*. This proved to be Voegelin's most widely noted book and central to its thesis was the argument that the political culture developed in the West since the period of the high middle ages was marked by a disordering phenomenon, modern gnosticism, that, by reason of the claim of its more or less self-aware devotees to a form of salvational knowledge capable of delivering mankind from the otherwise knowable constraints of political existence, bore a marked affinity and stood to some degree in historical continuity with the world denying heresies condemned by the Church fathers and such Neo-Platonists as Plotinus as Gnosticism. This was a theme to which Voegelin was to return in later writings, notably his inaugural lecture "Science, Politics and Gnosticism", delivered in Munich in November 1958, and the article "Ersatz Religion" which appeared in the