

"In-Between' Culture and Meaning: Voegelin, Bhabha, and the Intervention of the Political"

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Introduction

The emergence of "posts" in political philosophy (postmodern; postcolonial) in the last quarter of the last century suggests not a willful attempt to supplant elder ancient (e.g., virtue) and modern (e.g., property, self-governance) categories, but is better read as a suggestion that those categories have hardened and no longer serve as comprehensive conceptions of matters political. Under the weight of the "post" critiques, the assumed hegemony of western symbolizations has been destabilized and forced to rethink itself (Henningsen 2000; Radhakrishnan 1993). Despite the predictable backlash, however, the more perceptive of the "post" thinkers realize that the elder categories cannot be wished away nor should they be. In fact, postcolonial scholars like Homi K. Bhabha (1994) suggest that coming to grips with the transitive nature of our symbols may well be the real challenge for contemporary political theory. Politics as a rough-and-tumble competition of symbol manipulation in which the acquisition and maintenance of power are the twin objects is even more problematic when cultural understandings are not shared. The check on this Machiavellian conception of politics is what Voegelin (1990b; 1968) among others terms the search for meaning. This search that is always seeking demands we take seriously symbols that move between and among divergent traditions and circumstances. The symbol "in-between" and its corollary "openness" have been essential parts of our political discourse, persisting even as the *lingua franca* accommodates and is challenged by non-Western voices and categories.

This essay interrogates the usage of these symbols in two apparently divergent voices: the modernist *cum* ancient voice of Eric Voegelin and the postcolonial *cum* postmodern voice of Homi Bhabha. Voegelin's general thesis in *Order and History* (1956-87) is that human participation in reality has to be understood in terms of "leaps in being" that signify the authentic search for truth. Remaining open to the divine ground of being anchors us in the knowledge of our place in the Platonic *metaxy*, a space in-between the tensions of human existence expressed symbolically as tensions between life/death, order/disorder, truth/untruth, time/timelessness, etc. Yet, despite his commitment to the ancients, Voegelin's use of the term "gnostic" engages Hegel and Marx in their own terms, finally settling on ideological characterizations like "sorcery" to describe their work (1987; 1968). The category "gnostic" marks a limit in Voegelin's search and has the potential to do an injustice to his initial constructive vision. What is nonetheless interesting in Voegelin is his commitment to the symbol "in-between" which suggests not only an ontological and philosophical position, but also a place for necessary political exchange. It is on this latter impulse that postcolonial theorists like Bhabha, attending to the margins of cultural discourse, preserve the symbol even as they rethink the categories of the modern Western discourse on which Voegelin's analyses rely (Radhakrishnan 1993). Bhabha witnesses the ongoing struggle for meaning but not in terms of the dangerous simplifications of ideologies. He focuses instead on the power of discourse(s), particularly at the point of their interactions. Bhabha draws on the critical distinction between symbols and signs to show how cultural symbols are changed from the margins inward. Symbols, and this is the way in which Voegelin uses the term, point to values transcending a particular culture. Bhabha's postcolonial analysis works from the recognition that most of what we universalize into symbols are signs, that is, culturally self-referential marks of value. Signs are valuable as conduits of understanding, but they are also limited, static representations not easily communicable across experiences in time or space. Bhabha engages Western symbols as signs of cultural preferences not to be

dismissed as such, but to be drawn into conversation with those of other symbolic systems.

The tension between symbols and signs is critical to both thinkers because, in one way or another, they mark the values, the preferences, the development of cultures through, among other things, text and language. The contemporary willingness to engage literature and literary theory as political and philosophical documents-both Voegelin and Bhabha share this willingness- suggests the importance of cultural symbols to political discourse. The value of symbols may be found in the way they provide continuity in time and help justify specific forms of managing space, that is, they meld the temporal and spatial dimensions of human political existence. We see culture developing over time and, as Voegelin puts it, we can see the differentiation of cultural symbols only by attending to time as movement. But Voegelin posits the source of our political being out of time, concerning himself with the *philosophical* verticality of human existence, anchoring it in our obligation to attend to the divine ground of being, Bhabha embraces a fluid conception of time and reintroduces a more overtly *political* concern with the spatial dimension of politics, that is, with the horizontal relationships between and among cultures. Signs as symbols are the coin of these relationships. His is a pluralistic view wherein the desire for hybridity governs cultural contact, transforming cultures and their symbols. As in Voegelin's thought, it is the accommodating complexity of the symbol in-between that allows Bhabha to write of things political in terms of cultural encounters and hybridity. "Minority discourse," argues Bhabha, "sets the act of emergence in the antagonistic *in-between* of image and sign, the accumulative and the adjunct, presence and proxy" (1994, xxx)

Voegelin: The Verticality of the In-Between

Writing at the precise moment the Western symbol system was beginning to collapse (Jardine 1995) under the weight of its own adventures (philosophical, technological,

colonial), Voegelin works from within the tradition in an effort to save it from its self. He seeks a productive, creative synthesis which will salvage the meaning of Western symbolizations without turning them into the fetish objects of ideology. He uses the term "equivalence" in his discussion of symbols to signify a cross-contextual sameness in symbol-engendering experiences. It is this concern with sameness across symbolizations, I will argue, that links his analysis to that of someone like Bhabha. In "Equivalences of Experience and Symbolization in History" (1990a), Voegelin's philosophy of history posits a series of equivalences, which, as an ever expanding intelligible whole, tell the tale of man's representative participation in "the divine drama of truth becoming luminous" (133). Philosophers are inheritors of a "field of experiences and symbols" which is "neither an object to be observed from the outside, nor does it present the same appearance to everybody" (116). The philosopher's understanding of these symbols is either determined by his "openness toward reality" or "deformed by his uncritical acceptance of beliefs which obscure the reality of immediate experience" (116). The modern philosopher's vantage point has been skewed by the emergence of an "existential faith" in the symbolisms engendered by noetic and pneumatic experiences which dried up into a "doctrinal belief" in a scientific system to end all systems. "The doctrinaire theology and metaphysics of the eighteenth century," writes Voegelin, "were succeeded by the doctrinaire ideologies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; an older type of fundamentalist doctrine was followed by a new fundamentalism" (118). As fundamentalism confronted fundamentalism, we slipped, he asserts, into the "age" of modern dogmatomachy. Consequently, the contemporary philosopher must resist succumbing to the pressure of this "age" determined as it is by the emergence of ideologies and which is, therefore, "badly deficient in consciousness and order of intellect-the social and historical field of deformed existence, which having slipped from the control of consciousness, tends to usurp the ordering authority of existence that is properly the function of the intellect" (119). The very proclamation of an "age" (of Reason, of

Revolution, etc.) demonstrates, Voegelin suggests, the hubristic tendency of modern political philosophers to substitute systems for the authentic search for order.

The loss of consciousness and intellect symptomatic of this "age" is the direct result of our inattention to the in-betweenness of our existence. The critical loss occurs when we, Voegelin writes, "hypostatize the poles of the tension [of our in-between existence] as independent entities" and thus "destroy the reality of existence as it has been experienced by the creators of the tensional symbolisms" (120). When answers are simplified for philosophical or political expediency we have ceased attending to the questions, that is, to the tensions endemic to our experiences as human beings. Our symbols are hardened into tools, resume their status as mere signs and history becomes, if I may manipulate Voltaire, "tricks we play upon the [experiences] of the dead." Avoiding this hypostasy requires that human beings remain mindful of their participation and place in the process of reality. Voegelin argues that the

Cognition of participation, as it is not directed toward an object of the external world, becomes a luminosity in reality itself and consequently, the knower and the known move into the position of tensional poles in a consciousness that we call luminous as far as it engenders the symbols which express the experience of its own structure. (121)

For Voegelin, these symbols make up man's philosophical inheritance and suffice until they no longer adequately express man's experience of the process of reality. The process must be a profoundly self-reflective one. We must understand that the "new" symbol discerned through this self-reflective process is "recognizably related to a less reflected experience of participation and its less differentiated symbolization; and the propositions engendered by the effort are recognizably equivalents of the symbols which had been found unsatisfactory and whose want of differentiation had motivated the effort of reflection" (121). These newly differentiated propositions do not render

older ones unnecessary; the elder symbolizations of experience merely become part of the inherited historical field. The test of the truth of such differentiated propositions, Voegelin says, "will be the lack of originality in the propositions" (122).

The philosopher's openness to the process of reality is his discipline. The philosopher can allow neither the symbolizations nor the experiences they engender to harden into hypostases which would lead to the formation of a system. Voegelin defines this "openness" as a consciousness of the process revealing the depth of both the psyche and the primordial field of reality. The descent into the depth of the psyche, Voegelin writes, "will be indicated when the light of truth has dimmed and its symbols are losing their credibility; when the night is sinking on the symbols that they have had their day, one must return to the night of the depth that is luminous with truth to the man who is willing to seek for it" (125). At the same time, the "primordial field of reality is the community of God and man, world and society; the exploration of this field is concerned with the true nature of the partners in community and the relations between them; the sequence in time of the verities found in the historical field of equivalent experiences and symbols" (126). Each instance reveals an awareness of a depth: the psyche below consciousness and the Cosmos below the primordial field. The psyche of man is linked "in trust" with the depth of the Cosmos. The descent into the depth results in the recognition of the search into that depth which, in turn, reveals that there is "neither an autonomous conscious nor an autonomous depth, but only a consciousness in continuity with its own depth." (129)

Voegelin's insight into the sameness represented by this consciousness existent in "continuity with its own depth" has implications for history, or more specifically, for our historical perspective. "The process," argues Voegelin, "has a past only to the consciousness of its presence, i.e., at the point where a new truth is released from the depth of the psyche and sets itself off against older truth that has emerged from the

same depth" (129). The symbols of an historical field and equivalences among its phenomena are human beings' attempt to articulate an emergent truth positing itself as equivalent but superior to an elder, less differentiated truth. The constant in the process of reality is that, Voegelin writes, "the experience [i.e., the articulation of an emergent truth] is experienced as wholly present to itself" (131). Voegelin can thus define equivalence as the point of confrontation for the two symbolisms [i.e., the emergent truth and the elder truth] in the presence of the process. History, for Voegelin, emerges as the symbol of these confrontations in the presence of the process of reality. The philosopher stands, in temporal terms, in a present between past and future open to presence of the eternal.

Statements like "the test of the truth will be in the lack of originality in the propositions" properly locates Voegelin in his own tradition. He can afford such assertions because his faith in a unity of being that the tradition has explored undergirds his own work and, he believes, our very existence. "The trust in the Cosmos and its depth is the source of the premises," he writes, "that we accept as the context of meaning for our concrete engagement in the search of truth" (133). At the same time, there is something radical in his acknowledgment that symbols have their day and when their light dims we must return to the night of the depth (Heilke 1994) because it suggests the very possibility of that Bhabha embraces in his own work. To argue that an "emergent truth" will posit itself as equivalent but superior to an older one is to leave open the possibility that the newer truth might emerge from outside the currently accepted (e.g., Western) field of symbolizations. In fact, opening oneself up to the depth may well mean having to quiet the often distracting noise of accepted truths. The danger inherent in this radical movement is that the carrier of the newer truth, by his or her discovery, opens the search to hypostatization, that is, to the vagaries of politics as power. "Behind every equivalent symbol in the historical field," Voegelin says, "stands the man who has engendered it in the course of his search as

representative of a truth that is more than equivalent" (Voegelin 1994b, 133). History, for Voegelin, becomes a series of equivalences in which truths differentiate themselves from elder concretized others. What cannot be lost in the philosophical search, however, is that this differentiation is likely to be deeply political. In the political arena, truths-differentiated or not-are reinforced by cultural and other more martial technologies. Sometimes, the newer truth is the one most differentiated, but this is not necessarily the case. For the other side of Voegelin's methodological coin is that history is also the story of *failed* challenges to older truths in which those challenges are revealed as hypostases. The failure of a truth, however, does not mark the extent or limit of its influence for that philosophical failure is may well be masked by access to technological or other resources. Voegelin knows that the intervention of politics into the search for order closes us off from both the relative depth of our own experiences and from experiential insights engendered by different cultures through different methodologies. The everyday urgencies of politics may demand a philosophical closure which is utterly at odds with the openness of the in-between. Voegelin tries to insulate the search from politics, but can only do so by resorting to a faith. "The search that renders no more than equivalent truth," he writes, "rests ultimately on the faith that, by engaging in it, man participates representatively in the divine drama of truth becoming luminous" (133).

Voegelin, through his philosophy of history, is concerned primarily with cultural symbols across time. The political philosopher seeks the presence of an openness to the divine ground of being in the symbolic articulations of others' experiences in order to make connections (and judgments) across time. We stand in a present unfolding in the presence of eternity. The absence of these presences marks the philosophical crisis of Voegelin's time and this diagnosis forces his use of the category "gnostic." A politics that claims truth for itself in some final or complete sense, Voegelin argues in *The New Science of Politics* (1987) and elsewhere, is ideological, gnostic (Voegelin

1968; 1987), a function of sorcery (1990), etc. His vertical conception of the in-between (e.g., between the presence of the divine and the ugliness of politics) brings with it a corresponding obligation to attend to the past to discern equivalences of experience and their articulations. Yet when confronting the modern impulse to construct systems, Voegelin is drawn out of the tension and into the bipolar political landscape of his present. Ideological constructions, by laying claim to the truth, force their opponents to deny rather than negotiate them. This denial necessarily takes the form of a negation, the ideological practice *par excellence*. While Voegelin has not constructed an ideology, he has been dragged into ideological struggles it seems he can escape only by either embracing the methodology of ideology-using a philosophical term Agnosticism@ to negate rather than negotiate-or turning his back on politics altogether.

Through his use of the symbol of the in-between, Voegelin seeks a third way, suggesting a value in his work beyond the press of his immediate philosophical and political circumstances. The symbol of the in-between, suggesting persistence, negotiation, and movement in the realm of the political, makes valuable methodological demands of the political philosopher. The in-between signifies that fluid, necessarily incomplete understandings should be discerned and understood to play off of and inform one another. Voegelin's emphasis on the vertical dimension of the in-between (*metaxy*) suggests that discerning authentic from inauthentic experiences is a dangerous game and so he emphasizes the lack of originality in these insights. We must, as he proposes to do in *Order and History*, take experiences as they are and feel obligated to understand them to the degree we are able, which is to say, never finally. The corollary symbol "openness" requires the presence of a philosophical discipline that comes from a sense of one's own strength. A functional politics, our concern is political philosophy, requires an openness not only to the "divine ground of being" but also to cultural experiences of which we have no

experience. Voegelin's caution against "deformations" is well-intended, but, as we will see from Bhabha's analysis, the cultural and political power embodied in our symbols means culpability in generating the "deformed" experiences of others. Forgetting their relativity to the truths they claim may also lead to deformed perceptions of ourselves as preserved in the tension to the divine ground even as we acquiesce in injustice.

Bhabha: The Horizontality of the In-Between

Voegelin's targets-various ideologies-are mostly Western constructs and their importance-to themselves, to Voegelin, to us-reflects assumptions about their universal application. From his postcolonial perspective, Bhabha measures and takes seriously emergent non-Western responses to these apparently hegemonic conceptions. His work marks, he argues, "a shift of attention from the political as pedagogical, ideological practice to politics as the stressed necessity of everyday life" (1994, 15). The stressed necessities of everyday life put to the lie the relevance and universal applicability of ideologies (Giroux and Giroux, 1999). No longer willing to accept the universal application of Western ideologies, Bhabha also will not take the confrontation between ideologies as the most interesting problem in political philosophy. Ideological claims to universality, his analysis suggests, have been displaced by the confrontations and interactions with cultures formerly alien and colonized. These interactions are not the zero-sum conflicts of ideological clashes, but rather an opportunity to, as Leela Gandhi (1998) puts it, re-member the colonial past to make it more approachable. The data for that re-membering are the experiences articulated in our symbolic systems. When these meet, when the hegemon is confronted by that over which it no longer rules, cultural differences emerge which must be articulated and negotiated (cf. Phillips 1998). Assumptions about the relevance, about the authority of particular

symbols must now be negotiated where cultural meanings overlap, that is where neither holds sway. "The contribution of negotiation," Bhabha writes, "is to display the 'in-between' " (1994, 29).

Time and the appeal to tradition as a strategy of power and authority are critical to Bhabha's analysis. The unity that Voegelin seeks (and to his credit never finds for long) is the intellectual attempt to tame the fluidity of human political existence using stable generalities and symbols. Colonialism was the physical imposition of a western unity that, for all its strength and subtlety, could not eradicate, indeed, finally helped generate the sources of resistance that eventually emerged as hybrid cultures. But postcolonial claims of new pure national identities (ala Fanon, etc.) failed to recognize the permanent effect of the western presence on both the colonized and the colonizer. Thus, Bhabha recognizes the need for theory on a different order. Theory must resist explaining everything using cultural signs as universal symbols with settled understandings. Now, Bhabha suggests, theory must meet politics and, functioning as critique open up a space of translation between competing cultural meanings.

The challenge lies in conceiving of the time of political action and understanding as opening up a space that can accept and regulate the differential structure of the moment of intervention *without rushing to produce a unity of the social antagonism or contradiction. This is a sign that history is happening*-within the pages of theory, within the systems and structures we construct to figure the passage of the historical. (25; my emphasis)

Our cultural symbols suggest unity-a functioning politics seems to demand it-but that unity breaks down on borders (physical, philosophical, etc.) where it is confronted with the unity of the Other's symbols: "The problem of cultural interaction emerges only at the signifiatory boundaries of cultures," Bhabha writes, "where meanings and values are misread or signs are misappropriated" (34). The colonial order violated the

signs of the Other by translating them into the categories of Western ideological systems. Voegelin amply demonstrates that these ideological systems are, themselves, replete with hypostasizations of important cultural symbols. There is a double consciousness to these misappropriations and misreadings in that the important signposts of both self and other are being transformed by their forced interaction. Hegemonic conceptions defend themselves in terms of the past, assuming an authority delegitimated by the countering claims of postcoloniality. But these claims out of time undermine themselves in what Bhabha calls their transparency: their self-justifications reveal that "the action of the distribution and arrangement of differential spaces, positions, knowledges, in relation to each other, [are] relative to a discriminatory, not inherent sense of order" (109).

In the wake of the breakdown of the colonialist order, and, one might add the "simple" Cold War dualism that emerged alongside it, the number and sources of important cultural symbols has multiplied. The problem in sorting out the differences among cultural symbols, Bhabha argues, is "how, in signifying the present, something comes to be repeated, relocated and translated in the name of tradition, in the guise of a pastness that is not necessarily a faithful sign of historical memory but a strategy of representing authority in terms of the artifice of the archaic" (35). Like Voegelin, Bhabha takes cultural symbols seriously, but he also recognizes that bringing the categories and authority of the past into the present means substantiating power relationships which are no longer enforceable as legitimate. Interpreting transformed relationships among culturally diverse symbols requires an extraordinary willingness on all sides to let go of their authority.

The pact of interpretation is never simply an act of communication between the I and the You designated in the statement. The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both

the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot 'in itself' be conscious. (36)

Bhabha describes this Third Space-the "in-between" manifest-as a discursive space of demystification in which "the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity" and in which "even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (37). While cultural symbols stabilize a political environment, locating us in our world, any adventure of cultural confrontation (e.g., colonialism) puts the certainty and universalizability of cultural symbols at risk. Even as the adventurer finds ways to create and assume authority by undermining then supplanting native symbolic systems, otherness persists as a double presence-of both colonizer and colonized-as "a pressure, and a presence that acts constantly, if unevenly, along the entire boundary of authorization..." (109). The persistent, inevitable doubleness Bhabha identifies suggests what Ashis Nandy describes as the violent intimacy of any colonial situation. Once cultures engage each other, a co-dependence develops which alters both permanently and links them together in ways not easily undone.

The cultural encounter, then, is not simply a question of the imposition of one set of cultural meanings on territory formerly home to another set. The act of imposition, through military action, economic influence, education, etc. requires translation, that is, a hardening of those symbols into tools which can be used in overcoming the native culture and governing the population they formerly held together. The hardening of symbols, as Voegelin puts it, becomes part of what it means to govern according to our symbols. In any concrete political situation, cultural symbols are given meanings which are subsumed in political exigency. To the degree that this is so, Bhabha recognizes politics as involving the inevitable double displacement of symbolic meanings. The displacement is two-fold through what he calls *hybridity*

which is "the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects...that turn(s) the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power" (112). Colonial values come to be seen as coequal with the violence that imposes them and, as the native's cultural symbols are transformed, so too are the colonizer's symbols. For instance, "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" mean one thing for the French and quite another for Algerian Arabs. Once symbols require force in order to govern, their value as symbols asserted as universals is revealed as a simple but powerful set of local/alien discernments, preferences, and "discriminations" binding only when enforced by some kind of coercion (physical, cultural, etc.). Once identified with the coercive needs of "orderly" politics, symbols and the truths they claim to represent generate their own resistance.

Political use of symbols shuts off discussions of meaning re-creating them as what Bhabha calls "empty presences of strategic devices" (112). The process empties the symbols of any meaning beyond their status as masks for coercive political action. But Bhabha wishes to reconceive the postcolonial cultural encounter as a space of negotiation—a reframing of political conflict in recognition that common or historical understandings have been undermined by the cultural encounter and that which they symbolized must be recreated in new, negotiated and negotiable terms. To this end, we must understand that it is not, he argues, that cultural differences are the source of conflict. The conflict is, rather, the "*effect* of discriminatory practices—the production of cultural *differentiation* as signs of authority" (114). The emergence of a desire for hybridity (Fludernik 1998; Easthope 1998) resists the unity of the colonial presence, altering it instead into what Bhabha calls a "metonymy of presence." In the metonymy of presence, the hybrid object "retains the actual semblance of the authoritative symbol but revalues its presence by resisting it as the signifier" (Bhabha 1994, 115) of the unity. The meaning of the symbol is transformed or appropriated by the "native" presence until it is forced to govern that which it can no longer represent. In other

words, in the colonial situation, symbols are invariably destabilized by the force of hybridity:

Such a reading of the hybridity of colonial authority profoundly unsettles the demand that figures at the centre of the originary myth of colonialist power. It is the demand [of colonial authority] that the space it occupies be unbounded, its reality *coincident* with the emergence of an imperialist narrative and history, its discourse *non-dialogic*, its enunciation *unitary*, unmarked by the trace of difference. It is a demand that is recognizable in a range of justificatory Western 'civil' discourses... (115)

What Bhabha seeks is a recognition that hybridity is a tendency in the confrontation of cultures and not a conscious strategy. Indeed, his work suggests that as we negotiate with those who work from different ontologies, epistemologies, etc., that prior or present contact generates its own conditions which have ceased to be-if they ever really were-articulable by a single set of symbols. The fluidity of the hybrid "is finally uncontainable because it breaks down the symmetry and duality of self/other, inside/outside" (116). In Bhabha's work, then, we are in-between ourselves and the other, but-as in Voegelin-this is an intensely creative and difficult place to be. We are not paralyzed by our in-betweenness, but checked in our certainties and forced to negotiate our symbols, rather than impose our signs as universals. Negotiation *sans* final authority becomes the basis for cultural interactions and cross-cultural understandings.

Bhabha takes seriously-in a way the Voegelin of *Order and History* and *the History of Ideas* (Henningsen 2000) does-extra-Western experiences and positionalities. He writes with a keen sensibility, ala Foucault, that the understandings that Voegelin properly values bring with them assumptions of power. Bhabha argues that we should confront the power dimensions of our symbolic language honestly to communicate in a fruitful dialogic way. Writing as a postcolonial (and post Cold War) thinker, Bhabha

must be concerned with cultures across space and is, therefore, more overtly concerned with the politics of the border. Spinning our symbolic language works internally-where signs may be taken as symbols-but where cultures meet and interact cultural differences must be respected and we should abandon the universalist impulse that cultural meanings are or should be made to be all the same. Bhabha's analysis demonstrates that the attempt to take cultural symbols in their own terms requires that we recognize that *any act of cultural translation is an act of power and bound to meet resistance* and will, therefore, require negotiation on the level of cultural meanings. These overtly political concerns make Bhabha's a decidedly horizontal conception of the in-between.

Conclusion

Bhabha's work addresses itself to some of the same issues as Voegelin's and I think it would be a mistake-indeed this is what I am arguing-to see their analyses as mutually exclusive. Bhabha is thinking in categories that Voegelin cannot afford to indulge, even were he motivated to do so. By the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, Bhabha recognizes that the tensions in political reality are no longer exclusively Western and, therefore, they are not so starkly polar. While conceding symbolic sovereignty over interiors, Bhabha shifts the discussion to borders where meanings are much less authoritative. To produce fruitful outcomes, these meanings and their symbols must be negotiated at the point of contact between diverse cultures. They can no longer be "resolved" through action based on the elder colonial model, that is, by asserting-via whatever means-the superiority (e.g., the "differentiated" character) of one set of symbols or experiences over another. We can no longer afford to ignore the doubleness in our signs/symbols: (1) they are what we say they signify; and (2) we articulate ourselves in space and in time by identifying and asserting the meaning of the symbol. Voegelin's commitment to philosophical openness, it seems, allows for

the recognition of this doubleness. Doubleness would seem to be the very essence of what it means to be in the *metaxy*. Bhabha suggests that the consciousness of this doubleness must be present at the point of cultural interactions and the very stuff of negotiation. Naming what we cannot know is an act of power-Voegelin identifies ideologies as a function of this hubristic tendency-but the effect, Bhabha shows us, is reciprocal and results in the generation of hybrids over which we have little or no control. Bhabha recognizes the critical roles hybrids play in the outcomes of cultural negotiations. What negotiable symbols lack in certainties regarding eternal permanence, they add to politics by forcing a constant dialogue on their meaning and a resistance to hypostatization in the name of political expediency.

"The philosopher's way is the way up toward the light," Voegelin writes, "not the way down into the cave" (1990, 119). But Voegelin knows his Plato-Socrates and knows full well that the way of the *political* philosopher takes him back down into the cave where he teaches, learns, and finally dies. While Voegelin focuses on the verticality of the in-between, on our position between the temporal and the eternal, his philosophical commitment to an openness to equivalent experiences across time easily translates into a concern with such equivalences across space. Correspondingly, Bhabha's emphasis on the horizontal dimension of the in-between, on the contact between symbol systems across space and in time, suggests the practice of philosophical openness has a place in political discussions between cultures and suggests one way of making that philosophical openness politically viable. The task is to communicate the insights of philosophy in such a way that they may be made to inform politics, that is, to bring the vertical to bear on the horizontal and to take neither as the sum total of human political existence, if we take the political seriously.

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