

Philosophical Anthropology:

Voegelin's debt to Max Scheler

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❖In no other period of human knowledge man has ever become more problematic to himself than in our days. We have a scientific, a philosophical, and a theological anthropology that know nothing of each other. Therefore we no longer possess any clear consistent idea of man. The ever growing multiplicity of the particular sciences that are engaged in the study of man has much more confused and obscured than elucidate our concept of man❖1 [1] .

Scheler's words immediately plunge the reader into a state of crisis, a state of difficulty that torments Voegelin as well; a crisis in the knowledge man has of himself.

Even though Scheler was twenty-seven years older than Voegelin both of them had witnessed a radical cultural, social and political change in the intellectual context that had crossed German intellectual life, in particular, and European in general after the First World War. The precarious situation of human beings reawakened the search for a foundation of spiritual life in reality and led several intellectuals to try to reorganize the knowledge about human existence, after the incredible flourishing of positivistic science that had marked the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Figures like Max Scheler were part of this challenge and generations of young scholars like Eric Voegelin were conditioned, on one hand, by the cultural environment that included various tendencies like French vitalism, scientific positivism, Nietzschean radicalism,

1 [1] M. Scheler, *Man's place in nature*, Boston , Beacon Press, 1961, p.128.

phenomenology, idealism, Freudianism... and on the other hand, by a longing for a new "science of man" in society and in history.

The great development of science had uncovered manifold different aspects of man: biological, psychological, linguistic, social, economic and cultural. This gave rise to the supposition that the method of natural science has an intrinsic value of its own and thus all other sciences in the external world would reach the desired completeness and universal validity, if they followed its method. In reality this supposition had only deepened the study of single sections of a whole, the analysis of determined "slices" of the complex reality of man. Thus, it was felt necessary to consider a human being as a whole, synthesizing, harmonizing and integrating the results of scientific investigation to unite all the manifold aspects and obtain a new image of man. The specificity of philosophical anthropology derives from this supposition: from the necessity to explore the inner and profound part of man. Max Scheler, who is considered the founder of this discipline, in an essay, *Man and History*, first published in 1926, defines philosophical anthropology in this way: ♦ a basic science which investigates the essence and essential constitution of man, his relationship to the realms of nature (organic, plant and animal life) as well as to the source of all things, man's metaphysical origin as well as his physical, psychic and spiritual origins in the world, the forces and powers which move man and which he moves, the fundamental trends and laws of his biological, psychic, cultural and social evolution, among with their essential capabilities and realities♦2 [2] . Thus, philosophical anthropology was born, on the one hand, from a need to consider the human being as a whole, as a unit of meaning and on the other hand from finding itself at the crossroads between philosophy, natural science and the

2 [2] M. Scheler, *Philosophical Perspectives*, Boston , Beacon Press, 1958, p. 65.

science of man, it wants to reelaborate a theory that would help the human being to understand himself better and identify the characteristic traits of his existence.

Starting from the diffuse sense of unease and recession that followed the end of the First World War, which swept away all the certainties deriving from the solidity of the organism, social traditions and consolidated political forms, once again man began to question himself about the true sense of his existence. Thus, Scheler's philosophical anthropology asks itself what is man, his nature, his place in the world. It examines this via a stringent and thorough comparison between man and animal, keeping in mind that man has always created images to understand himself (*homo religiosus, homo sapiens, homo faber, homo dionysiacus, homo creator*) in the full knowledge that he will never be able to reach a definite answer, driven by the need to act, to fulfil himself and to make himself complete through his own work. Thus, a new theory created by Scheler about the human being was born. The human being is seen as a man who experiments and understands himself in his own world and asks himself questions about life. Scheler's investigation does not eliminate the self-understanding that man has of himself. In fact, it is not possible for man to think about himself in an abstract way. He has to realize that he is part of a concrete existence, to experience the world from his own level of understanding. Therefore, Scheler founded a new idea of man, a new science of man which was useful for Voegelin in eliminating the logical-conceptual aspects that considered it possible to elaborate perfect models, from which one could derive with mathematical certainty the right order of history. Philosophical anthropology is the beginning of the Voegelinian theory of a new political science that opens itself towards the originary dimensions of life, a position that cannot be determined in an aprioristic way or through, for example, the neo-kantian methodology or the kelsenian logic of legal norms, the *Normologik*.

In the development of his theory, Voegelin elaborated his own philosophical anthropology on the basis of classical philosophy, but it was Scheler who provided him with the necessary speculative stimulus. The best known work of Max Scheler is *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos* (1928): a text which is at times difficult to interpret and represents a manifesto of his thought. However, it would be wrong to think of *Die Stellung* as the only work which embodies the Schelerian philosophical anthropology. The intention of the author was to anticipate only some aspects of a much vaster work, though it was never published. Moreover, in this work some of the basic concepts already developed in other works are absent: the concept of love as the fundamental spiritual act which opens man's eyes to the higher values, the *ordo amoris* as the dynamic core of the scale of values, Schelling's philosophy of nature, Nietzsche's philosophy, the references to important themes of the Platonic dialogues, such as the concepts of *phronesis*, *eros*, *kalon*, *psyche*. An adequate understanding of *Die Stellung* automatically presupposes the knowledge of these themes which were certainly known and examined by Voegelin. Voegelin was aware of the wide area Scheler dedicated to metaphysics and to the relationship between metaphysics and religion. They are topics rightly considered the "high" frontiers of philosophical anthropology: a meta-anthropology which concentrates on the metaphysical dimension implicit in man's openness to the world and above all on the bond connecting man and God. The political phenomenon, for Voegelin, must be examined starting from human nature, because political order is the result of a continuous attempt on the part of man to attune himself to the order of Being in which he knows he is a participant. So, Voegelin's political science does not exclude, but rather incorporates a theory of man which does not consider the mere physical and finite dimension of man, but aims at penetrating the transcendent and spiritual character of human existence. Indeed, as Scheler claims: ♦Man is a thing so broad, variegated and diverse that all

definitions turn out a little too concise. He has too many ends³ [3] . Thus, any theory of political order must also indicate the specific nature of human existence: man is a world open being.

In the 1930s Voegelin took into consideration Scheler's works in writing some essays:

Herrschaftslehre (The Theory of Governance), an essay elaborated between 1930 and 1932; then in 1933, *Rasse und Staat* and *Die Rassenidee in der Geistesgeschichte von Ray bis Carus*, two volumes dealing with the problem of race.

In Voegelin's unfinished *Theory of Governance* his study of Scheler takes place in the context of a twofold philosophical reflection: the idea of the person and the concept of meditation.

Unfortunately in the typescript that has survived, the pages dedicated to Scheler's theory of the person have not been found. However, it is reasonable to think that the study carried out by Voegelin on Scheler's concept of person provided the author with useful and meaningful theoretical paradigms in the elaboration of a political science open to transcendence.

In both *Des Formalismus in der Ethik und die Materiale Wertethik* (1913-1916) and in *Vom Ewigen im Menschen* (1921) Scheler elaborates in a systematic and widespread manner a particularly articulated philosophy of the person that represents one of the main problems of all Schelerian philosophy. It would be difficult to summarise it here, but the characteristics that indicate a common horizon of investigation for Voegelin and Scheler can be underlined. It is rather difficult to understand what Scheler means by "person"; his formulations are, in fact, difficult to interpret and he himself states that language is not enough to describe the being of the

3 [3] M. Scheler, *The Idea of Man*, *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 9, October 1978.

person. However, the author has tried hard to look into such an idea starting from "negative characterizations" that derives from the attributes the person has and excludes the qualities he does not have. This corresponds to the needs of the phenomenological method laying the foundation on the intuition of the being of the person after having removed all obstacles from him. For Scheler, the person is not objectivable, because he cannot be treated as a thing; he isn't a substance because the author refuses any conception that tends to transform the person in an object. Moreover, it is neither the "I think" nor the reason especially the kantian transcendental reason. In fact, Scheler bitterly criticizes Kant for having transformed the person into a logical object. So, what is the person for Scheler? The answer cannot be reached through knowledge, but only through the achievement of action or rather pure "actuality" that constructs a person's existence solely by the way he acts: the person must be considered as a concrete individual, a self-sufficient entity, a foundation of intentional acts. Moreover, the person is involved in each of the acts he performs, permeating those acts with a unique character. Thus, he is the unity of acts of different nature and it is exactly such diversity that is essential for the being of the person. The sphere of the person is found in every action and the person experiences this exclusively as act-pursuing and act-performing being: ◆Person is the concrete self-essential unity of the being of acts of different nature, which itself precedes all essential difference of acts (especially the difference of external and internal willing, external and internal feeling, loving, hating etc.)◆4 [4] . The person defined in this way varies and is differentiated through his actions without becoming exhausted by anyone of these acts. This means that no science, positivistically considered, can deal with the concept of the person, because his sphere of action is trans-spatial,

4 [4] M. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, Evanston , Northwestern University Press, 1973, p. 580.

trans-temporal and trans-causal. Moreover, Scheler underlines how every person is unique also when carrying out the same type of action. This is because the differences between people cannot be deduced from empirical factors, since actions do not originate in the physical being. So, the identity of the person cannot be a mere sum of actions or a mosaic of acts, but the sphere of the person exists through acts and varies within the quantitative, qualitative multiplicity of all possible acts. In this uniqueness and unity of the person Scheler seems to progressively lead us towards a panorama of human expression that goes beyond what can be traced by logic or natural science. The principle of the person is the spirit. One could also say that for Scheler the sphere of the person and the sphere of the spirit coincide. In fact, the author connotes the entire sphere of actions with the term spirit. The person is the seat of the spirit and the spirit is the basis by which man is possessed of a spatial place in reality. The spirit represents the origin of personal freedom of action and the person is the form of existence of the spirit. Spiritual actions come to life through the activities of the person and through these he overcomes the boundaries of a world that limits all other living beings. The Schelerian person exercising the superior faculty of the spirit, establishes a particular relation with nature, with his fellow beings and with God. His attitude towards nature is not aggressive, he does not consider it only as a deposit of energy of which to take advantage, but he is willing to listen and look for what is necessary to help nature to achieve its still unexpressed potential. So man, thanks to the spiritual actuality of his person, is able to achieve a unique and common world, a non-objectivable reality, which is at the same time original and primary, which presupposes the Supreme Spiritual Being. For Scheler the human being is, thus, a point of intersection, a point of transition. Man has a tendency directed towards the divine; he is a living X who by his own nature goes in search of God. This characterization of man is shared by Voegelin, who like Scheler sustains that the peculiarity of

human existence can be found not so much in natural characteristics but in man's participation in a reality which is much bigger than it seems, which is directed towards the foundation of Being. For Voegelin, man lives in a state of tension directed towards the origin of existence, in the dimension of *metaxy*: the position of mutual participation between the human and the divine. In history there are some apertures through which it is possible to reach the divine. This experience of transcendence which is found in man and which characterizes man himself, manifests itself in the human being. What is Voegelin's *leap-in being* if not a revelation, a realization of the Ground of Being?

In explaining his theory of the person and in determining the reality of the human person as the half way point between God and man, Scheler refers to the thoughts of Saint Augustine . Scheler and Voegelin seem to be linked by Augustinian thinking on a double track. On one hand, the method of the *via negationis* or negative philosophy and on the other the concept of meditation and religious act. The procedure of the *via negationis* adopted by Scheler for his phenomenological method and inspired by Plotino, reveals an important, common point of view with Voegelin who in *Herrschaftslehre* explains how the *via negationis* is the rejection of all empirical levels of being which leads to the highest level of being⁵ [5] . The parallelism of Voegelin and Scheler is also developed around the concept of meditation/religious act. The concept of meditation has a central role in the Voegelinian philosophy. For the author, in fact, it is the action through which the spirit reaches the opening to the foundation of being of the human person. The meditative route leads to God and to the understanding of the being of the

5 [5] E. Voegelin, *The Theory of Governance and Others Miscellaneous Papers*, CW vol. 32, Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 2003, p. 227.

human who can be characterized by his openness to a transcendent being, by his being a frontier between the world, with its being and becoming and a superworld [] The person is the experience of the limits demarcating world-immanent finiteness from transcendence infinite⁶ [6] . Voegelin's quotation makes us think of Scheler's idea of the person. Contrary to the Augustinian vision that analyses the person obliquely in the question of the dualism between *creator* and *creatura* [] from the bottom, the corporeal, to the summit of the soul, Scheler (and modern philosophers) proceeds from the outward, the corporeal, as the outside of the person, to the most inward and intimate of the person⁷ [7] .

We can ask ourselves if Scheler's personalism can also give rise to a political philosophy. Rather than reflecting on a type of knowledge which has as its subject the organization of the coherent and stable power able to sedate a conflict, to elaborate rules for the production and distribution of resources, to justify through myths and ideologies its own existence, Scheler reflects on the relationship between the person and politics, giving us an original theory open to interpretation. Each person is an individual, but must also relate to other people and he is, thus, a member of a social body. Scheler has developed four primary types of social unity. The first is the *mass* or the *herd*, a social unity built through spontaneous and involuntary imitation of the others. This is achieved through instinctive relations founded wholly on the activities connected to senses like joy and pain. The second is the *life-community* (family, tribe or home community) which is founded on people living together where there is understanding of the other, but not in such a way that it precedes the experience of togetherness as in society. It is a community in which the

6 [6] E. Voegelin, *The Theory of Governance and Others Miscellaneous Papers*, cit., p. 236.

7 [7] Ivi, p. 237.

single member has his own vital individual experiences, but there is also a total dependence on the community. So there is no total freedom or individual responsibility. There is no judging or treaty among the members. Man is still a pawn in a "game" not a person. The third type of social unity is *society*, an artificial unity in which the relationships between men are put into practice through conscious action where everyone acts responsibly in his own interest or class interest, respecting conventions and laws. So, the experience of togetherness in societies is not original or natural, but it is formed through conscious understanding of situations, as in the constructions of treaties, contracts or constitutions. The relationships between individuals are founded not on spiritual values, but on what is pleasant and useful according to criteria of the legal equality of each individual. There is a unity of interests and solidarity, like moral loyalty in respecting agreements stipulated by individuals or groups. There is a sharp distinction between society and life-community, because in the latter there is no co-responsibility and trust, while in society what is important is individual liability and faith. Society is a form of social togetherness of adults only and hence, the sphere of the person exists in this communal form. This means that the individual is not suspended; on the contrary society exists for the sake of the individual. Society in the same way as the State includes life-community (all societies are founded on communities, society presupposes community) which regulate their relationships through an agreement to protect the interests of the individual and group. The fourth type of society is the *totality-person* (*Gesamtperson*) in which each individual is considered an autonomous, spiritual subject, but is also considered part of the community. This form started with Christianity which wished to conceal the value of the single person created by God and the community *corpus christianum*. In the totality-person each person is at the same time an individual and a member of the community. The fundamental law that regulates it, is the principle of the co-responsibility of one

for all and all for one. The main principle is that of moral solidarity, founded on what is best for the human being and the community, with its own supreme foundation in the value of the sacred and in God. In this situation, the person tries to combine harmoniously the part and the whole, the member and the community through a mutual agreement between individuals which attempts to bring out the moral values of each person: *love* illuminates our conduct, commanding and obeying, promising and keeping, worshipping and praying. This solidarity in love is the moral "a priori" by which the being of the person is expressed and through which the person and the Whole, history and the basis of every community are joined together. There are two main ways in which the community is expressed in history: *the nation*, on account of its cultural values and *the church*, on account of its religious values. The State is only the social instrument of the nation which is responsible for our rights, power and well-being; it is neither a nation nor a population, but only an organization of power in function of the people, the population and the nation. Since religion has its own autonomous values, that is the Grace for the individual and Revelation for the community, it distinguishes itself from the nation. The church does not have a cultural task, its task is to sanctify the person and this is also demonstrated by the fundamental unity of the church and the plurality of culture.

Through the characterization of these forms of association Scheler claims that it is the person and the qualities relative to him that give rise to certain forms of expression of his social life. The concept of solidarity enriches this situation on which the relationship person-community and person-society is based. For a society to remain alive it is necessary to build up a relationship of mutual trust among individuals and the attempt to do this is called "*solidarity*" by Scheler. Scheler suggests that the contract between individuals is founded on a mutual and common responsibility and solidarity and on love. The latter represents, in fact, the motion of the person

in the direction of good. So love is the point of origin of solidarity and co-responsibility that are necessary for the social life of man. Legal bonds originate through solidarity. In other words civil duty requires a personal attitude to mutual trust which cannot be found in any contract: contractualists like Hobbes and Locke are not able to reach the core of obligation which can in fact be found ♦in the solidarity obligation of the members of the community to realize their dutiful commitments to the content of the community. A so-called contract without this foundation would not be a contract, but merely a fiction♦8 [8] . When this substance is a primary and indispensable element for social relations, then ♦the unity of independent, spiritual and individual persons♦ becomes ♦an independent spiritual collective person♦9 [9] .

Such a notion of solidarity/solidarism is important for Voegelin who takes it further. Voegelinian synonyms for solidarity are the principle of *homonoia* or *likemindedness*. The idea of solidarity is the bridge between the interior order of the person and the civil order of political reality. Indeed, in the Voegelinian vision the political order is closely dependent on the order dictated by the soul: the principle of associate living can be found in *homonoia*, in ♦spiritual agreement between men; and it is possible between men only in so far as these men live in agreement with the nous, that is, the divine part in themselves♦10 [10] . Individuals come together in society because they are answering the call that initiates in their conscience and makes them create a political order. At the foundation of the community there is thus a bond that cannot simply be

8 [8] M. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, cit., p. 521.

9 [9] Ivi, p. 522.

10 [10] E. Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, CW vol. 5, Columbia and London, University of Missouri Press, 2000, p. 150.

explained by an agreement between two or more parts for regulating mutual rights and duties. For both Scheler and Voegelin it is not the contract that gives rise to society, but a conscious-spiritual bond ♦the participation in the common nous♦¹¹ [11] , that is the substance of social unity which can be considered as constantly open to the divine: ♦The order of the life community depends on homonoia, in the Aristotelian and Christian sense, that is, on the participation in the common nous♦¹² [12] .

Both Voegelin and Scheler consider spiritual dynamism, that characterizes man and history, of vital importance and both reject the contractualistic vision that reduces the complexity and richness of politics. Theories like that of Hobbes, for example, are completely insensitive to the truth of the soul and interpret the life of the spirit as an extreme manifestation of existential passions. Hobbes thinks that human life is naturally dominated by passions, with the result that no *summum bonum* can exist because political order is determined by the fear of *summum malum*, by the fear of death. The acts by which a society is born are expressed in legal terms but is the result of a psychological transfiguration of single individuals who come together to form a society.

Claiming a complexity of reality that cannot be belittled by any form of science led Voegelin and Scheler to exclude any form of dogmatism, because they were passionately looking for the truth

¹¹ [11] E. Voegelin, *Science, Politics and Gnosticism*, CW vol. 5, Columbia and London , University of Missouri Press, 2000, p. 235.

¹² [12] *Ibidem*.

which is expressed in human experience. This need led them reject any logical, cultural and racial reduction.

Voegelin and Scheler have a similar orientation as regards the problem of race. The rise of National-Socialism led Voegelin to deepen his study into the problems of the biological theory implicit in the Nazi conception of race, but also to develop a system of a theory of State that in stark opposition to the Kelsen theory takes into consideration the contingent political phenomenon of the political ideas. The problem of race gave Voegelin the chance to compile a kind of a "compendium" of anti race in stark contrast with the intentions of natural sciences to achieve a stable analytical system, which is above all universally valid. The author finds that the philosophical anthropology expressed in *Die Stellung* is useful for reaching the depth of the idea of race, that is the relationship between body, soul and mind. For Voegelin, this has a completely different meaning from the abstract scientific definition. His framework is political and it must not be confused with biological and ethnographical speculation. Social reality has nothing in common with the methods of natural science which investigates objective and general fields of evaluation and on principle acquires and accepts an unchanging, constant law. The concept of race elaborated by naturalists and modern science cannot be applied to politics and its origin does not regard only the phenomenal relations of human nature but above all the a-scientific substratum which can be penetrated through a philosophy modulated in an anthropological sense. In this theoretical background Scheler's work is an important source for Voegelin: the core of the idea of race isn't represented by biological foundations because physical differences are not sufficient to distinguish different races. Human nature is not only physical, but the combination of body-soul-mind. The theories about race which do not take such components into consideration, like the national-socialist theory, are completely groundless because they lower

the status of the body-soul-mind being to an animal category. The content of the race articulated in this way has its main referent in Scheler who in *Die Stellung* bitterly criticizes the Cartesian dualism that isolated the mind from the body. The point of view of Descartes is unacceptable for Voegelin because ♦the functions of the organism are completely of the nature of the soul; the soul is not poorly housed in some nook of the body but permeates all parts of it, down to the last fiber. Every detail of the body is a gesture of the soul♦13 [13] . Voegelin is in agreement with Scheler when he states that there cannot be a void between body and soul, but on the contrary the living body and soul must be considered as one. The unit of life is also inviolable according to Voegelin. The psycho-physical life forms a unitary whole and philosophical anthropology is the attempt to understand man in his existential concreteness. ♦Man's physical and psychological functions, which seem to be the same of those animals, are in fact structurally different from the latter; they are directed to the organizing center of the mind♦14 [14] . The mind and the soul permeate the body and mark the intellectual aspects, outward appearances and gestures. By body, we mean a mind-permeated body which also has to be investigated internally and whose shape and constitution are conditioned by the soul and the mind. Such a conception of unity between body-soul-mind gives man a transcendent and immanent character at the same time. As Voegelin asserts in *Race and State* it is a character which would be completely lost due to the fall into the total immanentization of race, caused by the Darwin and post-Darwin theories that reject any element of mystery that constitutes the essential part of human life.

13 [13] E. Voegelin, *Race and State*, CW vol. 2, Baton Rouge and London, Louisiana University Press, 1997, p. 31.

14 [14] E. Voegelin, *Race and State*, cit., p. 33.

Voegelin's thought is a continuing, never ending exploration of political order that should inform man about where everything started and how to get back to there. Voegelin follows these objectives analyzing the problem of human existence and questioning himself about man. He thus founds again a political science that is a science of man or rather a science connected to the anthropological reality of politics. The anthropological problem is thus never eliminated by Voegelin but on the contrary remains a constant element in the investigation into the problem of politics that the author pursues.

It was necessary, for Voegelin, to read Scheler's works and philosophy, above all to recuperate an anthropology of the human being that has an ontological scope, that is, one that attempts to find an answer to the problem of being and of reality. Philosophical anthropology reaches the so-called problems of the border of life, substance and conscience and the problems that regard the Absolute, the Ground of Being. Scheler's philosophical anthropology is a meta-anthropology because it is open to the values of the spirit, because it tries to find the link between the human spirit and God. Scheler does not fall into any psychological reduction, but elaborates a science of man in a pragmatic sense. He investigates what man is and what man does. The person in Scheler's thought must be perceived as a historical being and is inseparable from the context of the world: the person is a practical being of the practical world. Scheler's thoughts are practical and not abstract, trying to comprehend the complexity of human existence in history. These are the aspects of Scheler's thinking that influenced Voegelin who then took them further, elaborating with greater precision and penetrating deeper into the concrete content of history. The instrument for such an understanding is a philosophy of consciousness which sees the richness of human existence and is able to understand the everlasting tension between man and the divine, reason and spirituality, order and disorder, life and death.

The relationship between man and the divine is a controversial interpretation in the philosophical anthropology of Max Scheler because the author followed several "creeds" passing from an initial spiritual period to a successively Catholic phase and finally to pantheistic ideas. It is difficult to find a definite answer because one risks falling into a theocentric or anthropocentric interpretation, devaluing Scheler and his philosophy. In my opinion refusing to be labelled as a supporter of a particular cause which is not that of truth, Voegelin gives us the proper interpretation key to the question who is Scheler, really? Scheler cannot be linked to any particular religion, because as Voegelin pointed out the Schelerian person is in contact with the divine and observes the world through the eyes of *phronesis* (a conquest of the ethical dimension of reality that characterizes human existence) and it is able to see what the common human being cannot see, that is the divine dimension of earthly experience. Man is thus the living being who opens himself to the world, he is the tendency toward the divine and his essence consists in this inclination. Therefore, it is impossible to define man (if it were possible it would have no meaning). He is an open direction towards divine manifestation. At this point there is still one question left unanswered. Is Voegelin interested in the philosophical anthropology of Scheler or in his philosophy of religion? It is the meaning of philosophy that gives us the answer. For Scheler and Voegelin the starting point of philosophy must be the concrete existential experience of man. But philosophical research at the beginning of the 20th century had become increasingly a more abstract analysis, a metaphysic devoid of every contact with reality and with history, an empty rationalism defining itself with dogmatic claims of universality. Western must regain the knowledge that the individual cannot be translated by universal laws and so philosophy must, above all, regain the dimension of experience. This consists of a framework built up of unrepeatable, non-objectivable facts, a framework that cannot be analysed through the scientific

instruments of exact sciences, but which nevertheless not only exists but is vital for our experience. It is at this point that man starts questioning himself about his real existence, going further than what philosophy for centuries considered evident: *cogito ergo sum*. Man has to reconsider that the fact of existing isn't easy and mustn't be taken for granted: the starting point of philosophy isn't an abstract question of being but an investigation into what is able to provoke an opening for existence, a widening of the external and internal horizons of the person, a breakthrough by which life is transformed from a closed system to an open one. That is why we speak about meta-anthropology: the language that influenced Voegelin when he read Scheler's works, the language of a person who is authentically trying to understand the order of the world and the position of man in it, a language which also belongs to classical and Christian tradition, which is as Voegelin claims an ontological idiom and a result of the contemplation of the being and his order, an attempt to reach and interpret the experience of transcendence.
