

I will be discussing two papers: “Divine Presence and Epistemic Trust” by Jerry L. Martin and “What Does Mysticism Have to Do with Politics?” by Henrik Syse.

I will try to treat two papers together. I believe they have a common foundation and that their common ground is specifically relevant to us as political scientists.

The first paper begins with a personal experience of love that motivates a further search for the ground of that love. In this search the author discovers that human love is part of divine love. Since there is not a divine ground for just one or some of us, but a universal ground, this experience gives insight into the nature of humankind. At this point, at the latest, we political scientists can see the unparalleled importance of the question of the divine presence.

The paper describes an experience that cannot be subsumed under a model in which the subject and the object are discretely separate. The apparent “subject”, the searcher, is contained in the ground for which he is searching and he experiences the true state of things when he realizes that he is being sought by a partner in dialog. This relationship has been described in Christian culture as an act of love: Our love for God is part God’s love for us. Love in this sense is not an emotion, but an act, cognitive and moral, that is at the center of the person. Voegelin has discussed this dynamic act-center of our being in terms of the “open” and the “closed” soul. The open soul takes the full range of being into account. It is love that opens the soul. Max Scheler, emphasizes that love is a noetic “act” and not a psychic “function”. It must be committed, (initiated, “done”); it is does not just “take place”. Therefore Scheler defines love as a quality at the center of the soul that leads to deeper knowledge of value and therefore of being. There is a hierarchy of loveable goods and acts, at the height of which we find the human being who has learned to see all being in the light of divine being: “All loving, contemplating, thinking, and willing is intentionally united ‘in Deo’.”

So I think this is the type of knowledge the author is talking about at the beginning of the paper. The deep communication (communion) between person and person that takes place “in deo”. It

is not knowledge of how to do things in the world; it is not anything as peripheral to human-being as “rocket science”. It comes under the heading of Know Thyself. An inquiry that, as the author has shown, leads to the divine ground—and back again: a process in which we discover ourselves and others at a deeper level than we had before imagined to be possible.

And because one cannot grow in love without opening oneself to a partner in love, one gives thanks. The paper speaks of “a welling up of gratitude of thanks”.

Further, the author points out experiences of the divine presence are not rare, but at the same time they are not always attended to. I think the author is saying—[that’s a question to the author]— that these experiences take place all the time, or could, but that we often fail to rise to become a “partner” to them.

Naturally, however we try, we all fail to live up to the fullness of what it means to be a human being. This “state of affairs” has been dealt with under various terms and symbols, for example, “original sin”. But beyond this universal fallibility in practical life, the author tells us that there are people who, however good they may be in practical life—thanks to a good upbringing etc.— adhere to a theory that denies the relationship that was described in the opening section of the paper, and which I will henceforth refer to as the “philosophical anthropology of the love”.

If I understand the paper correctly, all the theories that reject the philosophical anthropology of love are oriented to the sphere of phenomena in the world of things. That realm where as Kant says, we “force’ nature to answer our questions[ KdrV Preface 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. ].

The application of such a method is misplaced because spiritual beings are not phenomena. Kant says that “only when experiment is directed by these rational principles that it can have any real utility.” But when you only see human beings under the perspective of “utility” you run the danger of destroying them. (This issue was treated thoroughly by Charles Dickens in *HARD TIMES*; and not by accident is the name of the character who makes the error of trying to understand human beings as phenomena, “Mr. Gradgrind”. )

Now why, as the paper points out, does modern philosophy take a model of science devoted to phenomena and try to apply it to spiritual-being? The paper says that the motive for turning one's back to the knowledge of spirit and fleeing into the science of phenomena, is that people "don't want to be fools".

And therefore, paradoxically, like the fool in the Psalm, they say in their heart, there is no god.

It is more than a cognitive error to apply a method developed for one sphere of knowledge to a very different sphere. The difference of the spheres is very clear in the paper's final example. Moses encountered a burning bush and "turned to look." He was not looking for God; he was just tending Jethro's flock. This is not Kant's science of phenomena in which a "subject" tries to force an "object" to yield answers to the "subject's" questions.

And since it is an historical fact that it was in such encounters as that of Moses that the human being learned what it is to be a human being, it is a moral failing to try to understand human-being by using the method developed for getting power over phenomena. That is not a climate in which love flourishes, and therefore not a climate in which human beings can seek the good life— which is the object of politics.

Let me therefore here turn to our second paper: Henrik Syse's "What Does Mysticism Have to Do with Politics?"

I think the second paper has common ground with the first. Here we read that mysticism involves "an immediate and direct communion with the divine". And such communion is not at our bidding. It cannot be explored by the science of phenomena: it must be attended to.

The paper explores how mystic experience becomes effective—or ineffective—in the world of politics and the author focuses on politics in the sense of "ordering and governing of the affairs of the public realm" which involves the "creation of laws and institutions". It is the realm of the *vita activa*, but the author does not want to limit it to that completely. He is not talking about mystics in politics but the role of mysticism in politics.

So, I would say, what we are looking for is not the direct action of mystics—that would seem to be the mystic in another mode of being (wearing a different hat), but the workings of mysticism in practical affairs.

The paper discusses “three possible relationships between mysticism and politics and asks how each throws light on questions that Eric Voegelin raises: if man’s search for truth, properly speaking, is grounded in a relationship to the whole that is, in its essence, is *mystical* and not imminent to the human condition how can we fashion a true politics that serves the common good of human beings, if we do *not* appreciate that mystic dimension?

The first position the paper examines is a skeptical one. It states that

*public action and debate require public reason(s)*, in the sense of arguments and reasons open to public scrutiny. The author shows that this ideal is not a clear cut one. And, I would ask the author, is this not because the root of all practical activity lies in part beyond the sphere of practical activity? The *ordo amoris* of the actor or actors, the ethos, character etc., precede and transcend the sphere of practical action itself.

As the author writes that “the dividing line between the political and the metaphysical is not clear-cut”.

I think the paper can make this statement because the author does accept the philosophical anthropology that the first paper outlined, and agrees that we cannot divide the human being into two parts— the spiritual that discovers “itself and others” in the ground of being, and a second part, which putting those experiences aside for a time, goes to the town meeting.

The second position explores the possibility of whether the mystic can in some way become part of the institutional structure of politics. Ultimately this fails because the life of a mystic is not a profession or a calling but is the open soul, i.e the human being per se who has actualized his (or her) human potential to the maximum. There is no criteria here for membership in a council, however finely drawn up its criteria for membership, because, as Bk. I. of Paradise Lost shows, even the once most eminently qualified can fail ( and fall ) at a later date.

The third position focuses on the mystic’s “balance of consciousness”. With the mystic’s orientation to a ground that transcends the world, the mystic is in the world not of it. The life in-between the eternal and the passing, and participating in both, leads to, among others, virtues, humility and hope. And these nourish the central cardinal virtue, *prudentia*. Here the life of the mystic infuses the “world of politics with a sense of realism and resistance to deformation”.

IN conclusion the author points out that the divine, as understood by the human being whose soul is open to communicate directly with the divine, enters into politics by means of the prudentia of individuals whose souls have been informed by their mystical experience.

When I look at both papers, I think I find the universal presence in politics of the divine. I think that the points that the first paper makes about the difference between a “philosophical anthropology of love”, and its sphere of knowledge, and the method that examines phenomena, and therefore the sphere of phenomena is the decisive distinction.

The three positions that the second paper analyzes are fallible because this distinction is ignored. The first position tries to introduce “statements” concerning mystical experience into politics. That is not mystical experience.

The second position, the creation of a council of expert mystics, also fails because the mystical experience is at the heart of the ordo amoris of the person who has it. This is not a “professional” calling, but the calling to human-being.

The third position, the mystics’s “balance of consciousness” gets to the heart of the matter.

But no institution can create this. Just as I cannot “create” my dialog partner. I have to attend to my dialog partner. Thus the “balance” can not be directly “made”, but it accompanies my openness to attend to my dialog partner—the process explained at the beginning of Jerry Martin’s paper.

Thus, it seems to me, that society itself can do little for mysticism. The task is that the mystics of the open soul engage in politics. Not to institute an “order of the open soul”, but to make sure that no order against the open soul is established.