WHAT IS THE METAXY?

DIOTIMA AND VOEGELIN

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The word "metaxy" () is a Greek preposition, meaning "between." Normally, Greek philosophers use "metaxy" much as we use "between" in numerous everyday settings, without great significance. However, there is a line in Plato's Symposium in which Diotima defines Eros as "a great daimon," adding that "the whole of the daimonic is between [metaxy] god and mortal" (202d13-e1). In that line, and in the surrounding passages that explicate it, the preposition acquires the status of a symbol or an index of the ontological rank of Eros, the mysterious reality that Diotima and Socrates regard as the most important force animating our lives.

Eric Voegelin was greatly impressed by this analysis of the daimonic Eros, so much so that he designated the preposition "metaxy" as a Platonic technical term and transformed it into a noun, calling it "the metaxy," or "the Metaxy," in scores of instances. Eventually, he came to think that he was dedicating his life's work to the exploration of this Metaxy, writing to Ellis Sandoz that: "From my first contact with such works as the Cloud of Unknowing, to my more recent understanding of the mystical problem . . . the great issue [has been] : not to stop at what may be called classical mysticism, but to restore the problem of the Metaxy for society and history." (1)

One facet of "the problem of the Metaxy" is that Voegelin's transfer of "metaxy" from the relational to the substantive category of speech and his treatment of it as a major Platonic concept are themselves problematic. Seven years ago, Zdravko Planinc addressed the Voegelin Society arguing that Plato never caused any of his dramatis personae to elevate "metaxy" into a technical term or a principal theoretical symbol on the level of concepts such as eros, justice, and the agathon (the good). Planinc also noted that Voegelin never did a thorough exegesis of the Symposium, never even a systematic, rigorous analysis of the whole of Diotima's speech in that dialogue, at least not in print. Rather, Voegelin merely quoted the same few lines of the Symposium repeatedly, neglecting to defend the accuracy of his first interpretation of them and filling up his newly minted noun "metaxy" with ever more meanings as he developed his own exceedingly rich philosophy of consciousness. (2) These points are well taken. Diotima's index of the status of Eros occurs only in the few passages in which she introduces it and in no other Platonic context, not even in the Phaedrus, which is about Eros. Voegelin does tend to select Platonic lines that appeal to him, omitting analyses of the whole dialogues in which they are set, and presuming the validity of his readings as he pursues his theoretical meditations. (3)

One wonders, therefore, whether our understanding of Plato is advanced or impeded by Voegelin's adaptations of Diotima's preposition "metaxy" to his own philosophic agenda. There is a more important question: Do Diotima's preposition "metaxy" and Voegelin's noun "metaxy" envisage different things or do
they denote the same reality even though different parts of speech refer to different aspects of reality? To what does Diotima's word "metaxy" point? What is Voegelin's "metaxy"? More important yet: Does either version of "metaxy" help us to know and achieve the right order of our lives?

**RULES FOR READING PLATO**

These questions cannot be elucidated if we do not know how to read Plato properly, as the philosopher himself intended. To conserve space, I am obliged to present the hermeneutic rules that I think Plato wanted us to follow in manifesto form, without argument or defense, relying for their support on my extended analysis in another place. (4)

First, in his Seventh Letter, Plato denies that the tyrant of Syracuse, Dionysius II, and his pseudointellectual courtiers could have known that about which he is serious ( ). They could not have understood it, "For there is no writing of mine about these things, nor will there ever be. For it is in no way a spoken thing like other lessons . . . . " (341c1-6). This means not that Plato's serious insights are secrets that, perhaps, could be divulged esoterically but, rather, that they are ineffable, impossible to encapsulate in either oral or written speech. Accordingly, we must not expect to find propositional truths about ultimate realities in any Platonic text. Platonic characters might utter statements that look like propositional truths about these realities but they are always provisional, always invitations to further inquiry rather than final resolutions. Thus, we must understand that Plato does not give us a serious doctrine about a "metaxy" that is one of the highest things, whether we think of "metaxy" as a preposition or a noun.

Second, in the *Theaetetus*, Socrates states that his philosophic pedagogical function is that of a midwife. He has no wisdom and teaches nothing. However, by means of his art, all whom the god may have permitted have found themselves pregnant with beautiful things and have brought them forth, the delivery being due to the god and himself (150b-e; cf. *Apology* 33a). I believe that Plato's pedagogy in the dialogues shares Socrates' purpose. So, although we may not look for ultimate propositional truths in Plato's work, we may concern ourselves with what Socrates depicts as our pregnancy. We are invited to open ourselves to the teaching that he offers, a divine-human action that delivers the beautiful things now embryonic in the "wombs" of our souls, if the god has permitted. This means that Diotima's speech about Eros and his "in-between" status in the hierarchy of being should be regarded not as propositional metaphysics but as a spiritual manipulation by a divinely governed midwife that facilitates the births of beautiful things, all this, of course, itself being metaphor.

Third, Diotima's speech in the *Symposium* and Socrates' second oration in the *Phaedrus* both speak of ascents to the acquisition of real virtues and to final visions. In the *Symposium*, one must rise to vision of "the beautiful itself" (211d-e). In the *Phaedrus*, souls fly to vision of the "Essence Really Being" (, 247c7). Both visions are silent. Accordingly, if we ask what are the beautiful things with which we are pregnant and which the philosophic midwife can deliver with the help of the god, we must not think that they are ineffable truths in propositional form. That would be a contradiction in terms, a violation of our first axiom (for the serious insights are "in no way" - - spoken), and a distortion of the Platonic analogies. Our eyes transmit sense data to our brain by means of
images rather than words. By analogy, our "soul eyes" transmit such knowledge as we can have of the highest realities to our *nous* by means of spiritual visions rather than words, this account again being metaphor. Ultimately, we must hope to be delivered of the beautiful real virtues and silent visions. This implies that, rather than taking speech about any sort of metaxy seriously in itself, we should use it as a springboard to the virtues and the visions.

Fourth, Platonic dialogues are dramas rather than treatises. It is hard for us to grasp this because scholars have been reading the dialogues as artistically ornamented treatises since Aristotle. However, we must throw off our millennial bad habits. One implication of this is that we must read every section of a Platonic dialogue in relation to its other parts, just as we understand the final scenes of *Hamlet* in light of its opening action. We may not lift parts out of their wholes and make them function as fragmentary scientific tracts, as Hegel convinced modern readers to do. Another implication is that we must pay attention to what is occurring in the play as well as to what is said. What is happening is actually even more important than what is said. In Plato's dramas, we behold a midwife endeavoring to deliver beautiful virtues and visions. We do not see a pedant positing universal verities. Accordingly, when Socrates speaks to one of his interlocutors, we must understand that he is saying something calculated to facilitate spiritual labor in the soul of that particular person. His teaching is not necessarily right for everybody. He could say something different to a second person because this other individual's soul might require some other stimulus, this just as a midwife might administer different pokes and prods to diverse women to facilitate their biological labors. Diotima's speech about a daimon who is between [metaxy] god and mortal is a midwife's strategy for facilitating labor in the souls of Aristophanes and Agathon, displayed to the midwives of later times who might meet similar poetic types. Phaedrus is possessed of a different, sophistical sort of soul that needs a different stimulus. Hence, in the later action of the *Phaedrus*, the midwife Socrates speaks to him not of the in-between "daimon" Eros but of a "god" Eros and of souls with charioteers and winged horses. Neither the tale of the middling daimon nor the story of the divinity and the souls with charioteers and Pegasuses is intended or presented as a universally valid ontological or anthropological image.

Fifth, Socrates often invents myths. The intention of this activity is revealed in the *Phaedrus*, where Socrates comments that he told his poetic story of the souls aloft "because of Phaedrus" (257a4-6), adding that his oration described eros with a likeness that achieved "some truth, perhaps" (265b7) (hence, together with much error), thus blending in a measured way "a not wholly incredible logos" (265b8) with "a playfully sung mythic hymn" (265c1). That is, his intention is still that of the divinely governed midwife who facilitates labor in the soul of a particular person by saying what gets him moving, not by speaking seriously. Earlier in the drama, Socrates hints that myths are to be *disbelieved*, only in the right way. Right disbelief of a myth is not to scorn it as superstition and substitute scientistic rationalism, as sophistical boors do. Rather, human beings must try to know themselves. To this end, they must create mythical images, for only a god could describe soul directly. The myths are to be disbelieved in that they are not to be taken literally. However, they are to be accepted as what they are designed to be, figurative images of events that truly musical poets and philosophers discern in their souls (cf. 229b-230a with the tale of the soul in 246a-256e). We must become accustomed to thinking of these pictures as symbols, or analogies, not as ontological concepts. The myth of the in-between daimon is put in the mouth of Diotima by Socrates as a playful analogy. It is pedagogically aimed at Aristophanes and Agathon. They are expected to relate the image to what can be observed in their souls. We have the same task.
Sixth, whatever the case with religious mystics might be, these apophatic conclusions do not dispense philosophers from the duty to strive to acquire propositional scientific truth. As Plato indicates in the Seventh Letter, passing our lives in the examination of thorny human problems produces a reasonable but incomplete science that is the sine qua non of the "perfect knowledge" (, 342e1-2) that we really want, a union with the knowable and true. Only after a philosopher has reflected on these matters for a long time does the perfect knowledge communicate itself to him or her, "good-natured to good-natured" (343c2-3). The dialectic is necessary because it purifies the soul for reception of the perfect knowledge and the birth of our beautiful things, probably by convincing us that our fairly adequate science is still ignorance. Dialectic is to the philosopher what the dark night of the soul is to the religious mystic. Accordingly, we must give our minds and hearts to the study of propositional theses about the highest realities, even as we accept our inability to penetrate to the ultimate truth with dialectical reason. We find ourselves in a curious situation: We must work intensely at propositional inquiries into whatever underlies the symbol "metaxy" while simultaneously regarding our work with a humorous and ironic eye.

With these rules in mind, we turn to our questions about Diotima and Voegelin.

**DIOTIMA'S METAXY**

Contemporary scholars typically analyze Diotima's speech as a stand-alone exposition of Plato's doctrine of eros. Many read it without so much as a glance at the other orations in the *Symposium*. This violates our first and fourth axioms and is illegitimate. Plato does not offer us a serious doctrine of eros. Plato places the other speeches in his dialogue for dramatic reasons essential to his purposes. Diotima's oration must be read in the context of what the other characters in the play do and say. What occurs is that the sophists Phaedrus, Pausanias, and Eryximachus, the comic playwright Aristophanes, and the sophistical tragedian Agathon (a student of Gorgias who is celebrating the triumph of his first play) articulate the motivating experiences, spiritual libidos, and political aims of five species of the tyrannical eros that Plato thinks destroyed Athens. All five types are manifestations of the Titanic élan, a massive will to power that wants to storm heaven, vanquish the Olympians, deify the speakers, and install a political regime that both represents the victory of this metaphysical rebellion and co-opts the citizens of Athens into it. Socrates must resist, answer, and correct these despotic erotes, practicing his midwife's art. He gets help from an unexpected source. Aristophanes dislikes sophists. He refutes Eryximachus and, hence, Phaedrus and Pausanias, comically. Therefore, although Socrates must direct a few comments to the first three orators, he chiefly has to deal with Aristophanes and Agathon. He invents Diotima's speech as an answer to the two poets. He especially means to reply to Agathon, who, by means of his oration, has sued Socrates in the court of the god Dionysus over the matter of their wisdom. Socrates starts his rebuttal of Agathon by engaging him in a dialectical exchange, in which Agathon yields too easily. Then, in Diotima's speech, Socrates continues the dialectical examination of Agathon's positions by playing the part of Agathon while letting Diotima act himself, thus treating Agathon the same way he handles Callias in the *Gorgias*, speaking his opponent's side of an argument as well as his own in order to pursue his investigation. To miss these dramatic facts is to be obtuse to the real import of Diotima's teaching. I regret that I cannot demonstrate these assertions here by analyzing the
first six orations of the *Symposium* at length. I am forced by a lack of space to break my own rules by discussing only a few highlights in Diotima's dialectic.\(^{(10)}\)

Still, I must supply a little more information about Agathon: The poet has maintained bewitchingly that Eros is the most beautiful and most virtuous god and has identified himself with this Eros. Socrates attacks Agathon dialectically, with a line of specious questions. He asks Agathon whether eros must be love or desire for something, the poet's answer being yes, and whether eros must lack what it loves or desires, the answer again being yes. With these admissions in hand, he recalls that Agathon previously said that Eros loves beauty. If this is so, Eros cannot be beautiful after all. Neither can Eros be good, for Agathon had claimed that all good things are beautiful. Agathon folds in the face of this flimsy critique,\(^{(11)}\) confessing that he did not know his subject. By surrendering so readily, Agathon calls his own metaphysical rebellion into question. If Eros is not the most beautiful and virtuous god, a man who has identified himself with Eros cannot be the most beautiful and best god either. However, the Socrates who gives dialectical science its due cannot be content with such a facile refutation. He must try to lead Agathon upward dialectically. This is where things stand when Socrates introduces the prophetess Diotima, gives her credit for saving Athens from the plague for ten years, claims that Diotima taught him what he knows about eros, takes over Agathon's part in the dialectic, and inconspicuously assigns Diotima the role of his alter ego.

Socrates resumes the dialectic by declaring that Diotima once showed him that Eros is not beautiful and good by reasoning in the way that he has just refuted Agathon. He promises to narrate the rest of his conversation with her. Then, acting as Agathon, he inquires whether Eros is ugly and bad. He intends to insist that Diotima-Socrates must have gone wrong if she thinks Eros ugly and bad. Diotima-Socrates responds by getting Socrates-Agathon to concede that there is something "between" wisdom and ignorance, i.e., right opinion. This is the first appearance of a "metaxy" that interests us. The admission that there is something "between" wisdom and ignorance emboldens Diotima-Socrates. She now demands that Socrates-Agathon refrain from saying that what is not beautiful must be ugly, or that what is not good must be bad. One must envisage something between beautiful and ugly, something between good and bad. I would be remiss in my duty if I failed to remark that this move by Diotima-Socrates is a gross sophism. Whatever might be meant by saying that right opinion is "between" wisdom and ignorance,\(^{(12)}\) granting the reality of this example of betweenness does not necessarily imply the existence of qualities located between beautiful and ugly and good and bad.\(^{(13)}\) Also, if there are qualities "between" beautiful and ugly and good and bad, they might not be "between" the poles in the same sense that true opinion lies "between" wisdom and ignorance.\(^{(14)}\) Incidentally, I hope that no one will take offense that I have accused Diotima-Socrates of sophistry. Later in our play, Socrates himself says that Diotima speaks "like the perfect sophists" (208c1). We must remember that Diotima's speech is not serious. If Diotima-Socrates can induce Socrates-Agathon to give up his rebellion by uttering sophisms - and this is not out of the question, for Agathon is not terribly deep - this will suffice as a first step of his education. Meanwhile, we should recognize that as long as we are dealing with a "metaxy" that sustains a sophism, and that might point to an array of subtly shifting referents, we do not yet have a major Platonic technical term or theoretical symbol.

Socrates-Agathon refuses to accept the notion that Eros can boast none but mediocre qualities. He counters with a sophism of his own, trying to intimidate Diotima-Socrates by citing public opinion against her. He suggests...
that "everyone" agrees that Eros is a great god. His unspoken premise is that a great god could not be mediocre. Diotima-Socrates parries this thrust easily. She asks Socrates-Agathon whether gods can lack beauty. The would-be deity says no. Diotima-Socrates appeals again to the admission that Eros is not beautiful. It follows from this that Eros cannot be a god. Socrates-Agathon has been forced to retreat another step from his metaphysical rebellion. Not only can he not be the most beautiful and best god, he cannot be any sort of god at all. He is shaken. However, he is even less willing to accept this demotion than the previous one. He inquires whether Diotima-Socrates means that Eros is a mortal. He thinks that if she says yes, he will have a beachhead for a counterattack, for he is firm in his belief that love could not be merely mortal. In this, he might be right.

The new question inspires the second appearance of a "metaxy" that interests us. The prophetess replies that Eros is, "as I said previously, between [metaxy] mortal and immortal." The confused Socrates-Agathon wonders what kind of an entity could be between mortal and immortal. The teacher answers: "A great daimon, for the whole of the daimonic is between [metaxy] god and mortal" (202d11-e1).

The first thing that we need to notice here is that Diotima-Socrates had not previously spoken about the in-betweenness of Eros. What she means by "as I said previously" is that, by analogy with her claims that right opinion lies between wisdom and ignorance, and that there are qualities between beautiful and ugly and good and bad, Eros lies between [metaxy] mortal and immortal. For the moment, this analogy is the only foundation on which her designation of the ontological place of Eros rests. As with the earlier case, I must object that the reasoning is sophistical. The discovery of a condition of soul between wisdom and ignorance does not demonstrate the necessity or possibility of a being that resides between mortal and immortal. Further, the sense in which true opinion is "between" wisdom and ignorance is not necessarily the same as that in which a metaphysical entity might abide "between" eternal and existential poles of reality. Indeed, it is hard for us to imagine what it might mean to be between mortal and immortal. These are not the only difficulties in the argument. Diotima-Socrates has not told Socrates-Agathon what a "daimon" is, or what "the whole of the daimonic" is. She might not even be committed to her definition of Eros as a daimon, given that Socrates defines Eros as a god in the Phaedrus. If she is indifferent to what Eros essentially is, she cannot be greatly attached to her "metaxy" either.

Clearly, the prophetess has not proved her thesis that Eros is "between" mortal and immortal by doing any serious propositional metaphysics. Neither has she grounded her view of this relationship of betweenness in an appeal to mystical experience. (She will begin to exercise that option only later in her speech.) So far, she has merely trifled with Socrates-Agathon, prying him away from his rebellious ideology with glaring sophisms and a sham ontology because she can. Thus, we still do not have a "metaxy" that qualifies as a Platonic technical term or major theoretical symbol.

Without thinking to challenge the sophisms of Diotima-Socrates, Socrates-Agathon rushes to ask "what power" the middling Eros possesses. Socrates-Agathon is worried that a mediocre Eros (if that is the only kind he can be) will not be able to control the conditions of his life in a satisfactory way. He wants to learn what he can dominate if this new portrait of Eros should be true. Diotima-Socrates replies that the daimonic has power to interpret and convey human things to the gods and divine things to human beings. Petitions and sacrifices go up to the gods and ordinances and recompense for sacrifices go down to the human beings through the daimonic. Situated in the middle of divine and human, the daimonic is filled with both and binds together the whole to itself. Through the
daimonic are conveyed all prophecy and the *techn* of priests pertaining to sacrifices, mystery rites, divination, and sorcery. For "god does not mingle with human, but through it all dealing and converse between gods and men occurs whether waking or sleeping" (203a1-2). Whoever is wise about this is a "daimonic man" (*daimonios aner*, 203a5). Everyone else is a *banausos* (a vulgar mechanic).

In this passage, we do not have a "metaxy" but we do find an "in the middle" (*metaxen*, 202e6), a rough equivalent. The daimonic is "in the middle" vis-a-vis the divine and human. Therefore, it has the power to mediate between them. What does this mean? Diotima now is operating entirely in the realm of myth. In keeping with our rules for reading Plato, we must expect her tale to have both literal and figurative import. Socrates-Agathon will be sensitive only to the literal meaning. This sophistical boor will understand Diotima-Socrates to claim that there are entities called daimonia, that these beings fly back and forth between the gods and mortal men, transmitting sacrifices and prayers upwards and commandments and rewards downwards, and that prophets have a monopoly on the art of securing the daimonic services, which are extremely valuable to people who wish to prosper in their worldly undertakings, as witness Diotima's success in staving off the plague that decimated Athens shortly after the Peloponnesian War broke out. Thus, Socrates-Agathon will believe that Diotima-Socrates is elevating herself and her fellow prophets alone to the rank of *daimonios aner*, exalting her art above all other *technai*, disparaging the wisdom of poets as vulgar, and thereby reducing the ontological status of a triumphant tragedian even below the middle of divine and human. In other words, Socrates-Agathon will think that he has been called a mere mortal and will feel insulted. Indeed, in both the literal and figurative meanings of her myth, Diotima-Socrates intends such an admonition. She is relentless in her attacks on poetic Titanism.

Regarding the figurative meaning of these lines about daimonic power, one could argue that they symbolize "man who is not simply *thnetos* [mortal] but experiences in himself the tension to divine being and thus stands between the human and the divine. Whoever has this experience grows above the status of a mortal and becomes a 'spiritual man,' *daimonios aner.*" One could add that the experience brings the *daimonios aner* into the world as a new "type," a new kind of human being in history.\(^{15}\) If we were to allow only a literal interpretation of the myth, this would be simply wrong. The literal story does not concern a man who experiences tension to divine being but a supernatural entity who mediates between gods and men. The *daimonios aner* is not a new historical type but an old one who for centuries has been dabbling in sacrifices, mysteries, divination, and sorcery (slitting the throats of beasts and burning their flesh for the delectation of the gods, conducting secret religious rites, reading entrails, casting spells, and whatnot). However, Diotima-Socrates is using the story to start Socrates-Agathon on a necessary ascent to self-knowledge. In this aspect of her teaching, she does not mean that there really are daimonia who mediate between gods and men or that a *daimonios aner* really knows how to monopolize their services by the correct practice of sacrifices, etc. Rather, she is reporting her consciousness of movements in her soul. There is something in the soul that mediates between the divine and the human, that is filled with both the divine and the human and binds the whole to itself, and that serves as the conduit of all converse between the divine and the human, even though the divine and the human do not mingle. Whoever is conscious of this something and wise about it is a *daimonios aner*, who very may well be a new historical type. A caveat: One must confess that the myth does not appear *prima facie* to be referring to this consciousness of a reality of the soul.\(^{16}\) This becomes clear only retrospectively, in light of the further treatment that Diotima-Socrates devotes to the
Eros who is wholly filled with unmingled god and man together.

I think that such clarification comes in the next tale that the prophetess tells. Socrates-Agathon asks who were the father and mother of the daimonic Eros. He raises this strange question because all of the previous speakers in the play invented theogonies that established the rights of Eros to sovereignty over the Olympians and their own claims to embody Eros. He is hoping that Diotima-Socrates will create an incredible genealogy that he can use to trip her up. Once again, his design is frustrated, if only because Diotima-Socrates eludes all efforts to box her into the realms of fundamentalism and sophistical natural science. Here is her tale: When Aphrodite was born, all the gods, including Poros (Resource), son of Mtis (Skill), were feasting. Although Mtis is cited, he plays no role in the story. Penia (Poverty) came to the door of Zeus's banquet hall, begging. Meanwhile, Poros became drunk with nectar. He went out to doze in Zeus's garden. Penia, desperate because she had no resource, contrived to lie with Poros and conceived Eros. By nature, Eros is a lover of the beautiful. As the son of Poros and Penia, he is subject to this fate: He is always poor and lacks the softness and beauty that the many suppose him to have. He is hard, dried up, shoeless, and homeless. He sleeps uncovered on the ground, in doorways and in roads. Having his mother's nature he always is needy. As his father's son, he plots against the beautiful and good. He is brave, bold, intense, a clever hunter, always weaving artifices, desirous and resourceful of prudence, philosophizing throughout his life, a clever sorcerer, poisoner, and sophist. By birth he is neither immortal nor mortal, but on the same day he blooms and lives, prospering, and then dies, only to be resurrected by his father's nature, his resources always flowing out, so that he never is either wholly resourceless or rich. He is in the middle of wisdom and ignorance, for gods do not philosophize or desire to become wise, being wise already. Neither the wise nor the ignorant philosophize or desire to become wise. The ignorant are self-satisfied, do not realize that they suffer their defect, and accordingly desire no remedy (203a-204a).

This myth is so opulent that it cannot be explained adequately in brief compass. Here, I must limit myself to three observations relevant to our present concerns. (17)

First, Diotima-Socrates aims her genealogy of Eros as much at Aristophanes as at her interlocutor, Socrates-Agathon. The comic had depicted Eros as the by-product of a storming of heaven by his original human beings. These strange creatures succeeded the Titans. They had "great thoughts" about their rights and abilities to usurp the Olympians. They were quite powerful, confident, and arguably masculine rather than feminine in their hybris, if not also in other ways. Zeus was at his wits' end in his perplexity over the problem of how to deal with their uprising. Ultimately, he created Eros accidentally when he bungled the execution of his counterstrike. Diotima-Socrates replies that Eros, having been conceived as she has said in her own fairy-tale, is not the by-product of a powerful human attack on heaven and divine ineptitude. Rather, he is the son of an absolute human Poverty, a primeval feminine potency that was the ontological substrate of human nature, an inchoate prime matter that sought to be actuated, as it were. (We know that Penia was the potency underpinning human nature because Eros is portrayed as a cross between god and mortal.) This Eros is also the scion of a masculine divine Resource who needed neither skill nor awareness to inseminate his unelected bride. By spinning this yarn, which clearly is a playful story rather than serious metaphysics, Diotima-Socrates sends this symbolic message to Aristophanes and Socrates-Agathon: Eros comes to a suppliant human nature as salvation from without, as the gift of an effortless divine largesse, much as pregnancy comes to a woman from without through the seed easily supplied by a man.
Eros does not come as the accidental substitute for a sovereignty over the order of being that a virtually divine mankind once failed to snatch from the gods by force.

Second, in the context of this anti-Titanic teaching, we notice the last two appearances of the "metaxy" image of Diotima-Socrates. We may say that, by analogy, the "something" in the human soul that serves as the conduit of converse between god and man is like a fetus in the womb of a mother. Although Diotima-Socrates does not mention it explicitly, the fetus is "between" the divine and the human in the same way a nascent child is "between" its parents. The child is neither the father nor the mother (so that it remains true that god and man do not mingle) and yet has the features of both, which blend into each other indistinguishably. Also, the child can be expected to "take after" its parents, so that it will be drawn both up to divine things and down toward absolute need. It seems legitimate to interpret the myth of the fetus Eros as the symbolization of an experience of a "tension to the divine." However, it is equally correct and necessary to picture it as the symbolization of a tension toward nothingness. Most critical to note is that the child will be drawn upward to wisdom and downward to ignorance and land "in the middle," on the level previously designated as opinion. Therefore, the child will need philosophy, which Socrates-Agathon had denied in his pretensions to be a divinely wise Eros.

Third, we must not overlook the fact that the Eros described in the myth of Diotima-Socrates has a number of unsavory characteristics. He plots against the good and is a clever sorcerer, poisoner, and sophist. Courage is the only virtue in his repertoire, accompanied by a cunning that is not wisdom and that is not encumbered by moderation and justice. He very much resembles Odysseus before the hero's repentance at Scheria. Diotima-Socrates posits all this for pedagogical reasons having to do with the deplorable morals of Socrates-Agathon. In the rest of her speech, the prophetess requires the man animated by this Eros to ascend to real virtue and the vision of the beautiful itself. Therefore, we may not take this unimproved Eros as our philosophic model and we must avoid regarding the symbol of an Eros "between" [metaxy] or "in the middle of" god and man as the highest teaching of the Symposium. Later in the play, Diotima-Socrates makes this perfectly explicit when she refers to her story saying: "Into these erotic matters, Socrates, perhaps even you might be initiated. But I do not know if you could approach the perfect revelations (or final revelations,) for the sake of which these exist, if someone should follow them rightly. . . . Try to follow me, if you can" (209e5-212b2). So, the poetry about the middling Eros is "imperfect revelation." It prepares the soul for the perfect revelations, which consist in the vision of the divine beauty. Further, the myth of the daimon can be validated only retrospectively, in the light of the vision.

At this juncture, we may break off our study of the Symposium. Nothing more is said about a significant "metaxy" in the dialogue or anywhere else in Plato. We may draw these conclusions: Diotima's "metaxy" is a term that Plato inserts into playful sophisms and tales. It is employed to convey an analogy. Diotima-Socrates experiences something in her soul that serves as the medium of converse between god and man. This something resides in the soul like a fetus in the womb. It lies "between" [metaxy] god and man in a way similar to that in which a child is "between" its parents. The "betweenness" consists in a blending of divine and human features in the converse between god and man and in experienced attractions toward opposite poles, i.e., toward being and nothingness, wisdom and ignorance, the fetus lying in-between these extremes. The figure is not serious metaphysics or literally intended universal doctrine. Rather, it is a midwife's nostrum that helps to purify some men, and perhaps us, for perfect revelations to which Diotima-Socrates wants her comrades to attain.
VOEGELIN'S METAXY

Eric Voegelin introduced *The New Science of Politics* with the statement: "The existence of man in political society is historical existence; and a theory of politics, if it penetrates to principles, must at the same time be a theory of history." Opening *Anamnesis* fourteen years later, he said: "The problems of human order in society and history originate in the order of consciousness. The philosophy of consciousness is therefore the centerpiece of a philosophy of politics." Voegelin always was a philosopher of both history and consciousness at once. However, I think that the difference between the quotations indicates that, as the years went by, he became concerned to have it understood that consciousness is more fundamental than history. At any rate, "the problem of the Metaxy" falls in the domain of consciousness.

As a philosopher of consciousness, Voegelin approached Plato again and again, trying to arrive at a satisfactory grasp of the master's experiences of the order of consciousness. As his inquiries advanced, he changed his mind about which symbols were keys to understanding the same realities. For example, in volume three of *Order and History*, he spoke a great deal about the "psyche" and its "depth" in the "unconscious" and barely mentioned "the metaxy," although "depth" and "metaxy" appear to refer to the same phenomena. He began to stress "the metaxy" in the mid-1960's, in some pieces included in *Anamnesis*. Thereafter, he laced all of his major remaining works with meditations on "the metaxy," letting "depth" fade into the background. It would require a book-length manuscript to trace all such developments fully. Here, I can only point to a few of the more important elements of the order of consciousness that Voegelin tried to illuminate with the "metaxy" symbol.

It is appropriate to begin by noticing that Voegelin was well aware of Plato's warnings about his writing. Therefore, he devised his own rules for reading Plato, formulating what seem to be essentially the same notions in different ways at various stages of his career. It will be seen in the examples below that, in greater part, his precepts are the models for mine.

First, heeding Plato's word that his serious insight is "in no way a spoken thing like other lessons," Voegelin declares in *Plato and Aristotle*: "Philosophy is not a doctrine of right order, but the light of wisdom . . . and help is not a piece of information about truth . . ." He maintains that one must "under no circumstance try to extract a Platonic 'doctrine' of order" from the *Republic*. Broadening this understanding to a general principle, he says in *Anamnesis*:

The tension in political reality, which historically produces the phenomenon of the noetic interpretation, is not a thing about which objective propositions could be formed. . . . Far as we might push the game of objectivizing language, we must keep dissolving it negatively, in order to keep free our awareness of the experience of order as a nonobjective reality. The nonobjective character of the experience of order admits of no so-called knowledge of order; rather, the intangibility of the reality, which is no ineffability, allows room for a variety of experiences that motivate a corresponding number of symbolic expressions of the experience.

Such statements demand acknowledgment of the fact that Plato's writing about the ultimate realities is
apophatic insofar as it is non-propositional, symbolic, and analogical.

Second, expanding this principle, Voegelin argues in *Plato and Aristotle* that an attempt to formulate one of the most serious things (eros) as a doctrine is "worse than futile: it is the desecration of a mystery." Why so? One explanation that he provides later, an account that pertains to all the serious things, is that consciousness of right order "wells up" mysteriously "from the depth," dragging the philosopher's soul "up to the light." Near the end of *Plato and Aristotle*, in a section on "the failure of immanentist metaphysics," he adds:

Truth is not a body of propositions about a world-immanent object; it is the world-transcendent *summum bonum*, experienced as an orienting force in the soul, about which we can speak only in analogical symbols. Transcendental reality cannot be an object of cognition in the manner of a world-immanent datum because it does not share with man the finiteness and temporality of immanent existence. . . . When the philosopher explores the spiritual order of the soul, he explores a realm of experiences which he can appropriately describe only in the language of symbols expressing the movement of the soul toward transcendental reality and the flooding of the soul by transcendence.

Extending this understanding to Aristotle in *Anamnesis*, he also remarks: "At its core human nature . . . is the openness of the questioning knowledge and the knowing question about the ground. Through this openness, beyond all contents, images, and models, order flows from the ground of being into man's being." Extending the analysis further in *The Ecumenic Age*, to "Revelation" understood as including myth, classical philosophy, and biblical prophecy, he says: "Revelation is not a piece of information, arbitrarily thrown out by some supernatural force, to be carried home as a possession, but the movement of response to an irruption of the divine in the psyche. Moreover, the movement of irruption and response has a structure of its own. As I have formulated it elsewhere, the fact of revelation is its content." (25) In these words on the experiential, apophatic nature of the highest truth, Voegelin's phrases "from the depth of the psyche," "experienced as an orienting force in the soul," "the flooding of the soul by transcendence," "order flows from the ground of being into man's being," and "an irruption of the divine in the psyche" seem to capture Socrates' image of pregnancy of soul by divine favor. Further, expressions such as "wells up life and order," "up to the light" (along with "light of wisdom"), "the world-transcendent *summum bonum*, experienced as an orienting force in the soul," "order flows from the ground of being into man's being," "irruption of the divine," and many others like them scattered throughout Voegelin's work seem equivalent to the Socratic metaphor on the identities of the beautiful things (real virtues and silent visions of the highest realities) with which divinely permitted souls are pregnant.

Third, Voegelin goes to great lengths on crucial occasions to elaborate a theory of the "philosopher's myth." In *Plato and Aristotle* alone, he devotes twenty-one pages to a sustained analysis of this topic. (26) It would be enjoyable to do a study of this single argument. However, I must rush ahead, observing only its prominent features. Glancing at the cosmic myth of the Egyptians, Voegelin maintains that the "truth" of their story "will arise from the unconscious, stratified in depth into the collective unconscious of the people, the generic unconscious of mankind, and the deepest level where it is in communication with the primordial forces of the cosmos." (Here, it is engaging to see a Voegelin who has not quite found his own vocabulary struggling to express himself in Jung's language.) He puts "truth" in quotation marks in this account because he does not think that even the Egyptians
believed in the literal factuality of their tales. He already envisages another notion of veracity, stating that: "A myth can never be 'untrue' because it would not exist unless it had its experiential basis in the movements of the soul which it symbolizes." This said, he traces the evolution of myth from a collective enterprise to a tool for representing "spiritual movements . . . of the individual soul," as in the dramas of Aeschylus, and finally into a pliable symbolic material that Plato can manipulate and transform "in order to fit the exigencies of differentiated, personal experiences." At this level, Voegelin declares, "the myth retains the seriousness of its 'truth' but is at the same time consciously an imaginative play." The consciousness that myth is play renders all belief in its factuality impossible (not only for Plato, but probably even for Homer). The seriousness of its "truth" inheres in the circumstance that: "The myth remains the legitimate expression of the fundamental movements of the soul." In his later works, Voegelin essentially retains this view of the philosopher's myth, except that he drops the language of depth psychology and replaces it with the "metaxy" symbol. For example, in The Ecumenic Age, he comments that Plato senses "the limits set to the philosopher's exploration of reality by the divine mystery." Then he infers that:

Since the philosopher cannot transcend those limits but has to move in the In-Between, the Metaxy, . . . the meaning of his work depends on an ambiance of insight concerning the divine presence and operation in the cosmos that only the myth can provide. Plato's answer to the predicament is the creation of the alethinos logos, the story of the gods that can claim to be true if it fits the cognitive consciousness of order created in the soul of man by the erotic tension toward the divine Beyond.

Because myth symbolizes movements in the soul, Voegelin inveighs mightily against handling it with a literalism that "splits the symbol from the experience by hypostatizing the symbol as a proposition on objects." (27) I think that all this accords well with Socrates' explanations of the right mode of disbelief in myths, with his own playfulness in accepting and creating tales, and with his use of the stories to represent what he discovers in his soul.

Fourth, Voegelin movingly describes Plato as the philosopher who resists the disorder of sophistry in the soul and in society. He calls Plato the man who can evoke a paradigm of right social order in the image of his well-ordered soul, in opposition to the disorder of society which reflects the disorder of the sophist's soul; the man who develops the conceptual instruments for the diagnosis of health and disease in the soul; the man who develops the criteria of right order, relying on the divine measure to which his soul is attuned; the man who, as a consequence, becomes the philosopher in the narrower sense of the thinker who advances propositions concerning right order in the soul and society, claiming for them the objectivity of episteme, of science . . . (28)

This analysis suggests that, although Platonic philosophy is apophatic in it highest reaches, it still traffics in propositions in its "narrower sense" and considers them "science." If Voegelin means that philosophy in its "narrower sense" is the dialectic, and if he also means that this "narrower" philosophy produces bodies of propositions that are only a partially adequate, still incomplete "science," I would agree. I believe that he does mean this, for we have seen already that he holds that "the nonobjective character of the experience of order admits of no so-called knowledge of order," so that Plato's propositions could not be "science" in the full meaning of the term. The propositions are "scientific" (perhaps better to say "authoritative") in that they rely on
the divine measure to which Plato's soul is attuned. They are imperfectly "scientific" insofar as they are grounded in mystery and also, as rationalists would object, because they are not based on "intersubjectively transmissible evidence." Thus, Plato may teach Athens justice even as he refrains from proposing doctrines. (This interesting phenomenon is worthy of a separate study too.) The upshot, as I remarked earlier, is that Plato's students must give their minds and hearts to the study of propositional theses about the highest realities, even as they accept their inability to penetrate to the ultimate truth with dialectical reason.

The result of this survey would appear to be that Voegelin certainly knew how to read Plato properly, unless I am wrong about the rules for understanding Plato. Not only that, it would seem that Voegelin himself must be interpreted in the same manner that we read Plato. Voegelin's highest insights, like Plato's, must be understood to be apophatic. All his language must be taken as symbolic and analogical. We must assume that Voegelin does not intend to teach doctrines any more than Plato does. However, it is necessary to temper this conclusion with one criticism: Voegelin does not appear to have been sensitive to the literary character of Platonic dialogues as dramas. He knew, of course, that these poems are plays that Plato wrote as continuations of the work of Aeschylus. Still, he disregarded the consequences of this fact, thus neglecting to note the ways in which the statements of various Platonic protagonists are conditioned by dramatic situations, pedagogical aims, etc. In other words, he seems to have paid insufficient attention to the interplay of symbols and context. This caused certain errors. Some were less serious, e.g., a failure to observe the unsavory characteristics of the Eros who stands between immortal and mortal in the Symposium. Some might have been more grave, e.g., a possible failure to understand that the speeches in the Timaeus and Critias are sophistical rather than philosophic, and should on no account be taken as Platonic teaching. Mistakes such as these do not necessarily compromise Voegelin's most important discoveries; the errors can be corrected by his friends constructively as they work to advance his philosophy.

We finally are ready to examine Voegelin's concept of "the metaxy." One of the first places in which Voegelin expounds this matter, if not the first, is the essay Ewiges Sein in der Zeit ("Eternal Being in Time") in the German Anamnesis. Here, Voegelin is discussing the "philosophical experience" as a pair of tensions in the soul, the first of which is that "between time and eternity." He declares that the locus classicus for the treatment of this tension is the speech of Socrates in the Symposium. In Diotima's myth, "the poles of temporal and eternal being are represented by the mortals and the gods." Voegelin notices that there are "relations" between mortals and gods, namely, "prayers and sacrifices" from the one side and "orders and graces" from the other. The relations should run back and forth but cannot because god and man do not mingle. Voegelin comments that it is "inscrutable" how man, inhabiting temporal being, could experience eternal being, so Diotima supplies a mediator, the daimon Eros. This, Voegelin says, "discreetly points up what is the core of the matter," that man "experiences in himself the tension to divine being and thus stands between the human and the divine." The "man" whom he has in mind is the new historical type, the daimonios aner. Some extremely important bits and pieces are added to this basic analysis later in Anamnesis. Voegelin argues that: "The man who lives in the erotic tension to his ground of being is called the daimonios aner, i.e., a man who consciously exists in the tension of the in-between (metaxy), in which the divine and the human partake of each other." Resisting the deformation of this argument into doctrine, he says that the metaxy "is not an empty space between immanent and transcendent objects, but rather the area of mutual participation of divine and human reality." But this is the sum and substance of his analysis.
We now see clearly that Voegelin simply ignores context in his exegesis. He does not mention the contradictions between the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* about the status of Eros, or the omission of all discussion of any kind of "metaxy" from the latter dialogue. He does not take the *Symposium* as a whole into account. He does not inquire into the role of Diotima's speech in the dialogue, or ask what Socrates is trying to accomplish with Agathon. He makes no bow to the literal meaning of Diotima's story, no effort to explain how it, too, contributes to her anti-Titanic intention. Although it is far from self-evident that Diotima's myth, with its language of sacrifices, commandments, and rewards, concerns the soul's "tension toward the ground," or "mutual participation of divine and human reality," he neither shows why his figurative construction of the myth is the right one nor invokes the further story of Poros and Penia or the later, perfect revelation, to help his cause.

These demonstrable oversights are grounds for a certain amount of dissatisfaction with the analysis. The neglect of the *Phaedrus* and the other speeches in the *Symposium* causes Plato to appear more serious about the "metaxy" relationship than he really is, thereby creating the danger that Voegelin will seem to posit a Platonic doctrine of a reified "metaxy" although he intends none. Also, it is not exactly "man" who subsists between immortal and mortal and, thus, in tension toward divine being, but the daimon Eros. If we drop the mythical language, that which stands "between" is some reality in the soul of man that is not perfectly identical with man. In addition, Voegelin's failure to heed the story of Poros and Penia causes him to miss the fact that, while Eros may exist between eternal and temporal poles of being insofar as he is between gods and men, he also lives more fundamentally between being and nothingness inasmuch as he is the child of Resource and Poverty. Hence, we lose sensitivity to something that Voegelin once perceived, that Eros is either two attractions or one double pull in opposite directions, one of them evil, necessitating serious efforts to control the deleterious Eros by developing real virtue, climbing the "ladder of beauty," and opening ourselves to the perfect revelations. The absence of an appeal to Poros and Penia even deprives Voegelin of evidence that he could use to strengthen his argument about "metalepsis" (mutual participation). The emphasis that Voegelin places on "the metaxy" and his failure to stress the vision of beauty as the final goal in Diotima's myth reverses the indices of imperfection and perfection that she places on these symbols, or at least shifts our focus away from the Socratic telos.

These are significant criticisms. However, they are not fatal to Voegelin's argument. As far as I can see, the main thrust of his reasoning is correct: The Socratic Eros does involve a *daimonios anr* who experiences something in his or her soul (which may be very difficult to distinguish from the essence of the self), something that stands between immortal and mortal insofar as it is a mutual participation of divine and human, but which nevertheless must not be hypostatized as a being object about which propositions could be formed. Therefore, it does involve a "metaxy," a relationship of betweenness that Voegelin legitimately may symbolize as the "area" that bisects the poles of the betweenness, as long as it is grasped that this language is analogical. In this metaphorical light, the difference between a preposition and a noun ceases to matter. So, although Voegelin's exegesis of Plato might not be entirely on target, it seems true enough to the Platonic experience of the positive pull of Eros to allow us to excuse some hermeneutic error. Rather than being rejected, his treatment of "the metaxy" in *Anamnesis* needs to be supplemented by reintroducing Socrates' warnings about the negative Eros and his focus on the vision of beauty as the highest aim of philosophy.

Voegelin provides several more fundamental analyses of "the metaxy." Typical is one in *The Ecumenic Age*. Once
again, he associates "the metaxy" with an erotic tension in human existence toward the ground of being and identifies the *Symposium* as the crucial Platonic text regarding the symbol. This time, he relates that Eros is the son of Poros and Penia, a daimon who is something between god and man, and he observes that the *daimonios anr* is someone "who is in search of truth somewhere between knowledge and ignorance." He notes that the whole realm of the daimonic is between god and man, facilitating the transit of the sacrifices, prayers, replies, and commands upward and downward. He argues that "this truth is not an information about reality but the event in which the process of reality becomes luminous to itself." Therefore, it is not a doctrine "but an event in the Metaxy where man has 'converse' with the divine ground of the process that is common to all men." (35)

Although this report is a better summary of Diotima's myth than the previous one, chiefly because it includes Poros and Penia, it is essentially subject to the same criticisms and praises. It is somewhat superior to its predecessor in one respect: It makes it more clear that "the metaxy" is a symbol of the reality of human converse with the divine. However, it still needs to be corrected with the insight that Diotima also sees the negative Eros operating in the In-Between and with a renewed emphasis on the perfect revelations.

This much will suffice as a synopsis of Voegelin's basic understanding of "the metaxy." Now, it is necessary to recall that Voegelin expands the symbol as he develops his philosophy of consciousness. He does so in two ways.

First, Voegelin fills "metaxy" with new meanings by providing further interpretations of Plato. He does this by treating pairs of words as symbols of experiential poles and arguing that Plato is conscious of existing not only "between" god and man but "between" these other poles too. In one place, he posits a hermeneutic axiom that he thinks justifies this procedure: "Once the truth of man's existence had been understood as the In-Between reality of noetic consciousness, the truth of the process as a whole could be restated as the existence of all things in the In-Between of the One and the Apeiron." (36) So, to be aware of Diotima's metaxy is to experience the others too. Thus, for example, the one and the unlimited, consciousness and unconsciousness, the one and the many, and time and eternal being all are said to be pairs of Platonic symbols of a betweenness that is more or less the same metaxy as the primary one. I have some difficulty with this. I suspect that a textual review of Plato's dialogues would uncover little in the way of support for the thesis that Plato extends the "metaxy" symbol to these areas, except perhaps for an occasional offhanded use of the word (e.g., *Philebus* 16e1). I also wonder in what ways the original experience of the reality of human converse with the divine is the same as consciousness of being "between" the other pairs. However, I certainly must remain open to Voegelin's view until I have had the opportunity to meditate on both the texts and the experiences and, at the least, I agree that these pairs do represent their own kinds of metaxy experiences.

Second, Voegelin frequently sets the "metaxy" concept in genres other than philosophy and combines it with results of his own introspection. This produces insights that go quite far beyond Plato. For example, in *The Ecumenic Age*, Voegelin maintains that:

The language of truth concerning man's existence in the divine-human In-Between is engendered in, and by, the theophanic events of differentiating consciousness. The language symbols belong, as to their meanings, to the Metaxy of experiences from which they arise as their truth. . . . In the prophetic literature, the word of truth can
be indiscriminately said to be spoken by the god or by the prophet. Moreover, the original experience need not be auditory; the word need not be "heard"; it can also be "seen" . . . The In-Between of experience has a dead point from which symbols emerge as the exegesis of its truth, but which cannot become itself an object of propositional knowledge. (37)

These kinds of moves create openings for Voegelin's theories of "equivalences" and introduce fascinating accounts of mystical experience, e.g., the notice of the "dead spot." Unfortunately, I cannot evaluate them here because this would require extensive new studies. I say only this: the standards of evaluation would have to be drawn not only from textual scholarship but also from mystical experience itself.

**KNOWLEDGE OF RIGHT ORDER**

The results of this inquiry can be summarized briefly.

(1) In Plato, the word "metaxy" is a symbol of the philosopher's experiences of human converse with divine reality and of man's potentially fatal attraction toward nothingness. In Voegelin, it is a symbol of human converse with divine reality that loses the second meaning of attraction toward the void. In both thinkers, "metaxy" is a metaphorical or analogical term that denotes what Voegelin rightly calls a nonobjective reality. In Plato, the myth involving the betweenness of the daimon Eros is called an imperfect revelation that exists for the sake of the perfect vision of beauty, helping to move an interlocutor in the direction of that vision. In Voegelin, "the metaxy" acquires a centrality that it does not have in Plato, perhaps somewhat to the detriment of an indispensable focus on ascent to the perfect revelation. Still, it is plain that Voegelin understands the positive pull of Eros in "the metaxy" rightly.

(2) In Plato, the experience of the in-between daimon Eros necessitates ascent to real virtues. In the present study, I have mentioned this en passant. The real virtues require much more extensive analysis in their own right. Voegelin's analysis of *phronesis* in *Anamnesis* looks like a good starting point but his students need to pursue this matter farther than he did.

(3) The answer to my final question has been worked out in the course of the study. There is no knowledge of order taught either by Diotima's or Voegelin's metaxy. However, meditation on the problem of the metaxy can propel us toward the real virtues and the perfect revelations. In leading us to that meditation, Voegelin has helped us achieve our right order more than any other thinker in our time.

**ENDNOTES**


2. Zdravko Planinic, "The Uses of Plato in Voegelin's Philosophy," presented to the Eric Voegelin Society,
American Political Science Association, 1996.


5. This accounts for many of the apparently conflicting expressions in Plato that his esoteric readers regard as contradictions, mistakenly, as I believe.

6. It is also discussed in the Republic, which I cannot treat here.

7. Of course, Alcibiades also comes on stage after Socrates' speech and delivers an idiosyncratic praise of Socrates, exhibiting a sixth variety of the tyrannical eros. I am ignoring Alcibiades here because none of the characters in the play expect him to appear and Socrates' speech is not directed to him.

8. Erotes is the plural of eros.

9. To refute Eryximachus is to negate Phaedrus and Pausanias because Eryximachus purported to blend and reconcile the speeches of these comrades.

10. For the details and reasoning that support my argument, see Rhodes, *Eros, Wisdom, and Silence*, chaps. 4-6.

11. Socrates' refutation of Agathon is faulty because the answers to the two questions are not necessarily yes. Depending on what eros (love) is, or depending on what a divine being who is the Very Reality of Love is, eros is not necessarily love or desire of some particular person or thing. Further, love, or the divine Love, need not lack what it loves, or desires. That is, if an individual or a god loves a beauty, and if this person or deity does not possess the beauty of the beloved beauty that he or she supposedly desires, this still says nothing about whether the individual or god is or is not a beauty too. Plato and Socrates certainly are not so incompetent as to be unaware of these objections to Socrates' argument. But Agathon is incompetent. He gives his answers for reasons having more to do with his raging libidos than with the cogency of Socrates' reasoning here.

12. The preposition "between" refers primarily to the relationship of a location to two other locations to which it is simultaneously adjacent. Wisdom and ignorance are not locations or realities that occupy locations. Once we get past the primary meaning of the preposition, we are in the realm of analogy. We must wonder what analogies intend to convey.

13. My point is that, while there may or may not be something between beautiful and ugly, or between good and bad, Diotima's analogy certainly does not establish the case. The fact that one pair has something between its members does not prove anything about the possibilities of other pairs.

14. Are qualities "between" other qualities in the same sense that a state or condition of soul is "between" other states or conditions of soul?

16. Thus, for example, no less a personage than St. Augustine missed the symbolic point and remained stuck at the literal level in his understanding of the myth. See City of God, 8, 18.

17. For a fuller account, see Rhodes, *Eros, Wisdom, and Silence*, chap. 5.

18. This observation thanks to the several publications of Zdravko Planinc on Plato.

19. Of course, the word appears elsewhere in Plato, but I do not believe that it is used in the same sense anywhere else. This will bring me into a certain disagreement with Voegelin, below.


21. See Voegelin, *Plato and Aristotle*, p. 66. There, Voegelin notes that Plato places *doxa* (opinion) between knowledge and ignorance and the object of *doxa* between being and non-being, but then says that Plato calls the intermediate realm *to planeton*. His attention clearly is not as yet focused on "the metaxy." "Psyche" and, possibly, "depth" are Platonic terms in this early analysis but I have my doubts about "the unconscious."

22. This needs qualification. It seems to me that, in his penultimate work, *In Search of Order*, Voegelin was unfolding a new and extremely complex technical vocabulary and thus was in the process of bursting the confines of the "metaxy" image. But that is the subject of another essay.


30. Cf. Zdravko Planinc, *Plato through Homer: Poetry and Philosophy in the Cosmological Dialogues* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, forthcoming October 2003). If Planinc is right, as I think he is, it is not only Voegelin who has fallen into this trap but most of Plato's readers.

31. "Metaxy" is mentioned in the introduction of the German *Anamnesis*, p. 12, as "the tension between time and eternity," but not explained there.

32. The second is historical, involving a before and after of the experience. It is not relevant here.


36. Voegelin, *The Ecumenic Age*, p. 185. The "Apeiron" is "the Unlimited."


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