Eric Voegelin published volumes two and three of *Order and History* in 1957. Stanley Rosen reviewed the volumes, rejecting their theses almost entirely, in 1958. Voegelin did not reply. He had a strict policy about answering criticisms of his works. To merit a reply, the critic must have understood his reasoning, his objections must have had theoretical merit, and he must have presented his criticisms respectfully. If Voegelin did not answer Rosen, we may assume that he judged the review defective on one or more of these counts. We know that he did read the critique but took no interest in it.

We who acknowledge Eric Voegelin as one of our teachers have an old obligation with respect to Rosen’s review. In this paper, I shall attempt to explain the nature of the obligation and then begin to discharge it.

I. THE NATURE OF THE OBLIGATION

It is appropriate to declare at the outset that we who honor Voegelin with the name of "teacher" do not have an obligation to defend him against Rosen’s attack. Voegelin chose not to answer Rosen, for the reasons stated. We must respect his decision. Actually, we have an old obligation to ourselves.

It will help us to learn our duty if we begin by reminding ourselves of the most famous thesis of Rosen’s teacher, Leo Strauss. In Strauss’s opinion, a "philosopher," a genuinely "great man," taught "truth" esoterically, in a way that "deliberately deceived the large majority of his readers." This philosopher had been "driven to the conclusion that public communication of the philosophic or scientific truth was impossible or undesirable, not only for the time being but for all times." Accordingly, he limited himself to "oral instruction of a carefully selected group" or to writing about "the most important subject" only by means of "brief indication," i.e., by asserting one thing in his texts and another "between the lines" of his publications. In his exoteric pronouncements, the great man expounded opinions that were "not in all respects consonant with truth." That is, he spread "noble lies." He also provided "poetic or dialectic presentation" of "the truth," leaving it to his philosophic readers to disentangle noble lies from nobler truths. For "he would defeat his purpose if he indicated clearly which of his statements expressed a noble lie and which the still more noble truth." The philosophic reader, coming upon the text later, could penetrate to the noble truth by adapting to his exegesis "the rules of certainty," which seem to be, but probably are not, rules for decoding esoteric writing.
This thesis asserts a dubious truth claim. The great philosopher, Socrates, proclaimed his ignorance, his lack of knowledge of the truth, on the day that he went on trial for his life and on numerous other occasions in Plato’s dramatic representations of him. We doubt that Plato the writer is in a position to conceal "the truth" about "the most important subject" (the very identity of which Strauss refuses to reveal) from the great majority of his readers because we understand his Socrates to have said that he does not have the truth, so that he could not be hiding it from anybody. Strauss disposes of this difficulty neatly. He maintains that irony (here, a synonym for esotericism) "in the highest sense" is "the dissimulation of one's wisdom, i.e., the dissimulation of one's wise thoughts." It takes two forms, one of which is expressing opinions less wise than one's own and the other of which is refraining from expressing one's views "on the ground that one does not have knowledge regarding it." In other words, one of Socrates' noble lies was that he did not possess the truth. The philosopher can and does know the most important truth and must shield it from the unphilosophic many. One of his means of hiding it is the proclamation of the lie that he does not know it. Now, if we wonder how we can be assured that Socrates was lying about his ignorance, the answer is that we penetrate to this truth by adapting Strauss' rules of certainty to the exegesis of Plato, if, happily, we are philosophic ourselves, so that we can understand correct applications of the rules of certainty. It seems that we are not philosophic if we do not appreciate the certainty of Strauss' use of the rules of certainty. If this is our situation, we will not be able to grasp that Socrates was lying about his ignorance. Too bad for us that we are unphilosophic, so that we cannot break into this circle of logic. However, fortunately for Rosen, he is a student of Strauss who is able to read genuine philosophers from a position inside the circle. Although Rosen has substantial disagreements with what he calls Strauss' "general program," he affirms with his teacher that: "In sum: It is entirely clear that Plato practices esotericism." He and other friends of Strauss regard this as so obvious that dissent strikes them as deliberately perverse. More significantly, Rosen also receives some or all of "the truth" about "the most important subject" from Strauss and maintains it against all comers.

Our situation is entirely different. Our perception of our condition has compelled us to proclaim ourselves publicly as "those who do not know," or "those who are in aporia." We believe, although we do not know certainly, that Socrates was telling the truth about his lack of knowledge of the truth. We are sure that we can apply Socrates' description of himself in the Apology to ourselves: Our wisdom is that we are worth nothing with respect to wisdom. Those of us who happen to be Christians, or at least Christians in Voegelin's understanding of the word, also profess that: "Uncertainty is the very essence of Christianity." In re what we assume to be the most important topic, we have received no truths that are certain to us, not from Socrates and Plato, not from the authors of the Bible (in the cases of those of us who are Jews and Christians), and not from Voegelin and our other great contemporary mentors. We regard it as impossible in principle that we could have been taught the highest truths as certain knowledge by these teachers, for we take Socrates seriously when he says:

Education is not what the professions of certain men assert it to be. They presumably assert that they put into the soul knowledge that isn't in it, as though they were putting sight into blind eyes. . . . But the present argument, on the other hand . . . indicates that this power is in the soul of each, and that the instrument with which each learns - just as an eye is not able to turn toward the light from the dark without the whole body - must be turned around from that which is
coming into being together with the whole soul . . . There would therefore be an art of this
turning around, concerned with the way in which this power can most easily and efficiently be
turned around, not an art of producing sight in it.  

We hold that we have not learned certainties from our teachers in the sense that we know that the
teachers have not put vision (conceived as propositional truths verified to our minds) into the
eyes of our souls. If we believe that our teachers have helped us, we suppose or hope that they
have turned us around, so that we might see for ourselves such insights as we may obtain, which
do not add up to wisdom or knowledge. Considering that we receive no propositional dogmas
from Voegelin, or at least none about "the most important subject," it is not possible that we
could maintain or defend any doctrines of his against all comers. It could not be our obligation to
be loyal disciples who vindicate his truths.

What is our obligation, then? It is complex. In our uncertainty, we need to make clear to
ourselves why we think that Voegelin might have helped us to turn around, or why he may have
assisted in opening us to truth, or why he might have contributed to the breaking of the hold of
old passions and shibboleths upon our souls. Among other things, this is to say that we owe it to
ourselves to lead the Socratic, philosophic life. Plato and his Socrates never for a moment let
themselves rest content in the possession of a truth. Whenever there seemed to be a danger that
their inquiries had reached definitive conclusions, they promptly cast doubt on their reasoning
and started again. Rosen gives us an opportunity to do this. We should have seized it long ago.
Our task is to try again to know what we have been tempted to think we already knew by letting
Rosen's critique of Voegelin inspire renewed doubt and inquiry in us. We should make sure
that we have mastered the arguments on both sides of the disagreement between Voegelin and
Rosen. Then we should inquire what we really know about the issues, how far our knowledge
extends, and whether and why one should side with Voegelin. Maybe the result should be our
best account of the limits of our ability to know, and, hence, why we are necessarily people in
aporia.

Of course, to take Rosen this seriously might mean that, occasionally, we have to call a spade a
spade. If it should prove that Rosen's review of Order and History, together with some of his
subsequent work, seems to us to be quite wrong, even dangerous to a soul's life in quest of the
truth, we shall have to speak up. Sometimes we too must say: "Posterity may know we have not
loosely through silence permitted things to pass away as in a dream." This could give our study a
more polemical aspect than we normally should like it to have.

I turn to the analysis of Rosen's review. I start with cursory, superficial impressions. The
critique seems to have been written in a spirit of anger. It is organized not as a systematic
argument that establishes premises and then draws well-founded inferences, but in a stream-of-
consciousness fashion in which the critic states objections as he thinks of them. My analysis of
Rosen's critique cannot be more systematic than his essay. I need to follow him where he
wanders. Neither can my essay deal with all of Rosen's objections to Voegelin severally. If it
did, my response to an article of twenty printed pages would expand to quadruple the size. I shall
attempt to compress and meditate upon Rosen's argument under a few catch-all rubrics - not an
ideal method but the best possible given present constraints.
II. HERMENEUTICS

Before entering upon substantive problems, it is necessary to examine Rosen’s critique of Voegelin’s method of reading great thinkers. Rosen asserts: "One is forced to wonder how Voegelin knows that his interpretations are correct, i.e., what Plato believed, or even wanted his readers to believe," and he asserts that Voegelin’s principles of interpretation are "cryptic."8

With regard to the hermeneutic problem, the general principle of what loosely is called Voegelin’s "theory of symbolic forms" is that one should attempt to move from symbols that poets, prophets, and philosophers use as analogies back to the experiences that originate them. How do we do that as we interpret a philosophic theory? Voegelin’s most concise statement appears in The New Science of Politics:

Theory is not just any opining about human existence in society; it rather is an attempt at formulating the meaning of existence by explicating the content of a definite class of experiences. . . . In the first place, theory cannot be developed under all conditions by everybody. The theorist need perhaps not be a paragon of virtue himself, but he must, at least, be capable of imaginative re-enactment of the experiences of which theory is an explication . . . And, second, theory as an explication of certain experiences is intelligible only to those in whom the explication will stir up parallel experiences as the empirical basis for testing the truth of theory.9

So, the optimum result of reading a great thinker and seeking parallel experiences in ourselves is that we believe, without being certain, that we understand the philosopher’s meanings, for his statements seem to indicate that his experiences resemble ours.

Whether Rosen understands Voegelin’s hermeneutic reasoning or not, he disparages it. He insists upon "a scrupulous effort to see the Greeks as they saw themselves." If we were to protest that Voegelin makes precisely such an effort, by attempting to dig beneath symbols to the experiences that caused the Greeks to create them, Rosen would deny that it is so, arguing: "We must know what they [the Greeks] thought, and we must try to think those thoughts as though they were both true and our own."10 Evidently, to venture to understand the Greeks by comparing their experiences with ours inevitably generates anachronisms. We must dispel that error by getting inside Greek minds. If it were possible to comply with this demand, our achievement would be infinitely superior to Voegelin’s. An attractive prospect, this. I gladly would leave Voegelin in the lurch and go sit at Rosen’s feet if he would teach me how to know what Plato thought. Therefore, it behooves us to take instruction from Rosen on the point, if he gives any. This could be our chance to get a glimpse of the rules of certainty.

Rosen attends to these matters in Hermeneutics as Politics. At the basis of his analysis, one finds an appeal to common sense with which I strongly agree: "If there is such a thing as the interpretation of a text, as opposed to the writing of a new text by the ostensible reader, then it is obvious that there is a core meaning in the text that has been placed there by the author, who expected it to be intelligible to perceptive readers without the aid of elaborate hermeneutic tools."11 But a problem arises immediately. I think that I am a perceptive reader. Rosen is certain
that he is one. We disagree about Plato's intentions. For example, whereas I think with Voegelin that Plato's term, "the good," refers to an unknown, unknowable force experienced in the soul, Rosen emulates Strauss by following Aristotle and taking "the good" to refer to a logical category. Whereas I am persuaded with Voegelin that Plato creates images of the good and myths of Eros to symbolize realities that are not objects of cognition, Rosen is convinced with his teacher that everything (the whole) is an object of cognition in principle, if not yet in practice, that it is proper to follow Al Farabi by understanding Plato "without the forms" (the images of the sun, line, and cave have vanished from the Republic in Strauss' study of this dialogue in The City and Man), and that the myths are merely lies. How can common sense settle this dispute when it seems that both of us could not have it?

But wait: I seem to have forgotten that "no text worth reading wears its meaning on its sleeve." I am perceptive only if I can fathom esoteric texts. How do I do that? Rosen replies: "There are no canons by which one can usefully restrict legitimate from illegitimate readings. Nevertheless, this did not prevent generations of intelligent authors from communicating with intelligent readers." Having mulled over the problematic implications of this for a while, he repeats his conclusion: "No rules can teach us how to interpret esoteric texts." So, clearly, the rules for reading esoteric texts that Strauss ostensibly enumerates in Persecution and the Art of Writing are not actually rules for reading esoteric texts; at most, they are a list of prudential maxims for competent reading that competent readers do not need. We are left to infer that works of genius are grasped only by geniuses. That is that. Thus, Rosen refuses to tell us his method of knowing what Plato thought, if there is one, and he insists that he could not teach us such a procedure in any case because there is not one. Suspecting that this always was his stance, and Strauss' actual position too, one wonders how it was fair that Rosen demanded of Voegelin an account of how he "knew" that Plato meant what he said, or how it was just that he accused Voegelin of being "cryptic." Perhaps Rosen has played an old rhetorical trick.

This does not exhaust the issue. If there are no rules for interpreting esoteric texts, and if the genius understands them nevertheless, either of two situations obtains: (1) There are no criteria for reading esoteric texts that come in the form of generally applicable rules but there are criteria that validate interpretations without admitting of codification into laws. A genius recognizes the anomic criteria when he sees them, much as a chess master effortlessly envisages a move that nobody else can imagine. (2) There simply are no criteria for interpreting esoteric texts. The genius makes texts mean whatever he wants them to mean. His genius lies not in his ability to grasp difficult criteria but in his ability to trick or terrorize others into accepting his word about the meanings of texts. One might think that Rosen would opt for the former explanation of the superiority of his Platonic studies to Voegelin's readings. However, if one did assume this, one could be in for a surprise. As noted above, Rosen disagrees with Strauss' general program. Part of his dissent is that he thinks that Strauss keeps too many secrets: the corruption of our time demands greater openness. Hence, he reveals something that Strauss had kept deeply buried. Here and there in Hermeneutics, he discloses that: "Both philosophy and religion rest upon an act of the will." He speaks for himself and Strauss. The disclosure seems to imply that, as mentioned above, Strauss' "rules of certainty" probably are not canons for interpreting esoteric texts. If studying texts is part of philosophy, and if philosophy is an act of the will, the hermeneutic "rules of certainty" reduce to these: Certainty lies in the will, not in the intellect. Texts certainly will mean what Strauss and Rosen want them to mean.
Whether Rosen is a genius whose thought is infinitely beyond me or a noble liar who conceals his hermeneutic principles by denying their existence, I cannot attain to confidence in his insinuations that he knows Plato’s thought better than Voegelin does. I am skeptical when Strauss and his students achieve their results by suppressing key and potentially embarrassing texts, even when they justify this practice by appealing to thinkers such as Farabi. Naturally, I am even less impressed by arguments that Plato means this or that because Strauss and Rosen will it to be so. I also must confess to a doubt that is more fundamental: I suspect that Rosen only pretends to know what Plato thought. I do not believe that anyone could know certainly what is in another’s mind because we are not in each other’s minds. In answer to the question of how Voegelin "knows" that his renditions of Plato are correct, I must repeat that Voegelin does not know that. Voegelin believes it because Plato’s concepts appear to refer to experiences that correspond to his own. We cannot advance beyond belief to certainty about what Plato thought. I also are in aporia about an intriguing mystery: Why does it appear that Voegelin’s admitted uncertainty about Plato’s meanings is cognitively superior to Strauss’ self-proclaimed certainty and to the postmodernist opinion that every reader of a text rewrites it? Why does it seem reasonable to seek insight into Plato’s experiences by comparing them with our own? I think that this is the right way to read Plato but cannot quite explain why.

III. GOD AND CHRISTIANITY

In Rosen’s perception, Voegelin’s central thesis is that "order in history depends upon the recognition of the transcendental source of order," which is "the Christian God." Men are expected to acknowledge the truth "that God is the source of the order of being." Voegelin’s grounds for this demand are shaky: "As proof of God’s existence, Voegelin points implicitly to his faith, and explicitly to the faith of others, which he calls their historical experience. A non-believer may express doubt as to the force of this historical demonstration, but Voegelin has no patience with such gnosticism."

Further, "civilizations are evaluated in terms of their anticipation of, approach to, or withdrawal from this God." Thus, as regards the subjects of the books under review, "Voegelin is not interested in the Greeks, except insofar as they may be used to assist his Toynbean march through history toward God." In relation to Christian revelation, the celebration of which is the aim of his march, "Greek thought is prejudged as a defective preliminary vision of historical and metaphysical truth." Further, "in the process of being rejected or completed, classical thought takes on a remarkably Christian appearance." A more ironic consequence is that Voegelin, who dislikes liberalism, in his "christianization of the Greeks produces anachronisms of the most extreme liberalism."  

Although these complaints are only a minute fraction of the charges that Rosen levels against Voegelin, they already are a huge bite to chew. I shall stop here and try to digest them a little, discussing the questions of God and Christianity separately.

With regard to God, it appears to me that Rosen has gotten Voegelin’s argument quite wrong. Voegelin must have sighed in deep discouragement, for he had taken pains to explain that:

Truth is not a body of propositions about a world-immanent object; it is the world-transcendent sumnum 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.\textsuperscript{20}

This being Voegelin's account of the nature of the highest truth, he could not mean to say that order in history depends upon "recognition of the transcendental source of order," or upon acknowledgment of "the truth" that "God is the source of the order of being." He could not intend to offer a "proof of God's existence," particularly not one premised on what Rosen takes to be "faith." The mistake here is that, while Voegelin denies that truth is a proposition about an object of cognition, and Rosen even knows this,\textsuperscript{21} Rosen insists on making him issue propositions about objects of cognition called "the transcendental source of order" and "God."

I should spell this out a little further. Evidently, Rosen envisages Voegelin's thought as a sequence of the following steps: Voegelin imagines a supernatural entity with such and such qualities: this being, not those other entities fancifully adored by other people; a certain being with these traits and not those. Then he comes to believe in the reality of this entity, much as a child might become irrationally convinced that some imaginary monster lives under the bed. Then he concocts half-baked historical demonstrations of the existence of the being, reasoning that such and such historical personages had faith in the entity, so it must be there. Then he erects a system of propositional affirmations about the nature and actions of the entity, replete with the dire warning that there will be disorder unless everybody admits the objective truth of his propositions. Finally he demands the universal acknowledgment of the veracity of his creed that he believes necessary to order. A farrago of sophisticated superstition.

But Voegelin makes a different argument in his study of the philosophic consciousness. He says that Plato, for example, experiences a stirring in his soul. Plato does not know what causes it. He strongly assures others that he is not certain what the source is. He cannot give it a name that captures its essence. He wants his readers to understand that he is symbolizing his inner experience. He feels the stirring forming his character and he lovingly responds to it. He thinks that his experience and response are the grounds of right order in human affairs. So, it is not that he "recognizes a transcendental source of order" and makes this blind leap the premise of a system of unsupportable ideas that he will force on his fellow man. Rather, it is that he is amazed by the experience of a powerful ordering of his soul and wonders about the nature of the force that injects this order into a human life. In this account, which Rosen has gotten totally backwards, Voegelin rejects all unwarranted belief in the beings of imagination. He does not know a supernatural entity. He claims to have proved nothing, for there are no objects of cognition that he could affirm.\textsuperscript{22} His Plato simply is transformed by an experience. Voegelin does not equate "faith" with this experience. Rather, he says that Plato's response to the experience is philosophy.\textsuperscript{23} He knows no "right" name for the reality that is the source of the experience. In his remarks quoted above, he employs a name close to one Platonic choice, \textit{summum bonum}, not "the Christian God." But "God" also serves. None of the symbols used signifies cognition of the experienced reality in the modality of cognition of worldly things.\textsuperscript{24}

We should observe here that Voegelin's reading of Plato is at least a plausible account of the philosopher's intention. It is not self-evidently wrong. To show this, we may compare it with Socrates' first remark about the good as he goes around the longer way in the \textit{Republic}, together with some of Socrates' other utterances. Socrates' first comment is as follows: "Now
this is what every soul pursues and for the sake of which it does everything. The soul divines (\(\text{B@:"\text{-}:J,\text{L}:X<0}\)) that it is something but is at a loss about it and unable to get a sufficient grasp of just what it is, or to have a stable trust such as it has about the rest" (505e). Voegelin's symbol, "experience of transcendence," appears to correspond exactly to Socrates' declaration that we cannot have "trust" (\(\text{pistis}\)) about the good. If we could have \(\text{pistis}\) regarding the good, this would place the good on the second level of the divided line, on which reside the worldly things that we know by means of \(\text{pistis}\), our mode of cognition of worldly things. Voegelin's term also tallies with Socrates' remark that education causes us to look away from that which is "coming into being," which is another reference to all the objects on the second level of the line, i.e., all the things there are in this world. Further, it is consistent with Socrates' image of the cave, in which education takes us up and out of our natural state. Voegelin's assertion that the transcendent \textit{sumnum bonum} is experienced as an orienting force in the soul corresponds directly to Socrates' remark that the good is that which every soul pursues and for which the soul does everything that it does. Voegelin's declarations that the transcendent good is not an object of cognition and that we can speak of it only with analogical symbols match Socrates' dicta that we are in \textit{aporia} over it and cannot get a suitable grasp of what it is: when we cannot appeal to essences, we necessarily resort to analogies. Voegelin's interest in analogical symbols also seems justified, e.g., by Plato's use of the images of the sun, line, and cave in the \textit{Republic} and the myths of Eros in the \textit{Symposium} and the \textit{Phaedrus}. Voegelin's paradoxically uncertain confidence that Plato's experience nevertheless has a real source befits Socrates' statement that we "divine" that the good is "something" (\(\text{ti}\)). Voegelin is apophatic without being agnostic. I realize, incidentally, that issues as complicated as these cannot be resolved by lining up a few proof texts, as I just have done, but the limits of space and time occasionally force us to resort to our own versions of "brief indication."

The allusion to divining poses a question: how Voegelin can know that a transcendent good is actually there in the soul and really transcendent? If we understand this query in the positivistic sense that Rosen would mean it, we give the same answer: Voegelin does not \textit{know} that. He is incapable of saying what a "transcendent good" is. He does not know what "really transcendent" is. He cannot issue propositions about such realities as if they were objects of cognition. However, if we examine the problem as Voegelin does, we can assert a little more. Voegelin's Plato knows that something has happened to him in the same manner that all of us know that something has happened to us, by experiencing it. This Plato attempts an exegesis of his experience. As he focuses on the unknown source of the experience, he decides to call it "good" \textit{by analogy} with other things that have affected him in ways that he thought good. He decides to call it "beyond being" (for which Voegelin employs the synonym "transcendent") \textit{by negative analogy} with all the things he has experienced in this world; he cannot find in his experience anything that the source of the new experience resembles. If asked how he knows that the unknown and unknowable source of the experience is there, or how he knows that he has not merely been hallucinating, I suppose that he would reply (a) that it is impossible to be certain of that with respect to any experience whatsoever and, therefore, that one is obliged to be extraordinarily cautious when reporting this particular experience, which is why Socrates invariably speaks of it in the language of "seeming," and (b) that, although he does not possess absolutely certain knowledge of the presence of the source of his experience, his soul "divines" (\(\text{B@:"\text{-}:J,\text{L}:X<0}\)) it - this being a mode of experience that merits trust as much as any other when the speaker is a self-critical Socrates. Now, this analysis engages us in a most profound
aporía. In my undoubted ignorance, I think that I am not the ground of my own fulfillment. Seeking my fulfillment from outside myself, I wonder whether I may have an experience such as Plato and Voegelin describe. I also wonder whether I already have had the experience but do not recognize it. I wonder whether I can be sufficiently careful about the dangers of self-delusion when I search my soul for signs of the "divination" to which Socrates appeals. I am content to spend a lifetime pondering these matters, for I see no way to an ultimate personal fulfillment other than the ones that Voegelin argues were suggested by Socrates, the prophets, the Christ, and others like them - which I do not take for a proof that they are available.

If Rosen had understood Voegelin's notion of the highest truth as the *summum bonum* that is divined in the soul, he would have rejected it as "extreme piety." In *Hermeneutics* and other works, Rosen repeatedly, vehemently tells us that: "The ancient philosophers rejected the warnings of the poets, as exemplified in Pindar's admonition: *do not strive to be a god.*" "The man of religious faith regards it as madness to attempt to become a god. The pagan philosophers, especially those of the Socratic school, thought otherwise." Socrates says in the *Philebus,* "the wise all agree, thereby exalting themselves, that intellect [nous] is king for us of heaven and earth." The "philosophical question of the Platonic dialogues, and in particular of the *Phaedrus,*" is "how can a human being become a god?" The political name of individuals "who aspire to be gods" is "philosopher kings." Kojève is "exactly like Plato" in that he tries "to become a god." Plato was a "seriously playful god." Aristotle says in the *Ethics* that the theoretical life is higher than human life, adding: "Not *qua* human will one live it, but he will achieve it by virtue of something divine in him ... If then the intellect is divine in comparison with man, so is the life of the intellect divine in comparison with human life." In announcing this fact, "Aristotle is even more explicit than Plato ... Aristotle's representation of himself as divine is a radical simplification of Plato's poetic evasiveness." Generally, "As Socrates puts it, the classical philosopher wills that the intellect be god." "Kant acts not like a humble empirical scientist but like a world-maker or god." "On the Hegelian account, one denies the separation of the eternal from the temporal, or identifies the two as the structure of the Concept, that is, the philosophical speech about the totality or the whole. ... As a consequence, ... he who is able to repeat the totality of this discourse becomes a god." Nietzsche, "like all great philosophers, engages in the divine prerogative of willing a world into being and hence of creating a way of life." Among moderns, "from Descartes forward, the intellect resolves that the will be god." "Strauss and Kojève, and Strauss as much as Kojève (once we put aside Strauss's exoteric flirtation with Hebraic tradition) are atheists who wish to be gods." Rosen himself does not wish to risk "being excluded from the company of the gods." In an ironic twist, it turns out to be Rosen, not Voegelin, who must know what a god is, for Rosen wants to be one, and he hardly could wish for this without knowing what he wishes. And, indeed, he tells us what it means to be a god: it is to be *causa sui.* Rosen wants to be the ground of his own fulfillment. One suspects that, if a real god other than ourselves could be known like matter, Rosen would want to get rid of the deity. One can see why Rosen would dislike piety.

Now, it appears to me that Rosen misconstrues the proof texts that he selects from the ancient philosophers, Plato and Aristotle. In some cases, the quotations do not even seem on their faces to mean what Rosen says they mean (particularly the one culled from Aristotle). In other cases, the passages appear to acquire the meanings that Rosen gives them only when they have been ripped from their contexts. I do not have the space here to correct all the fallacies of this type that
Rosen spins into the ancient texts. Suffice to say that Rosen should have paid some attention to *Phaedrus* 278d, in which Socrates explicitly disavows the epithet "wise" for men such as himself, on the grounds that the appellation is fitting for god alone (2, ☽' < ☽), a statement that clearly implies that Socrates does not think himself a god, and a statement that is not contradicted by other Platonic texts, no matter how hard Strauss and his students try to manufacture such a contradiction. But arguments to this effect probably are made in vain. If certainty lies in Rosen's will, and if texts accordingly mean what he wants them to mean, it is impossible to converse with him about these matters. Therefore, I shall conclude this part of my analysis with these considerations: Because Plato allegedly agrees with Kant about being a god (and about other things not relevant here), Rosen assures us that we must admit that Plato "was in fact a Kantian." In other words, "Plato was a ☽modern, ☽ not an ☽ancient." It appears to me that, in this facilely contrived modernization of the Greeks, it is Rosen, not Voegelin, who "produces anachronisms of the most extreme liberalism." But this dispute about Plato's intentions is less important than Rosen's dismissal of Pindar's warning. I know of nothing in my nature that would permit me to be the ground of my own fulfillment. As far as I can tell, Pindar was right: wanting to be a god is madness. Rosen invites us not to a life in quest of the truth, but to a Nietzschean life of willful self-delusion that differs fundamentally from Plato's divine madness.

Let us turn to the problem of Christianity. Rosen's critique of Voegelin has merit in one respect but not in another. We must examine each side of the issue.

In the *New Science*, Voegelin speaks of a "giant cycle" in the history of civilizations. In this cycle, "the acme . . . would be marked by the appearance of Christ; the pre-Christian high civilizations would form its ascending branch; modern, Gnostic civilizations would form its descending branch." One can see why Rosen would get the impressions that, in Voegelin's *Order and History* II-III, civilizations are evaluated in terms of their anticipation of, approach to, or withdrawal from Christian revelation and that Greek thought is prejudged as a defective preliminary vision of historical and metaphysical truth. One can see why Rosen would hold that Voegelin was not interested in the Greeks for their own sakes and that he was massaging Greek texts to make them fit into a historical march toward Christian dogma. Rosen had the right to challenge the giant cycle thesis (although some Christians think it true and, indeed, it could be true). As we know, Voegelin himself abandoned the thesis in *Order and History*, IV, *The Ecumenic Age*. He was magnanimous enough to confess an error. Rosen could not have been expected to know that the recantation was coming. One frets that Voegelin should have answered him, at least on this point.

However, that is not the end of the matter. In lodging his admittedly proper objection to Voegelin's grand historical thesis, Rosen implicitly suggests that arbitrary faith is the only reason that Voegelin adduces for concluding to the superiority of Christian insights to Greek insights. Rosen thereby paints a distorted picture of Voegelin's ordinary procedure. In case after case in volumes two and three of *Order and History*, Voegelin identifies serious theoretical problems, gives detailed analyses of the elements of the problems, and then reasons to the superiority of Christian solutions of the problems not because the solutions are Christian, but because they seem to alleviate the problems better than the Greek solutions do. In constructing these arguments, Voegelin publicly offers his evidence and logic (this being something that
Strauss and his students never do, for they feel obliged to conceal the truth from the unreliable many). Reasonable people may inspect his reasoning and agree or disagree. It is his commitment to this open methodology that leads Voegelin to break with his grand historical thesis: he finds facts that no longer permit him to maintain what he previously had maintained. In his subsequent work, Voegelin continues to identify serious theoretical problems, analyze the elements of the problems, and reason to solutions of the problems that appear to alleviate the problems best. Sometimes he still argues for the superiority of Christian solutions. At other times he argues for the superiority of Greek solutions. Given that Voegelin could have been seen to be offering his reasons in 1958, and given that it is not totally inconceivable that, once in a very great while, a Christian solution to a problem could be superior to a Greek solution, we must suggest that it was illegitimate for Rosen to use Voegelin’s grand historical thesis as an excuse for reviewing the two volumes as if they did not contain the reasoned case studies, thus, in effect, painting Voegelin as nothing but an ideologue.

It will be fitting to offer an example of what I am discussing. I choose the illustration not quite randomly: it concerns a problem that will arise again later in this paper, the question of the polis. Voegelin (OH III, pp. 223ff) follows Plato to the discovery of the rather obvious problem that it is difficult to embody justice in existing societies. (Voegelin here calls justice "the order of the spirit" because justice is an order that Plato has found in the experiences of his soul.) A primary element of this problem is that most human beings either refuse to be or try and fail to be just. A secondary element of the problem is that a just polis, if it could be built, would be too small to maintain itself against the murderous depredations of other poleis and empires. Plato sees the need for "a more comprehensive organization," not necessarily a United States of America or an ancient Persia, but perhaps a federation of poleis. To believe in the ability of a just polis to preserve itself without integrating itself into a more comprehensive unit would be a purely utopian fantasy, a faith in deified human beings with superhuman powers who never could exist, Rousseau to the contrary notwithstanding. Voegelin perceives an evolution of Plato’s thinking on this issue from the Republic to the Laws. I think that he is wrong about the evolution. However, that is not very important, for it is Plato’s solution of the problem in the Laws that is of absorbing interest here.

According to Voegelin, Plato seeks a federation of Hellenic poleis under the leadership of a hegemonic polis. He cannot suggest an order on the Persian model, which would be very undesirable in light of the Persians’ ignorance of the order of the spirit. Neither does he want to propose what we have come to regard as a Machiavellian solution: political power must not be separated from the spirit, "for the soul of the tyrant would have to close itself demonically against the law of the spirit that doing evil is worse than suffering evil." Now, "Plato is not a Christian saint," says the Voegelin who allegedly makes Plato a Christian. Unlike a Christian, Plato "wants to embody the Idea in the community of a polis." Voegelin comments that: "He could not know that he struggled with a problem that had to be solved through the Church." It is "one of the functions of the Church" that it mediates the "stark reality" of the Idea (in the Christian case, the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount) "to the level of human expediency, with a minimum loss of substance." Plato opts for a theocracy in which the lawgivers preface their nomoi with "preludes" intended to inject the Idea into the polis. He seems to be trying to get political lawgivers to do what the Church later does. Voegelin concludes by contending that: "The theocracy is the limit of Plato’s conception of order, because he does not advance to the
distinction of spiritual and temporal order. Plato's experience of the life of the spirit as an attunement of the soul with the divine Measure is essentially universal . . . but the last step is never taken - and was not to be taken by man without revelation." Still, as the creator of the "religious poem" that the *Laws* clearly is (and even Strauss agrees, in his ironic way, that the subject of the *Laws* is prophecy), Plato has entered "the universal community of the Spirit."

Pondering this reasoning, I think that all of the following assertions are possibly - I do not say certainly - true: It is hard to embody justice in existing societies. A just polis generally would have trouble preserving its existence. The problem of embodying justice in historically real societies probably would have to find its solution in a more comprehensive organization than the polis, perhaps in a federation of poleis. But the Greeks never were able to effect this solution and probably could not have done so, given the defects of human nature that make it hard to embody justice in societies in the first place. The Church conceivably could be a more effective instrument for embodying justice in societies, although at times it has functioned as a tool of terrible injustice. It could provide an adequate context for the exercise of *phronesis* and the other virtues in any political order, thus excelling the polis as an organization in which we might better ourselves. Plato did not hit upon this solution. It is likely that he did not think of it because he never quite distinguished spiritual order from temporal order. But there is a real distinction between these two types of order. Hence, in this matter, Plato did not quite discover the whole truth, which is not to say that, in other affairs, his achievements were not greater. It may well be that understanding of the superior solution in this case had to wait for Christian revelation. I repeat: I do not know certainly that these propositions are true. I find them at least arguable. Rosen might have done himself more credit by debating the questions with Voegelin on the merits instead of scorning him as an ideologue. Perhaps Rosen did not do this because he himself held a dogmatic position. Perhaps he was unwilling to entertain the possibility that there is a distinction between spiritual and temporal order. Perhaps because Aristotle asserts - in a rather sketchy argument - that the polis is the culmination of naturally growing associations, or perhaps because Plato and Aristotle seem to consider the polis as the preeminent context for the exercise of the virtue of *phronesis*, Strauss and his students take it upon themselves to cast anathemas on anyone who suggests that the polis is not the be-all and end-all of human possibilities of order. One cannot know what their arguments are because they do not give them: they are content to denounce heretics who stray from the Greek line.32 Meanwhile, we have stumbled across another enduring aporia: Can we embody justice in the affairs of mankind? If so, how? We still make a bad job of it, polis or no polis, Church or no Church, America or no America. Perhaps it is impossible to realize this aim.

### IV. PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

Rosen's dislike of piety is related to another obsession of his. Rosen assaults Voegelin with a fierce barrage of charges that reflect philosophic disdain for theology. To get the flavor of these accusations, I can quote a few. "Nor in all accuracy is it philosophy which he admires, except insofar as it may be transformed into theology.\" "Philosophy is, not quite useless, but the articulate handmaiden of faith; for, by Logos, Voegelin means experienced revelation. . . . the study of history becomes a piece of religious propaganda, illuminated from above.\" "Thus philosophy as a whole is transformed into mystical theology.\" "When he is most sympathetic toward the Greeks, Voegelin interprets them as but a step away from the truth of Revelation . . .
it unfortunately leads him to trivialize philosophy."

"[T]he basic philosophical problem (that of transcendence) . . . is a problem of passionate experience rather than reason. When the will succumbs to passion, apparently the result is theory." "A sensitivity to the existential dimension in Greek philosophy is admirable so long as it does not distort or underemphasize the rationalist dimension. The merits of Voegelin's approach are compromised by this . . ." "The symbols of philosophy, exactly like the symbols of mythopoesis, have as their referent, which they more or less adequately represent, the transcendental divinity . . ." "[T]here can be for Voegelin no real distinction between symbolism (in the religious sense) and speculation, or between mythical-religious and mythical-philosophical symbolism. . . . Since all symbols have a religio-mystical referent, the philosophical dimensions of Plato's myths is in Voegelin's analysis obscured."

"The myth, the most important part of Plato's philosophy, is reduced to an entirely non-intellectual, non-conscious form: the myth is a revelation. Voegelin sees in Plato the totally unplatonic separation of myth, not just from verifiable propositions, but from reason . . ." "He excludes the possibility of a non-empiricist and non-mystical philosophy." As a result of Voegelin's sins of this ilk, the censures of which I have scarcely begun to quote in full, there will be "harm to the purposes of Greek philosophy which his prestige will effect." The envisaged purposes of Greek philosophy seem to be indicated by one of Rosen's most revealing statements: "Aristotle's justification of philosophy against the statement that God alone can have this privilege would seem to be a rejection of the view that the highest things are inaccessible to reason. . . . But the Greeks did not share [Voegelin's] view of reason. For Aristotle, in theorizing about the highest (non-material) things, the act of thinking is one with the object of thought."

In a somewhat imprecise way, Rosen has understood something here: Voegelin thinks that the most important instances of myth, philosophy, and faith represent "equivalences of experience and symbolization." Availing himself of a mythical symbolism to explain the rise of philosophy, he also supposes that: "Through the force of Eros the soul rises to the intellection of the Agathon" (OH III, p. 203). He also assumes that conceptions of myth, philosophy, and faith that portray these phenomena as systems of propositions about objects of cognition are "derailments" in which the originating experiences of symbols are lost and the now empty words persist as denatured pieces of verbiage that are manipulated in systems of doxa. He did not always believe this. When he was working on his abandoned history of ideas, he adhered to the concepts of myth, philosophy, and faith that he later came to condemn as derailments. He admits that he did so because he had a belief in ideas and histories of ideas that the current European intellectual climate had inculcated in him. He therefore offers his new understanding of myth, philosophy, and faith as a discovery, or a rediscovery, of the true natures of these phenomena. This should have been abundantly clear to Rosen. Thus, I would suppose that it was incumbent upon Rosen, as a scholarly reviewer, to recognize that a significant new thesis about philosophy was being offered and to provide a well-reasoned evaluation of its merits and demerits. Instead, he wrote a condemnation of the theory as an egregious departure from self-evident truth. His reaction is curious enough to justify an examination of the factors or issues that occasioned it.

It is clear from the outset that Rosen's response is that of an aggrieved dogmatist. Leo Strauss had taught his students that, as a type of thought, religion (or faith, or revelation) has the following characteristics: It comes as law or as creed. The laws or creeds are rigid. They contradict one another, making their claims to be what they are radically problematic. What the
laws or creeds purport to be is superhuman information imparted to prophets by gods and handed down to others by authority. This means that they are merely hearsay. If it is argued that they are based on the experiences of prophets, the experiences are not verifiable. What the prophets demand is blind trust, which is a far cry from theoretical certainty. Accordingly, unassisted human reason is invincibly ignorant of divine revelation. Philosophy, on the other hand, seeks wisdom accessible to the unassisted human mind, a mind not illumined by divine revelation. The philosopher insists on seeing with his own eyes. He quests for a knowledge of the whole that takes the form of verifiable propositions. Therefore: "No one can be both a philosopher and a theologian." These doctrines, hardly distinguishable from Nietzschean positivism, are debatable because they are not necessarily true representations of either faith or philosophy, but to Rosen they are certain truth.

But why maintain the absolute certainty of the radical distinction between philosophy and theology when the distinction is anything but a certainty? Indeed, when the distinction is so little a certainty that, if we operate on the level of proof texts, I can observe that Plato was the author of the term "theology" (Republic 379a5-6; cf. OH II, p. 174) and did considerable work in the field, that Aristotle argued: "There must, then, be three theoretical philosophies, mathematics, natural science, and theology . . . " (Metaphysics 1026a 19-20), and that Aristotle talked about god at length (especially in Metaphysics 1072b). And why Rosen's passionate rage?

If philosophy is an act of the will, Strauss and Rosen maintain their certainty about the radical distinction between philosophy and theology because they will it. Rosen's anger then appears to be a reaction to a threat to the object of his desire that Voegelin poses. The nature of that object and a fuller picture of the motives of Rosen's critique of Voegelin now may be allowed to come into view piecemeal:

(1) Rosen is serious about his rejection of the view that the highest things are inaccessible to reason. He obviously wants to maintain that the highest things are accessible to reason. When he co-opted Aristotle as authority for this position, he misconstrues Aristotle. It is true that Aristotle engages in a "justification of philosophy against the statement that God alone can have this privilege," i.e., the privilege of possessing a science of the first things and causes. Aristotle objects to Simonides' poetic line to this effect. He refutes Simonides on the grounds that the god is not jealous, as the poet had claimed. But when he comes to this conclusion, he argues: "Such a science either god alone can have or god above all others" (Metaphysics 983a10). Clearly, Aristotle holds that the highest of the highest things are accessible to the god alone. Further, in leading up to his conclusion about the three theoretical philosophies (mathematics, natural science, and theology), Aristotle notes that things that are both separable from matter and immovable, with which the first science deals, "are the causes of so much of the divine as appears to us" (1026a17-18). Rosen omits mention of this qualification because he hankers to believe that he can have all knowledge of the highest things simply, not only so much of that knowledge as is available to human beings, which is what Aristotle actually says when all his comments are collected and weighed.

It comes as no surprise that Rosen misreads Aristotle's in much the same way. This statement occurs relatively late in Aristotle's argument to the prime mover. When it is torn from its setting, we lose clarity about the extent of the highest things that are the
object of thought with which our act of thinking is one. Rosen supplies no proof that Aristotle has changed his mind about the ability of theoretical philosophy to see only "so much of the divine as appears to us." But there is much more to consider. Aristotle discusses the thorny problem of the relationship between the moved and the prime mover, transposing it into the relationship between thought and the object of thought (1072a15 ff). He notes that "thought is moved by the object of thought." This is a fundamental and permanent difference between the former and the latter. He says that thought is moved when the object of thought inspires love of itself in the thought that it moves. This is a second basic and eternal difference between thought and the object of thought. As Aristotle delves more deeply into the relationship between the two in an extremely difficult passage, he delivers himself of a declaration that I shall allow Voegelin to translate: "Thought (nous) thinks (noei) about itself because it shares the nature (metalepsis) of the object of thought (noeton); for it becomes an object of thought in coming into contact (thigannon) with and thinking (noon) its objects, so that thought and object of thought are the same. For that which is capable of receiving (dektikon) the object of thought, i.e., the essence (ousia) is thought (nous)" (1072b20-22). Voegelin comments that, in Aristotle, the will to knowledge has become "so exuberant that consciousness is in danger of drawing into itself the reality of the ground, a reality to which consciousness in its participation relates itself." Hence, he concludes: "It is no accident that we find the above-mentioned quotation from Aristotle in Hegel's gnostic-dialectical speculation as the great peroration of the Encyclopedia." Perhaps in disagreement with Voegelin, I think that Aristotle avoids the danger in question, for he still speaks of metalepsis. His thought participates in the object of thought; the object of thought is that in which thought participates. This is a third essential and permanent difference between thought and the object of thought. Aristotle then suddenly proceeds to speak of god, saying that it is wonderful if god always is in that good condition in which we sometimes are, that it is even more wonderful if god is in an even better state, and that this is the case: with regard to noetic felicity, god is in an even better state than we are. The first alternative sounds like a deliberate echo of the myth of Eros in the Phaedrus, more specifically, an echo of that part of the myth in which the gods are revolving serenely around outside the vault of the heavens and contemplating the hyperuranian realities while the souls of human beings are allowed only fleeting glimpses of the realities because their charioteers are having trouble with the horses. The second alternative envisages an even greater advantage for god. Now, it is only after imposing these qualifications that Aristotle finally says that thought is one with the object of thought. This confirms that Aristotle thinks that the highest things are fully accessible to god alone. (In this light, one could suggest that Aristotle's arguments are what Rosen least would like them to be, alternative symbolizations of Voegelin's experience of transcendence.) Rosen omits mention of this because he wants to embrace the prospect that Voegelin labels as a danger, that of permitting consciousness to draw the ground of being into itself. He wants to be a god. His impulse is Hegelian, not Platonic.

(2) I have searched the pages of Plato and Aristotle in vain for direct statements to the effect that philosophy should seek a wisdom accessible to the unassisted human mind, a mind not illumined by divine revelation, and that the wisdom should consist in a knowledge of the whole in the form of verifiable propositions. I wonder why Strauss and Rosen insist on this. Rosen supplies the answer when he says: "On the Hegelian account, one denies the separation of the eternal from the temporal, or identifies the two as the structure of the Concept, that is, the philosophical speech about the totality or the whole. . . . As a consequence, . . . he who is able to repeat the
totality of this discourse becomes a god." Strauss and Rosen want unassisted minds so that they can be entirely responsible for "the Concept." They demand a science of propositions about "the whole" because they think that this is what will transform philosophy into wisdom, thus deifying them. This plan is also Hegelian, not Platonic.

(3) Rosen profoundly misrepresents Voegelin by making him say that "the basic philosophic problem (that of transcendence) . . . is a problem of passionate experience rather than reason," and that: "When the will succumbs to passion, apparently the result is theory," all in an effort to prove that Voegelin is "anti-rational." In this matter, Voegelin is chiding Aristotle for having committed the error of tearing symbols of transcendence out of their experiential contexts and handling them as if they were concepts referring to a datum of sense experience. He remarks: "If the error is committed nevertheless, even by an Aristotle, one will look for its source not in a failing of the intellect but in a passionate will to focus attention so thoroughly on a particular problem that the wider range of the order of being is lost from sight" (OH III, pp. 277-278). In other words, Voegelin here is accusing Aristotle of having been irrational, if not antirational. One could dispute Voegelin's judgment of the affair: if Aristotle did make such a mistake, it could have been an error of reason rather than a distortion of reason by will. But Voegelin's thesis is not absurd; it deserves a respectful hearing. Why did it not get one?

I suspect that the answer is that Rosen senses something that really is in Voegelin and that he does not like what he senses, i.e., Voegelin's intimation that Aristotle has lost Plato's "Eros toward the Agathon" (OH III, p. 276). To insist openly that, in Plato, it is "through the force of Eros [that] the soul rises to the intellection of the Agathon," is to say that the decisive moment in philosophy, that in which the psyche begins its ascent to the good, originates in a passion of reason, not in a "passionate experience rather than reason," and not in a surrender of will to passion that becomes theory. Voegelin is thinking of something like Plato's wish for a "true eros for philosophy" in kings (Republic 499c1). In case Rosen missed this in those parts of Order and History devoted to Plato, Voegelin covers the ground again in the discussion of Aristotle that immediately precedes the passages over which Rosen takes umbrage. He repeats that the Platonic realm of eternal being "was experienced as a reality in the erotic fascination of the soul by the Agathon." Then, citing Aristotle's On Prayer, he strives to show that faith was seen by Aristotle as an equivalent of philosophy, in a fragment on the mystery religions, a saying that supports the opinion that: "The cognitio Dei through faith is not a cognitive act in which an object is given, but a cognitive, spiritual passion of the soul" (OH III, p. 275). Rosen should have noticed that the phrase "a cognitive passion of the soul" refers to reason, not will. Why did he not?

This question poses no great mystery. If Rosen permitted philosophy to begin with an "erotic fascination of the soul by the Agathon," as defined in the non-cognitive manner earlier explained, there would be something in the soul's movement toward philosophy not totally under human control. We would have to wonder about the nature of the force that pulled the original philosopher out of the cave, conceding that it was not a human force. Hence, Rosen cannot permit Platonic myths of Eros to be philosophically meaningful. To keep them from disturbing the philosopher's self-defication, he must not only rout Voegelin rhetorically, but do a bit of work on Plato as well. Thus, in later essays, he claims that the discussion of Eros in the Symposium is "defective." The very fact that Plato wrote the Phaedrus proves this (as if Plato
could not have written two flawless accounts of eros meant to serve different purposes). One defect of the *Symposium* is that it seems simply to equate Eros with philosophy. Another is that "it contains no adequate account of speech." Philosophy, argues Rosen, must be "vision and speech . . . it is vision and speech of the whole." Another defect of the *Symposium* is that it "does not take seriously enough the role of the nonlover." I pause here to wonder whether Plato did not omit the Hegelian account of the speech that deifies man and omit praises of the nonlover from the *Symposium* because he assumed that they did not belong in a non-defective account of eros. Rosen is not troubled by this prospect. He rushes full speed ahead. Turning to the *Phaedrus*, he informs us that the second speech of Socrates suffers from the same defects as the *Symposium*. Divine madness is "silence rather than speech." This is unacceptable to one who can tell Plato what philosophy must be: "We see here a lucid illustration of the defectiveness of the Platonic position when viewed from a Hegelian perspective." We must accept that: "Philosophical speech requires a detachment from erotic madness." But Rosen would defeat his purpose of co-opting Plato for the Hegelian project if he left the matter here. Therefore, he saves the enterprise by defending "that much and unjustly maligned character, the nonlover," never mind that the first person in the history of philosophy who maligns the nonlover is Socrates. He interprets the first two speeches of the *Phaedrus* as a "partial rehabilitation of the nonlover." This despite Socrates clear denunciation of both speeches as "dreadful," "simple-minded," and "impious" (242d). The magic of the rules of certainty makes Socrates maintain the opposite of what he ostensibly asserts. Thus, everything has been fitted back into Rosen's *Weltanschauung*. Now truly "philosophic" reason has been insulated from passionate eros and man's potential for complete self-deification has been restored.

(4) It is gratifying that a sensitivity to "the existential dimension in Greek philosophy" - whatever that is - "is admirable so long as it does not distort or underemphasize the rationalist dimension." But what lies beneath the label "existential"? Is it the same as "theological" and "mystical"? And what does "rational" mean? And what is the true relationship between the theological or mystical and the rational?

The easiest way to answer this question is to refer to Plato's Seventh Letter. In the so-called "philosophical digression," Plato argues that every existing object has three things that are necessary to knowledge of it: name, definition, and image. Fourth comes the knowledge. Fifth comes the object itself, knowable and true. Plato revises this schema slightly, saying that there is perfect knowledge of the thing at the level of the fifth. The nature of each of the first four is defective; only knowledge at the fifth is perfect. Now, intellectual endeavor with the first four is dialectic, what Rosen calls the "rational" side of philosophy. A philosopher must go up and down among the four to purify his or her soul. But the four are still defective. At the fifth, there is a jumping flame, a light, that brings the philosopher to the best knowledge. It is Voegelin's interest in the insight at the fifth that Rosen calls "theological" and "mystical." Indeed, Plato's words do refer to a mystical experience, as even Kant recognized, much to his chagrin. It seems evident that, for Plato, the "rational" side of philosophy, while necessary for the purification of souls, is subordinate to the mystical side. Rosen proposes to reverse that relationship for the reasons already ascertained.

(5) Voegelin discusses two kinds of myths in the volumes under review, the "cosmological" and the "philosophic." Rosen especially intends to criticize Voegelin's understanding of the
philosophic myth, i.e., the type of tale that Plato deliberately invents on many occasions in his dialogues. Rosen ventures to give Voegelin lessons on the nature of Platonist myth. He dogmatically repeats the instructions that he himself had from Strauss. "For Plato," he argues, "myth is of central philosophic importance." However, to know how and why this is so, we must understand what is what in philosophy. "A logos is a reasoned demonstration." On the contrary, "a myth is a likely story." Because "the whole" can be expressed "only in mythical language, the ultimate status of the logos would seem to be mythical as well." Voegelin takes too much encouragement from this and transforms philosophy into mystical theology. But his jump is contradicted "by the entire rationalist side of the dialogues." One might wonder why the whole can be expressed only in mythical language. It would seem that Rosen has an obligation to explain this if Voegelin is forbidden to take encouragement from it. But Rosen's argument tails off into a scolding of Voegelin for ignoring Plato's warning that his dialogues do not express his serious insights. Of course, this gives the game away. The "whole" can be expressed only in mythical language, or likely stories, because the truth about the whole must be concealed from the unreliable many, not because there is some intrinsic difficulty in stating truths about the whole in the language of cognition of worldly objects. It only seems that the ultimate status of the logo is mythical. The myths really are pure lies that conceal the truth known through unrevealed logoi.

This is a neat little package tightly sealed by the rules of certainty. We cannot break it open to call its components into question. I only can suggest that Rosen might have done well to give respectful consideration to an alternative explanation, one that appears to me to have a better foundation in the texts. I shall make only two points. First, when Socrates commends "the spoken lie" in the Republic (382c-d), shortly after he has declared that gods hate "the true lie," he asserts that we tell spoken lies "because we don't know where the truth about ancient things lies - likening the lie to the truth as best we can." This seems to support the account of the philosophic myth that Voegelin gives, not the picture that Strauss paints. Second, in the Seventh Letter, Plato explains at great length why his serious insights are not a spoken thing like other lessons. For reasons that I have indicated briefly above, this account has everything to do with the ineffability of the highest things and nothing to do with irony. The mystical and the rational still belong together, with the mystical superior to the rational.

The fact, it seems to me, is that Strauss and Rosen take Socratic and Platonic accounts of ontological reasons for spinning philosophic myths and convert them into esoteric political reasons. The effect of this transformation is to protect Strauss and his students from the need to take any "theological" statement in the Platonic or Aristotelian corpus "seriously" - as a tale that the philosophers contrive to be as close to the truth as possible when they do not know the truth. Notice the uncertainty that Socrates proclaims here, as he does in all his roles in the Platonic dialogues. It is this uncertainty that Voegelin proclaims when he contends that Plato "shared unreservedly the common Greek conviction that things divine are not for mortals to know" (OH III, p. 193). Rosen directly objects to this statement. He does so because he is inspired by the prospect that: "Wisdom as the fulfillment of philosophy, at least if wisdom is perfect vision of perfection, amounts to the transformation of man into a god - or rather, into a noetic Idea." He also is excited by Parmenides' statement: to gar auto noein estin te kai einai. He shares Hegel's horror of the void and wants to be by turning himself into a god by means of a propositional science that speaks the whole. This is why he also comments that: "A stable
criticism of Plato's logic is in my opinion possible, if at all, only through the use of Hegelian logic." This helps him to state the "defect" in Platonic argumentation.44 I am driven to repeat my earlier conclusions: In his attack on Voegelin, Rosen actually is the one who is guilty of an extreme anachronism, that of projecting Hegel's project back onto Plato. When this does not quite work out, Rosen assails Plato too, in Hegel's name. The enterprise is mad.45

Still, Rosen has helped to illuminate an aporia that students of Plato and Voegelin must consider: If we do not know the realities of which mystical philosophy ("theology") discourses analogically, why do we trust or hope in an uncertain experience of transcendence that forms the soul?

V. HISTORY AND HISTORICISM

Rosen maintains vociferously that: "Voegelin is convinced of the soundness of modern historicism." In this "modern" historicism, "the truth springs up among men that God is the source of the order of Being. Mere sequence is transformed into history, within which man advances toward higher levels of truth about the order of being." Voegelin blatantly speaks of "the historicity of truth." He has "turned truth into history." He claims to be ignorant of the truth. However, in his historicism "we do know the final truth" because we are able to rank various insights according to the degree to which they have penetrated to truth. Although he counsels against "the fallacy of transforming the consciousness of an unfolding mystery into the gnosis of a progress in time," he "subscribes to the notion of indefinite historical progress." He contradicts himself by asserting that history "has no knowable meaning (eidos or essence)," for he says that history has a Logos, and "how can history possess a Logos while lacking an eidos or essence?" This "historicism" prevents Voegelin from doing justice to Greek philosophy and "to his obvious intention to rescue contemporary political science from empiricism and relativism."46

I have dealt with this class of objections to Voegelin in another place.47 I should like to repeat in summary form some of the things I said there while adding a few new ones to treat the particulars of Rosen's case.

Our first task is to ascertain what Rosen means by taxing Voegelin with "historicism." For present purposes, I take Strauss' definition of a "radical historicist." This person declares that: "All understanding, all knowledge . . . presupposes a frame of reference; it presupposes a horizon, a comprehensive view within which understanding and knowing take place. . . . The comprehensive view of the whole cannot be validated by reasoning. Accordingly, there is a variety of such comprehensive views, each as legitimate as any other."48

Next we must ask whether this definition fits Voegelin. Incidentally, it would be very surprising if it did, for Voegelin himself condemns "historicism" as Strauss depicts it.49 I think that it can be shown that Rosen and other students of Strauss apply Strauss' denunciations of historicism to Voegelin rather mechanically, without having read Voegelin carefully.

Does Voegelin believe that what human beings can think or know depends upon their "frame of reference" or their "horizon" or their "times" or upon "history" in any sense? The question is a complicated one that necessitates distinctions, not-too-subtle discriminations that Rosen glosses
over completely. The question may be answered by two "no[s]" and a "yes" that heed the distinctions.

The argument starts with the obvious. Voegelin assumes that our cultures give us the categories with which we begin our rational lives and, therefore, that they affect our thought. Materials to which Plato "applied his genius must have broadly pre-existed" (OH II, p. 276). However, we come immediately to the first "no." Voegelin never says that the pre-existence of these materials determines our thinking. On the contrary, he asserts that "the philosophic genius was Plato [his] very own" (OH II, loc. cit.) He also uses the expression "leaps in being" for many purposes, one of which is to reflect the freedom from cultural bondage that experiences of divine reality afford to mankind.

From here, we must move to Voegelin’s understanding of "history," which Straussian critics seem never to grasp. History is not time. Neither history nor time are substances that could determine thought or behavior by exerting something like gravitational pulls on minds. Neither is history a type of ontological stream "within which" intellectual events could occur. Neither is it a process in which propositional truths spring up. Neither is it an artifact of the mind that has been constructed from a sequence of opinions. Voegelin explicitly says that:

Transcendental reality . . . is eternal, out-of-time; it is not co-temporal with the experiencing soul. When, through the experiences of the Socratic-Platonic type, eternity enters time, we may say that "Truth" becomes "historical." That means, of course, neither that the flash of eternity into time is the privileged experience of philosophers, nor that now, at a specific date in history, it occurred for the first time. . . . By "historicity of Truth" we mean that transcendental reality, precisely because it is not an object of world-immanent knowledge, has a history of experience and symbolization. The field of this history is the soul of man (OH III, p. 363).

Thus, history for Voegelin is nothing more nor less than flashes of eternity into time in the field of the human soul. Voegelin’s usage of the term history is idiosyncratic but that does not excuse gross distortions of the usage. We come to the second "no." For Voegelin, what Plato or any human being can think does not "presuppose a frame of reference." It has nothing to do with "horizons" or "comprehensive views within which understanding and knowing take place." Nor does Voegelin "turn truth into history." Rather, he argues that flashes of eternal truth into time are history - the only "history" that he cares to discuss. It is in the sense that Plato and Aristotle were conscious of such flashes that Voegelin says that they had "historical consciousness," a debatable point, not because the Greeks had no consciousness of the flashes, but because they did not directly apply the word "history" to their consciousness of them. It may be that Voegelin could have found a better term than "history" to symbolize what he had in mind. However, this flaw, if it is one, does not touch upon the essence of the matter.

We come to the yes. What Plato can think does depend on "history" in this sense: no one can be conscious of the content of an experience of transcendence before he or she has had the experience of transcendence. Rosen will not like that. But the argument appears directly
equivalent to Plato's image of the cave. The prisoner cannot know the things above until he has been pulled out. If this is historicism, then Plato is a historicist.

We can dispose of Rosen's remaining objections briefly. It is possible to rank insights into the truth without knowing the final truth. Without getting into the technicalities of the portions of Voegelin's theory of symbolic forms that concern "compactness" and "differentiation," these being matters that Voegelin later at least implicitly admitted to having oversimplified, one can appeal to the silly example of blind men groping the elephant. A blind man who has discovered both a trunk and a tail is ahead of one who has held only the tail. But this does not mean that he knows the entire elephant. He has the authority to correct the laggard but not to issue infallible dicta about the whole. He therefore is neither a relativist nor a claimant of firm possession of absolute truth, contrary to Rosen's paradoxical effort to make Voegelin both at once. By the way, this example held true of Voegelin even when he was, so to speak, a Christian blind man who thought that the revelation of Christ was the telos of history. No Christian believes that all truth has been revealed. Voegelin always declares that: "The destiny of man lies not in the future but in eternity" (OH II, p. 4) and that we do not know what lies in store for us in eternity. Remember: Uncertainty is the essence of Christianity. Thus, there is no contradiction in Voegelin's rejection of the "fallacy of transforming the consciousness of an unfolding mystery into the gnosis of a progress in time." Simultaneously, to hold open the prospect of new revelations is not to "subscribe to the notion of indefinite historical progress." It is only, as Voegelin says, to be conscious of an unfolding mystery, without having any idea of the nature or direction of the next unfolding. Finally, it is possible that history could have a Logos but "no knowable meaning (eidos or essence)." Rosen's effort to restrict the meaning of the word Logos is dogmatic. Sometimes Plato does use the word to mean something like a "rational demonstration." However, Voegelin is not wrong to use the term as a synonym for the nous that the philosopher experiences when eternity flashes into time. When the transcendent truth flashes, one can sense this Logos without knowing the why or the whither of the flash. History has no eidos.

This is precisely the permanent aporia in which Voegelin's consideration of "history" leaves us. If eternity flashes into time in our souls, we never shall be able to be sure what has happened, or why, or whither, shall we?

VI. THE POLIS AND THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN

Voegelin expresses one last set of opinions in Order and History that especially agitates Rosen. He argues that, late in Plato's life, the spirit was on the point of breaking away from the polis and that one step further would have led to the vision of the universal community of mankind. This, says Rosen, "destroys the Platonic distinction between the philosopher and the non-philosopher." Not only that, when Voegelin treats Socrates' noble lie, he asks what the lie is and replies: "It is the simple truth that all men are brothers." Rosen scents easy prey and attacks. "It is not the brotherhood of man for which the lie is designed," he says, "but the differentiation of men and the subservience of inferior to superior natures." Voegelin's fallacy is that he "has misinterpreted Plato's conception of nature." On his reading of Plato, "human nature is homogenous . . . whereas for Plato, it is clearly heterogeneous." Voegelin is false to Aristotle in
the same manner. This is another instance in which Rosen assails Voegelin with dogmas that he has learned from Strauss, who learned them from Nietzsche.

In this paper, already grown overly long, I shall restrict my reply to the simpler case of Plato. In the *Republic*, Socrates takes two positions that seem contradictory but that actually are complementary. At the end of the image of the cave, which is "an image of our nature in its education and want of education," he discusses the power of the soul to be turned toward being. He declares: "But the present argument indicates that this power is in the soul of each" (518c4-6). This is an unequivocal proclamation of the equality of human nature as regards the noetic and ethical potentialities of souls. Earlier, however, Socrates spins his noble lie of the gold, silver, and bronze souls, which contains the disputed statement about brotherhood (414b ff). He also comments: "Then it's impossible that a multitude be philosophic" (494a4). This is an unequivocal declaration of the inequality of human nature as regards the noetic and moral actualization and unhappy lack of actualization of the potentialities of souls. Inasmuch as one cannot tell by looking at people whether the fabulous Necessity of the myth of Er binds them to the path of philosophy or the path of the many, I should think that the practical conclusion to be drawn from the juxtaposition of these positions is that one approaches each individual as a potential philosopher, until that person has demonstrated lack of aptitude for the calling, but that one also pragmatically expects little of the many taken as a whole.

This teaching is not difficult. It also happens to be Voegelin's understanding of Plato. Where Voegelin refers to the brotherhood of man, even with regard to the myth of the metals in the souls, he is thinking of the equality of human nature with respect to noetic and ethical potentiality that Socrates so manifestly articulates, thus grounding the idea of a community of mankind. I fear that, if there were no such concept, or if it were not true, we would have no principled defense against the world's Hitlers. On the other hand, the great bulk of *Order and History* is nothing if not the story of Plato's effort to embody the philosopher's authority over the many in the polis, an authority derived from Plato's actualization of every human being's potential for noetic and moral virtue in response to the experience of the agathon, and further derived from the failure of the many to actualize it. Rosen once again misrepresents Voegelin by missing this.

Socrates's idea of the simultaneous equality and inequality of human nature (in different respects) seems so clear that one wonders why Strauss and Rosen deny its existence. Voegelin provides some insight into this puzzle in an extremely interesting but little noticed discussion in *The World of the Polis*. There is a dramatic interlude in the *Protagoras* in which the sophist Hippias speaks. Hippias is trying to prevent the collapse of the discussion. He argues that it would be disgraceful if those present, who are all kin "by nature," should quarrel (see 337c-e). Voegelin comments:

"Nature" in this passage does not refer to an essence that is common to all men and makes them equal . . . Hippias expressly says that "like is akin to like by nature"; the kinship by nature prevails only among men who are "like"; and men are by far not all "like." In fact, the likeness which makes for kinship by nature is confined to "those present"; those present are kin by nature because they are the wisest of all Hellenes, and they are wisest because they "know the nature of things." It even looks as if it were precisely the like knowledge of the "nature of things" that
made them "kin by nature," while likeness between men in other respects would not have this effect. The select group of the "wisest" is, furthermore, reckoned of "one kin, household, and polis" by nature. . . . The admonition of Hippias, far from being a declaration of the community of mankind, is the declaration of a *republique de savants*" (OH II, pp. 282-283).

When Rosen, with Strauss, insists on the validity of a distinction between the philosopher and the non-philosopher that suppresses the natural equality of human souls (as regards noetic and ethical potential), he is not being Socratic or Platonic. Rather, he is attempting to co-opt the philosophers for the first anthropological principle of sophistry. My guess would be that he does this because it is the last necessary step in his self-deification. His perception probably is that gods need inferior beings to know their divinity. It is little wonder that this principle has to be taught esoterically: there is an extremely high risk that it would not stand open scrutiny and that it would be exposed as unsupportable narcissism. This discovery appears to explain something that always has puzzled me: Why should Strauss and his students do battle for the superiority of the polis when they are so contemptuous of most of the people who inhabit it? The answer seems to be that it is not actually the ancient Greek polis that they mean to defend but, rather, the polis of the *republique de savants*, which can maintain itself best, perhaps, if it secretly controls a small political unit such as the Hellenic polis.

However, leaving this aside, we come to the last *aporia* illuminated by Voegelin: on the basis of Socrates understanding of the natural equality of the powers of human souls, can we be sufficiently confident of the existence of a community of mankind to act upon this premise, even though we are aware that our knowledge is uncertain?

NOTES