Anyone who has ever read the *New Science of Politics* knows that Eric Voegelin was convinced that Joachim of Fiore, who lived in the 12th century, is an important figure in the history of political thought. Voegelin's most famous thesis on the Calabrian Abbot was, that: "In his Trinitarian eschatology Joachim created the aggregate of symbols which govern the self-interpretation of modern societies." The four symbols that Voegelin explicitly mentioned are (1) "the third age", which in Voegelin's view reappeared for example in the third positive stadium of Auguste Comte and the Third Reich of the Nazis. (2) The leader or "Fuehrer" that shows the people the way into the third age. (3) The Gnostic prophet. (4) The new order of a spiritual community.

From the citations in Voegelin's works one can see that he stopped his research on Joachim after the 40s, when he finished his work on the *History of Political Ideas*. It seems that he did not take note of publications on Joachim that were written after the Second World War, except Karl Loewith's *Meaning in History*. In the meantime hundreds of books and articles on Joachim have been published, especially by historians. Several original works of Joachim have been discovered, the last one only four years ago. The Humboldt-University Berlin and the University of Padua are working on a critical edition of the complete works. In summary, over the last few decades the abbot has become one of the most attractive figures in medieval studies. So, I guess that it is time for a new valuation of Joachim's works also in political science. Naturally, such a study has to deal with Voegelin's work because he was the first political scientist to point to the importance of this medieval theologian, and as far as I can see Voegelin is still the only political scientist that provides a genuine view on the thought of the abbot.

Regarding the current state of research I am convinced that Voegelin's main thesis can be maintained. Joachim's symbols are still an important part of the self-interpretation of modern societies. And we can still see how these symbols reappear, seemingly with a certain necessity. In Germany as one can imagine the symbol of the "third age" is discredited, at least for a certain time. But this is not the case in other European countries. To give just one example: Italy's most popular post-modern philosopher, Gianni Vattimo, speaks of the coming third age in which all discrimination will end and everybody will accept the world as a world of difference. Vattimo explicitly regards himself as standing in the tradition of Joachim of Fiore.

When I say that Voegelin's main thesis can be maintained I must also add that Voegelin has to be corrected in the details of his thesis. Just one example: Today we know that Joachim didn't expect a leader (*dux*) into the third age. The symbol appears in one of Joachim's works, yet without major significance. But, after the experience of the charismatic leader St. Francis, Joachim's immediate successors, the Franciscan Spirituals tried to personalize the eschatological expectation of their prophet. This is only a small and rather formal correction, but there is another problem, that appears especially in the *New Science*, and that is that Voegelin calls Joachim a Gnostic. I mention this because on the one hand that assertion has been repeated in many publications especially by students of Eric Voegelin, and on the other hand the same assertion is the reason why all historians that deal with Joachim rejected Voegelin's view. This is
a great pity because I don't think that this was Voegelin's main point. The steady repetition of the gnosis-thesis prevents many scholars from taking a more careful look at Voegelin's works. If we consider the essential elements of Gnostic thought, as they have been described by the scholars like Kurt Rudolph or Hans Jonas, we can say that Joachim was definitely not a Gnostic. Some of the arguments are:

1) The Gnostic believes that there are two gods, a good and a bad god. They are permanently fighting each other and they are equally strong. Joachim's believes that there is only the one triune God. All evil forces are nothing but tools in the hand of the good God.

2) The Gnostic struggles to attain the *gnosis*, the knowledge that provides redemption. Joachim is convinced that there is no such knowledge that can be attained by the initiative of man. Real knowledge can only be received from God.

3) The Gnostic tries to redeem himself by knowledge. Joachim believes that man can only be redeemed by God. In his works one can find very orthodox treatises on the doctrine of grace.

4) The Gnosis, the knowledge that the Gnostic speaks about, is usually cosmological knowledge. Joachim on the other hand does not show the slightest interest in cosmology.

5) The Gnostic believes that this world is irretrievably lost and corrupted. It has been created by the bad god and therefore the Gnostic tries to escape from it. Joachim believes in the creation of the world as written in the book of Genesis. He also thinks that there can be a perfection of man and society *inside* this world. Therefore there is no need to escape from it.

In several of his works Joachim argues against the Gnostic movements of his time, like the Albigensians. He does not do this just because the Gnostics are regarded as heretics but because he cannot accept their view.

If we look again at the works of Eric Voegelin we can see that he calls Joachim a Gnostic only in the publications written at the time of the *New Science*. When he first wrote about Joachim in the *Die Politischen Religionen*, he called him an apocalyptic thinker. And this is certainly right. The *Revelation of John* is the basic text from which all of Joachim's thought starts. Later, in the *Autobiographical Reflections*, Voegelin admitted that the Gnosis-thesis, as formulated in the *New Science*, cannot be maintained. He realized that there is a difference between Gnosis and Apocalyptic, and that both symbolic forms play an important role in modern ideological movements. In a late work like *The Ecumenic Age* he does not call Joachim a Gnostic anymore.

Today I want to speak about a spectacular discovery that was made during the Second World War. An Italian scholar found several medieval drawings and attributed them to the Calabrian abbot. It became clear that some of Joachim's ideas where so new that he couldn't even find adequate words to write them down. The abbot therefore chose another way of symbolic articulation, he decided to draw his ideas. His scholars collected the drawings in the so called *Liber Figurarum* (Book of Figures). Today I want to present one of the figures that must be of
particular interest to political scientists. It shows the sketch of a constitution, the constitution that Joachim expected to reveal itself in the coming third age of the Holy Ghost.

The figure is extremely complex and as far as I have yet discovered it can be divided into at least seven symbolic levels. The texts inside and around the figure are commentaries on these symbolic contents. But one can also say that this figure is something like a summary of Joachim's political thought. One can read all of Joachim's works like commentaries to this drawing. I want only to pick out some aspects.

1) As the title (dispositio novi ordinis pertinens ad tercium statum ad instar superne Jerusalem) says the figure is formed according to the heavenly Jerusalem. And indeed we can see for example the twelve gates that are described in the Revelation of John (Rev. 21,10sqq). If Joachim says that the society of the third age is formed according to the heavenly Jerusalem he does not say that it already is the heavenly Jerusalem. And in one of his works the abbot writes that the society of the third age will be a partial realization of the society in the beyond. So, to speak in Voegelin's terms the eschaton is not completely immanentized as in the prophecies of the Positivists or the Communists. Like all apocalyptic prophets Joachim expects the end of the world and the coming of a new aion. But and this is the crucial point human society will not be transformed in the beyond as the apostle Paul wrote. It will be transformed in the course of history and then be transferred into the beyond. To Joachim history is the process of perfection of man and at the same time the process of political perfection. That means that the society of the third age and the society of the beyond are almost identical.

2) The shape of the figure shows a Greek altar cross as could be found all over Europe in these times. It is easy to see that the figure has three main parts. That means that the future society will be divided into three classes. The cross stands for the monks that will govern the society of the third age. The predella stands for the clerics. And the whole order is based on the pedestal of the lay people.

3) The figure can also be seen as an architectural plan for a monastery or as a monastic rule. And it is clear that this has not just a symbolic meaning. The remarks Joachim made are so detailed that we must assume that the abbot expected similar monasteries to be built in the future. But because Joachim describes the future society as completely monastisized, this is not only the constitution of a monastery, it is the constitution of the future society. One of the commentaries says that the supplying of the monastery should happen according to regional circumstances. That means that these monasteries should be built all around the world. We can also find detailed measures that tell us about the distances between the single houses. That all might sound strange to us. But among medieval monastic orders it was very common to send architectural plans to all foundations in order to give all monasteries the same shape.

The commentary says that the real monks live only inside the "cross". The cross is divided into five oratories in which we find different kinds of monks. a) The monks that are not very clever and that have to do physical work. b) The monks that are old and weak. They have done their duties. Therefore they are allowed to drink wine and to eat meat twice a day. c) The monks that teach the other monks. d) The monks that Joachim calls the perfect men (viri perfecti). Like anchorites they stay in single cells beyond the monasteries walls and lead an absolutely quiet
live. All they do is to contemplate and meditate. They are in direct contact with God. e) In the centre we find the abbot and his confidants. His house is called the sedes Dei, the throne of God. That makes clear that Joachim's constitution shows a theocratic order. The abbot, the spiritual father (pater spiritualis) of all inhabitants, is the representative of God. He rules not only over the monks but also over clerics and lay people. There are representatives of the abbot, the priores and the praelates, in every house. They pass on the instructions of the abbot. Only the prior of the real spiritual monks must act in a certain manner. He is not allowed to shout at the spiritual men. He may only speak to them in a very low and quiet way in order not to disturb their meditation.

The clerics have an intermediary function. They go up into the house of the monks who are in direct contact with God. After having received the spiritual knowledge from the monks they go down to the house of the lay people to preach. Concerning the clerics, there's a specific feature in Joachim's constitution: They have to work, especially in agriculture.

The lay people have to supply the monastery not only with food and clothing but also with novices. Only in this house do we find women, who should not only give birth to children but who also do all the needlework. The men do handicrafts and are traditionally organized in guilds. The young boys first enter the house of the clerics where they learn to speak Latin and to read the Bible, before they join the monks and receive the real knowledge provided by the Holy Ghost.

4) Now we can understand why another symbolic level is the body. As in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 12) Joachim describes the society as a synergistic collective in which all parts function like the parts of the body. The house of the lay people is called the foot because the whole society "stands" on their supply. The oratory of the spiritual monks is called the eye because they live in a steady vision of God and pass on their knowledge to all their brothers. And so on. Every part of the society acts for the benefit of the whole society.

5) Other interesting symbols are the different dispensations of the spirit. Joachim cites from the classical messianic prophecy of Isaiah (Is. 12,2sqq) where it is said that seven spirits come down upon the messiah. In Joachim's figure we find all of them. The lay people have the spiritus timoris, the spirit that provides the fear of God. The spiritual monks have the spiritus sapientiae, the spirit that provides wisdom, etc.

Now, if we put the two symbols of the body and the messianic spirit together we get the picture of a collective messiah. This is what Joachim expects for the third age of the Holy Ghost: There will be a society that is in perfect harmony like the parts of the human body. And this society will reveal itself like a messiah.

Joachim's basic theory of history was that there is a succession of three ages, the age of the Father, the age of the Son and the age of the Holy Ghost. In the course of history God will reveal himself in three stages according to the three persons of his essence. The increasing knowledge of the essence of God will make man able to create a political order that is more and more adequate to God's will. The first age of the father was dominated by the patriarchs, the married lay people like Abraham and Jacob. The second age was dominated by the clerics, who are, like
Jesus Christ, rulers and priests at the same time. The third age of the Holy Ghost will be dominated by the monks that lead a spiritual life and possess spiritual knowledge. But all the other forms of society will still exist. As we have seen there are clerics and lay people in the third age as well. Yet they will find their place in the right order according to the Divine will: monks on the top, clerics in the middle, and lay people at the bottom.

Now, what we see here is a concept of order that does not show a cosmological analogy. This is not a *cosmion*. It is an hierarchical order that shows a *historical* analogy. It contains all the steps of social development that Joachim identified. Those who stand at the beginning of the progress of mankind are the bottom of the society, those who are the result of the progress stand at the top. And this is maybe what Voegelin meant when he spoke of modern ideologies as Gnostic movements, and what he meant when he said that these ideologies have their roots in the ideas of Joachim of Fiore. The abbot's concept of order is not just the attempt to escape from the cosmos. It rather is the attempt to escape from cosmology. Joachim made experiences that let him conclude that a political order cannot be based on the everlasting realities like the cosmic order or the human nature. He drew a political order that is based on the changes in history, the increasing knowledge of man and the transformation of human nature, that means the increasing ability of man to receive knowledge.

But what are the existential experiences behind this concept? I want to pick out one experience that is significant especially for this sketch of a constitution, and that was described by many authors in the 12th century. Looking at the social developments in his time Joachim could observe a broad movement toward a more spiritual life. After the end of the investiture controversy there was a big disappointment about the condition of the church, that had become too secular in the eyes of many Christians. A lot of people started to believe that the sacraments of the official church were no longer sufficient for a save way into paradise. Thousands of nobles gave away all their possessions and became monks. A huge number of clerics decided too lead a monastic live and gathered in new orders like the Premonstratensians. But also the lay people wanted to participate in monastic live and to have better chances to reach heaven. The Cistercian order invented the so-called *converses*, lay people that are in a lower rank members of the monastic order but are allowed to marry. They did all the necessary work and so the monks had more time to contemplate. (Joachim was a Cistercian before he founded his own order.) Even the spiritual monks, that as we have seen are part of the community but live in single cells, look very much like another order that was founded at the end of the 11th century, the Carthusians. Joachim concluded that the whole society was moving toward monasticism, toward the perfect way of living. So, in his picture of the society that we have just seen, we find almost all the spiritual movements of the 12th century. One must admit: The concept was based on an empirical fundament.

One of big the mistakes Joachim made, was a mistake that a lot of political thinkers made after him, as they do today. The abbot wanted to see only the empirical facts that fit his own theory, and he thought that all these movements would be linear developments that will reach complete fulfilment.

Joachim wanted not just to observe the progress toward complete spirituality, but to be an active part of it. He founded his own order, the Florensians, who were more ascetic and observed
strict rules than most of the other orders. He went up on the Sila mountains to build a monastery far away from civilization. But what happened to his foundation? Immediately after his death the monks left the cold climate of the mountains and settled in the warm valleys of Southern Italy. The rules became more moderate and after a few centuries the order disappeared.

To come to an end: The Joachim failed as a prophet and he failed as a monastic founder. He failed like all political thinkers and political activists that believe in the perfectibility of man. Yet his failure was less terrible and less violent than that of all the others who followed.