historical order of Hellas through philosophy, just as the Israelites had perceived their order through divine revelation; but these respective spiritual visions were possible because they were grounded in history. As Voegelin has said: "The Laws is the sublime expression of the experiences which connected the order of classic Hellas with its origins." (p. 44). The truth, therefore, is not that Plato was an unrealistic idealist, but that the Sophists were as blind to the historical order of Hellas as their modern counterparts are to the religious order of Western society. The implications of this spiritual blindness are most evident in Thucydides. In recognizing the common order of Hellenic society, for all his refinements upon the methods of Herodotus, Thucydides could not conceive an alternative to his Periclean prince:

This absence of a spiritual reforming personality not only from the reality of Athens, but even from the imagination of a Thucydides, shows clearly that an age of political culture had irrevocably come to its end. The time of the polis was running out; a new epoch of order began with Socrates and Plato (pp. 364-365).

Without a sustaining spiritual vision of order in history, the polis perished, and with its demise Hellenic civilization declined.

Voegelin’s erudite study has not been exercised merely upon perishing empirical phenomena. He has distilled the essence of the world of the polis; he has ascended to what is immortal in Greek civilization, and his achievement is a great monument to the spirit of both Hellenic and modern man.

Plato and Aristotle

P E T E R  S T A N L I S

The Third Volume of Voegelin’s Order and History* completes his study of Greek civilization by explicating the Platonic and Aristotelian revelations of the cosmos, the polis and man’s soul, and presents a view of order and history which is permeated with rich significance for the middle of the twentieth century.

The philosophical conflict which largely determined the course and spirit of order in Greek history was waged between Socrates, Plato and, to a degree, Aristotle on the one hand, as against such Sophists as Callicles, Polus and Thrasymachus, and the pharisaical leaders of the corrupt order...

of Greek society. This should not be understood to mean that the order of history, as an existential phenomenon, follows the norms or principles of triumphant philosophy. On the contrary, as Voegelin has noted, "On the level of pragmatic history, the philosopher is not the ordering force of society." (p. 301). This important point is well understood even by vulgar people, who are proud of their physical presence and mere pragmatic persistence in the flow of human events, and who therefore mistakenly dismiss philosophy as trivial or impractical.

Yet on the level of enduring principle, in the realm of fundamental ethical norms, the empirical flow of events has no real significance; a "synoptic vision of order and history" can only be perceived by the "animating psyche" of sound philosophy and religion. This is true because "the problem of history as a meaningful order" is "the process of revelation." (p. 43). It is self-evident that Plato, and not the pragmatic Sophists or successful politicians of his era, supplied through his philosophy the ethical and metaphysical norms by which Hellenic society reveals significance to us: "The Platonic vision of order has become part of reality, and while reality resists an embodiment of the Platonic idea it cannot escape the fate of being judged by it. The idea has become a standard." (p. 295). As Voegelin observes, Plato's claim to be the true statesman of his time is both philosophically and historically valid: "Plato's claim has proved historically quite sound. The order represented by Callicles has gone down in ignominy; the order represented by Plato has survived Athens and is still one of the most important ingredients in the order of the soul of those men who have not renounced the traditions of Western civilization." (p. 39).

"Plato emerged as the victor with world-historic effectiveness;" his principles "have become the 'philosophical language' of Western civilization." (p. 65). In the light of norms which transcend pragmatic events, Plato's historical achievement can best be understood as an enduring spiritual regeneration of public authority in "the life of the soul, over the deadliness of earthly passions." (p. 42). Plato's achievement reflects the "fullness of experience" in Greek philosophy, whereas in Aristotle there is "an intellectual thinning-out." (p. 291).

In the twentieth century the empirical fact of Plato's historical significance is still admitted, however reluctantly, even by our sophists, utilitarians, positivists, relativists and pragmatists, and even when they do not perceive or will not acknowledge the ultimate basis of his achievement. Living under the vaguely paralyzed consciousness of contemporary social and spiritual disorder, seeing the shadows of life pass like shattered fragments cast on the wall of a cave, blinded by pride in the feeble light of natural reason and of the scientific method, the contemporary enemies of Plato occasionally catch faint glimmers of the Platonic foundations of order and history. Mistaking the earthly shadows of Utilitarianism and Positivism for reality, Plato's modern enemies are blinded by the pure sunlight of his principle that order in the cosmos, the polis and the souls of individual men is interdependent and organically whole: "The order of man and society is part of the embracing cosmic order." (p. 51). Therefore, "Society is man written large," (p. 72), and "The soul is a one-man polis and man is the 'statesman' who watches over its constitution." (p. 92). To those prosaic souls who detest analogy as an impediment to insight, who limit both order and history exclusively to things temporal, who hold literally that the proper study of mankind is only man, nothing appears more illusory and "idealistic" than Plato's principle that "the spiritual order of the soul" requires a full acceptance of the transcendent reality of the eternal world of Being, of Divine Ideas or Forms.

Plato's belief in a transcendent reality is the key to his philosophical method. As Voegelin says, "The charm of Socratic
discourse is the resurrection of the soul from death to life with the Savior.” (p. 59). The Socratic dialogue, with its attendant instruments of parables, myths, symbols and fables, so baffling to prosaic fundamentalists, is in Voegelin’s words, “the ineluctable instrument for communicating the experience of the soul.” (p. 170). In his use of myth Plato is concerned with “the imaginative symbolization of divine forces.” (p. 101). All this is of great importance to the study of order and history, because “The soul as the creator of the myth, and the myth as the symbolism of the soul, is the center of the philosophy of order.” (p. 170). All this, of course, is also very troublesome to those poor souls who deny there are souls and who believe on faith in the scientific myth of rationalistic man against myth.

Plato flatly contends that the proper study of mankind is God. This cardinal conviction underscores his perception of the greatness and achievement of Socrates: “The order of the soul as revealed through Socrates has, indeed, become the new order of relations between God and man.” (p. 43). Before men can justify the ways of man to man, they will have to cease being unjust to God. Voegelin accepts Plato’s belief that philosophy (or religion) determines the order and spirit of civilization throughout history, that principles and dogmas shape human destiny. Among contemporary historians his position is practically identical with that of Christopher Dawson, who holds that “civilization exists to serve religion and not religion to serve civilization.” (Dawson, Dynamics of World History, p. 396). Intelligent Positivist historians, who have taken part in the great conspiracy of silence concerning the creative role of philosophy and religion in history, should regard Voegelin’s Order and History as a formidable challenge to their unconscious complacency. It is not hard to picture the bland smiles of humanitarian commiseration for Voegelin on the faces of the less intelligent prisoners in the cave.

Plato’s normative conception of history as philosophical (or theological) revelation is the foundation of the order in history, and also of the history of order. If the whole transcendental realm in Plato’s philosophy is set aside (for convenience in discussion), it will still be found that the order of man in society reflects a parallel interrelationship with the cosmos: “Plato plays back and forth, in the Republic, between the order in the polis and the order of the soul, illuminating the one by the other.” (p. 88). In any given civilization, the social order reflects the collective spirit of its members. Ultimately, the spirit of man (the personal soul) and the nature of society (the body politic) are identical. Plato had seen too much of the corruption in Greek politics to believe that a sound social order could be constructed merely by changing the machinery of government, while men remained morally unaltered: “Plato was not obsessed by the superstition that the blueprint of a constitution will deliver the world from evil.” (p. 250). It is highly ironical that doctrinaire ideologues who reject Plato as an impractical “idealist” are generally themselves guilty of adherence to some variety of Utopian blueprint, without reference to man’s moral nature. The death of Socrates (like the later crucifixion of Christ) was proof that it is not possible for just men to long remain in an unjust state, ruled by sophistical theorists and pharisaical politicians. The salvation of a corrupt society depends ultimately upon the willing martyrdom of its best citizens.

It is in this light that we must view the conflict between the true philosophers, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, and their opponents the Sophists. The true philosopher is the law-giver of society; the sophist is the false prophet who corrupts the souls of its citizens and on an empirical level destroys the just order of society. Voegelin notes that to Plato, “Philosophy is not a doctrine of right order, but the light of wisdom that falls on the struggle.” (pp. 62-63). This light of wisdom is like the
Christian concept of sanctifying grace. In both, God is the source of all good. Since the individual soul as a factor in shaping the order of the polis is supremely important, the battle between philosophy and sophistry for the souls of men, and particularly for the younger generation, is perennial. If there is to be a sound social order, youth must be taught to believe in and abide by normative principles of veneration of God, and of self-restraint in worldly pursuits. They must learn to so love justice that even when life itself is at stake, like Socrates they will not sacrifice it to any temporal self-interest. True philosophy in the soul results in a sound social order, with moral leadership and disciplined obedience to public laws, with a sense of civic solidarity and spiritual kinship between all citizens, and with justice and liberty for all.

In the struggle between philosophy and sophistry, Voegelin observed, "the resistance [of philosophy] depends for its success on a precise understanding of the enemy, and Plato indeed analyses the various aspects of sophistic corruption with care." (p. 71). The dictum that "society is man written large" applies to the existential corrupt Greek society, "the great beast itself," (p. 81). "The Sophist [Thrasymachus] proclaims his disease as the measure of human and social order." (p. 71). The power-hungry pharisaical politician, with his external respectability and inner moral corruption, mistakenly believes that conventional standards "apply to the divine substance of order in the soul." (p. 57). Yet he is not nearly so dangerous to a well-ordered and just society as the sophist who presumes to be its law-giver. Socrates admits to Polus, the corrupted disciple of the Sophist Gorgias, that the majority of the "best" Athenians believe it is better to be a successful tyrant than to be good but powerless, that it is better to do evil than to suffer evil, and better to escape punishment for evils done than to suffer any punishment; in short, and ultimately, that it is better to murder for injustice than be martyred for justice. Following the Socratic method through this chain of sophistical reasoning, in a dramatic scene Socrates exposes to all his listeners the essence of Callicles' sophistry: "The advocate of nature [Callicles] is brought to realize that he is a murderer face to face with his victim. The situation is fascinating for those among us who find ourselves in the Platonic position and who recognize in the men with whom we associate today the intellectual pimps for power who will connive in our murder tomorrow." (p. 37).

In brief, Callicles is to Socrates as Judas Iscariot and Pontius Pilate together were to Christ. The conniver in criminality who pursues a life of hedonistic pleasure or caters to the evil passions of the masses, merely illustrates the sickness and disorder in the soul which yields to the pressure of the surrounding corrupt society, and which sophistry defends as a good.

It should be self-evident that the struggle against sophistry is still the chief concern of man in the twentieth century. Nor do we mean the mundane sophistry of the petty shyster lawyer, quack doctor, dilettante artist, hypocritical politician, epicurean playboy, and so on. These merely illustrate on the existential level the excessive value placed on "success," "respectability," "expediency," "the pursuit of pleasures," and so on, to those sick souls which follow the sophistical conclusion that "the successful wicked are happier than the honest poor." (p. 80). It is on the level of life of what should be intellectual and moral philosophy that the struggle becomes truly significant. But here we are faced with a terrible irony: the very men who would have been designated sophists or "philodoxers" by Plato and Aristotle are today considered as philosophers. We are the heirs of seventeenth and eighteenth century rationalism and nineteenth century Positivism. The philodoxers whose theories dominated these centuries—Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Bentham, Marx and Comte—in one way or another preached an "in-
verted philosophy of existence,” centered in the ancient sophistical conviction that “goodness and justice consist in the satisfaction of desires.” (p. 35). Hobbes would have agreed with Polus that each man would be a knave if he could, and also with Callicles’ definition of justice as “the rule of the stronger over the weaker.” Like Callicles, Bentham identified pleasure with virtue, and condemned self-denial as weakness. It would be a simple matter to correlate the fundamental assumptions and arguments of the ancient sophists with those of their modern counterparts, and to draw out the consequences to society. The modern disciples of ancient sophists are legion: jurists who make no distinction between de jure and de facto law, sociologists who confound normative and discursive reason, and convert existential facts into categorical imperatives, politicians who operate concentration camps on the basis of mass production in murder. And then there is that vast army of the philosophically stillborn, with one leg in each camp, leaning either way, who don’t quite know how they feel about the struggle, and want to know first who will win before they commit themselves, or who, when they are not the victims of sophistry, face away from its horrible consequences.

The social disorders of our century are not merely the result of intellectual confusion, although that is important; at bottom our worst catastrophes reveal a disorder in the souls of modern men. Voegelin’s analysis of the principles of order in Greek society transcends even Plato and Aristotle, because he writes from the vantage point of our era. Every discerning reader of Order and History will perceive its rich application to modern society, and will understand better how the order of history is determined by true philosophy.

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**Blues in Chicago**

In a little club  
In Chicago  
At two  
Someone says,  
"Play the blues."

A melody on piano  
Is picked up by a trumpet  
While a bassist bemused  
Nods his head  
To the beat.

People listen and drink:  
A marine and a beer,  
A blonde and a gin,  
A professor  
And scotch-on-the-rocks.

Sounds distinct  
Are combined  
To produce the blues  
In Chicago  
At two.

JOHN REECE DRING  

Spring 1959