The Primacy of Politics in the Understanding of "Modernity"

Dante Germino

IN HIS UNPUBLISHED *History of Political Ideas*, the late Eric Voegelin (1901–1985) observes that the problem of when to date the beginning of modernity is of principal importance for its proper understanding. Rather than marking this beginning with the artistic Renaissance, writing in the vernacular, the recovery of Roman law, or the discovery of America, Voegelin contends that the beginnings of modernity extend as far back as the twelfth century, when the anonymous author of the *York Tracts* evoked an ethos of innerworldliness in opposition to the prevailing Augustinian, Carolingian, and Gregorian interpretation of Christianity.

I am convinced that Voegelin's thesis is correct and that one can fully understand modernity's origin and nature only by centering one's attention on the change in political sentiments occurring over several centuries. By "politics" and the political I refer to Aristotle's understanding of the political as that which concerns the highest good in human affairs and not to today's shrunken notion of politics as the study of who gets what, when, and how (to recall Harold Lasswell's words). In this larger view of politics, man is engaged "with the whole of his personality" (Voegelin).

Politically speaking, modernity "begins" with a revolution in religion and "ends" with a religion of revolution. (I put "begins" and "ends" in quotation marks because there are many beginnings over several centuries and because we are still in the midst of its endings.) Politics has a faith dimension as well as a power dimension; or rather at the center of politics is a faith with power as its protective shell.

The faith that we call modernity originated at least as early as the twelfth century as a reaction against the civil theology dominant in the Christian West. The very idea of a "civil" theology had been rejected by Augustine as a pagan concoction unsuitable for Christianity. Only decades after Augustine's death, however, Pope Gelasius I began to construct such a Christian civil theology. Popes Nicolas I in the ninth and Gregory VII in the eleventh centuries completed Gelasius's work.

The ninth-century Carolingian civil theology likened human society to the mystical body of Christ (Corinthians 12: "all are members of one body"). Within the one social body of Christ, the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor occupied places of distinction at the head of two "orders" of the same body politic. The Pope represented Christ's priestly person and the Emperor Christ's kingly person.

Among the implications of the medieval Western Christian civil theology were the following tenets:

1. Every Christian was a member of the universal Holy Roman Empire jointly headed by Pope and Emperor.
2. The priestly person of Christ was higher in dignity than the kingly person, so that as a last resort popes could depose emperors and princes.
3. The visible Catholic clerical order (the *sacerdotium* or priesthood) was hierarchical in nature, with the Pope, assisted by councils of the cardinals and bishops, having the last word in scriptural interpretation.
4. Although by baptism every member

of the *corpus mysticism*, whether priest or layman, was a new person, reborn in Christ, the clergy ranked higher in the sight of God.

5. The purpose of worldly existence was to prepare for eschatological perfection through God's grace beyond time and the world. The world as such had no structure or dignity.

Every one of these tenets was denied by the modern faith. The *York Tracts* (1102) marked the first systematic revolt against the Carolingian-Gregorian civil theology of which we have records. The anonymous author—a publicist for the English King Henry I in his struggle against Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury over lay investiture—contended that Christ's kingly function was higher than his priestly role, that a mature, educated Christian—layman or priest—can interpret scripture for himself, that priests and laymen are equal in dignity in God's sight, and that worldly existence has a structure of its own. (God willed life to be lived fully here and now in this world.) Although the *York Tracts* do not directly attack the existence of a single Holy Roman Empire, the effect of accepting their propositions would be to destroy it.

Voegelin has given the name "intramundane ethos" to that current of attitudes, sentiments, and ideas that culminated in the modern faith. Many figures little noted today were harbingers of modernity. Although the term "the modern age" originates in the fifteenth century with the Florentine historian Flavio Biondo, the constellation of attitudes and sentiments undergirding modernity goes back many centuries. Before one studies the acknowledged masters of early modern political thought—Machiavelli and Bodin—one needs to be aware of the contributions of various earlier writers including Joachim of Fiore, Dante, and Marsilius of Padua to the emergence of that new constellation.

Joachim of Fiore originated the modern convention of dividing history into three ages. In his case these ages were named after the persons of the Christian trinity: the age of the Father (Abraham to the birth of Christ); the age of the Son (the birth of Christ to the Apocalypse, at which time Christ returns to judge the world); and the age of the Holy Ghost, or the rule of Christ with his saints on earth as predicted in the book of Revelation.

Dante Alighieri fused Joachitic apocalyptic prophecies, Franciscan innerworldly spirituality, and Dominican Thomistic-Aristotelian rationality into an original vision of the world. To say that he is a transitional figure between the medieval and the modern periods is banal. Dante is *sui generis*. Nonetheless there can be no doubt that he contributed in a major way to the change in the constellation of sentiments leading to modernity.

From his first work, the *Vita Nuova*, to the last line of the *Divina Commedia* Dante sounds the note of rebirth, of *rinascimento*. The Franciscan theme of spiritually purifying the Church is taken over by Dante to apply to all of society. Dante, "a party unto himself," seeks to bring about renewal through argument and through poetry. His words summon the *veltro* and the *dux* of the new Italo-German empire. The center of Europe is to be restored on a new basis, that of an Emperor who effectively keeps the peace and of a Pope who preaches instead of clutching for land and power. The new order will witness a rebirth of reason on the basis of a recovered Aristotelian science made more profound and accessible to all mankind through the commentary of the great Muslim philosopher Averroes. An intellectual aristocracy of free and independent minds, liberated from domination by a corrupt clergy, will grace this new springtime of the human race. The new Holy Roman Empire will bring an end to faction and division. A true unity of mankind having been restored, peace will prevail. Yet the object of the new Rome will not be to parcel out humanity in bits but to bring out the unity of humankind underneath its diversity. Humanity for Dante has a will, and the Emperor represents that will. Universal peace and concord will result in its operation.

Dante's *De Monarchia* poses three ques-

tions: (1) whether the office of Emperor is necessary to the well-being of the world; (2) whether the Roman people acquired the Empire by right or by force; and (3) whether the Emperor's authority came directly from God or indirectly through the Pope. Dante answered all of the questions in favor of the Emperor but not in such a way as to preclude altogether a role for the papacy. "Caesar," the last lines of the *De Monarchia* read, "should observe that reverence to Peter which a first-born son should observe to a father, so that illumined by the light of paternal grace he [the Emperor] may with greater power irradiate the world, over which he is set by Him alone who rules all things spiritual and temporal."

Alois Dempf has suggested that the *veltro* (greyhound) in the *Divina Commedia* represents a reformed papacy—an "angelic pope"—while the *dux* symbolizes the emperor with the sword. Far from being a revolutionary, Dante was a "conservative," Dempf claims. Surely Dante defies categorization: he was conservative and revolutionary at once, and his vision of Europe sought to combine universalism and nationalism, spirit and power, authority and consent, in a new equation.

As Dempf suggests, in the *Divina Commedia* Beatrice, the symbol of Dante's quest for a new life on earth, in paradise becomes the symbol for an "unpolitical church." Dante's passionate hatred of the "political" popes, Innocent IV and Boniface VIII, knows no bounds. "You have usurped in place, my place, my place," Christ intones to Boniface VIII, forever immured in the depths of hell. It is a new worldly idealism, a new spirituality derived from St. Francis, that Dante invokes to lighten a world dominated by monsters who guard the hill of earthly happiness.

In the dedicatory letter to Can Grande Della Scalla, Dante urges that his great poem be treated as an allegory for attaining happiness in this life. Whether Dante severed Aquinas's two ends, earthly and heavenly, as Gilson suggests, is debatable, but more probably Dante does not so much betray Aquinas as develop him. He develops all the potentiality of Catholic spirituality for reformation of the human order in the world and in doing so anticipates the debate over liberation theology. A domesticated interworldly apocalypticism is the result, or shall we say that Dante passionately believed that institutions need not automatically freeze into power-hungry bureaucracies? He passionately denied the Joachitic claim that in the "old" world the law of entropy sets in at the moment of institutionalization, and he would have found Marsilius of Padua's positivism dreary and contentious. Ever the opponent of crackpot realism, Dante sings to us today in our myopia and conformism, calling us to be committed to innerworldly renewal but also to forswear a pseudo-revolutionary throwing out the (traditional) baby with the bath.

Not Dante but Marsilius of Padua was the principal architect of the modern idea of politics, however. Not one mankind but many closed national communities; not one religion but many churches controlled by their congregations; not one law but many national systems of legislation; not one history but many histories—these are some of Marsilius' legacies. The controversy over the meaning of the phrase *valentior pars* may indicate an ambiguity in the mind of its author. The earliest manuscripts of the *Defensor Pacis* (1324) contained the words *in qualitate et quantitate* after *valentior pars*, thereby indicating a possible interest in a numerical majority as well as predominant socioeconomic power as sources of law in the community. In any event, with Marsilius the accent has definitely shifted from "descending" to "ascending" theories of authority, to use Walter Ullmann's terminology.

Marsilius' theory of man postulates biological drives for survival and power as the sources of politics; theoretically society could do without any religion at all. Whether Marsilius wanted to reform Catholic Christianity for spiritual reasons or whether he regarded all religion as an opiate for the people cannot be ascer-

tained. One possibility is that as an Averroistic Aristotelian he may have thought in terms of a "double truth"—one for the masses and the other for the philosophers. In any event in the *Defensor Pacis* Marsilius was concerned about the utility of religion rather than about its truth. He regarded the papacy's exercise of temporal power to be a major cause of political unrest.

In his *Foundations of Modern Political Thought,* Quentin Skinner concludes that there are four "preconditions" for the emergence of "the modern idea of the State." These preconditions are as follows: politics "should be envisaged as a distinct branch of moral philosophy, a branch concerned with the art of government"; "the independence of each *regnum* or *civitas* from an external and [allegedly] superior power should be vindicated and assured"; "the supreme authority within which each independent *regnum* should be recognized as having no rivals within its own territories as a law-making power and an object of allegiance"; and "political society is held to exist solely for political purposes," its aim being the promotion of civil peace rather than the upholding of "true religion" (II, pp. 349–352).

What Skinner calls "preconditions" for the development of the modern state could as well be termed "characteristics" of the same. All of them are fully present in the thought of Marsilius (d. 1342).

Skinner accepts the modern notion of "that which is political"—as distinct from "that which is religious"—as definitive, and in so doing shows himself to be utterly captive to the modern ethos itself. My assumption, on the other hand, is that as critical thinkers we have come neither to bury modernity nor to praise it. Our task is to understand it.

What is born (or reborn) over the centuries from the *York Tracts* to Machiavelli is not politics but the modern idea of politics. To equate politics with modern politics itself as Bernard Crick, Skinner, and countless others have done amounts to dehumanizing all premodern peoples, since politics is quintessentially the activity in which man publicly affirms the meaning of his existence. Thus there is a politics of ancient Israel, or of medieval Christendom, and of Islam even though none of these political styles conforms with that of modernity. There is also a politics of Aristotle that is quite different from the politics of Marsilius' "rediscovered" Aristotle.

Although modern politics is "secular"—meaning that it is independent of any revealed religion—it is nonetheless nourished by a faith—a faith that can degenerate into fanaticism just as easily as can the faith of the revealed religions. Michael Oakeshott describes the modern faith as Machiavelli expressed it:

> He assumed a human being to be an intelligent agent seeking the satisfaction of his wants in self-chosen actions and utterances calling for response in others, each guided by *la sua fantasia* (his understanding of himself). He believed that there were occult forces (*necessità* and *fortuna*) of which account must be taken [*On Human Conduct,* p. 244].

What distinguishes the modern faith from that which is premodern is the loss of a common center in the psyche. The emphasis upon the autonomous individual, engaged in "self-chosen actions" and guided by his *fantasia* (which word has more the flavor of imagination than understanding), leads inevitably to the fragmentation of what once had been a common culture. The "secular" state which claims merely to be independent of revealed religion in fact becomes hostile to the same, in that innerworldly achievement and the production and consumption of material goods become the *summum bonum* of society. What had been condemned as avarice now becomes celebrated as virtue. In the Florentine renaissance, Pico della Mirandola, Alberti, and others gave primacy to the active over the contemplative life. These "secular" intellectuals were actually involved in constructing a new innerworldly religious faith in opposition to the Augustinian interpretation of Christianity. The

early Florentine humanists celebrated the *vir virtutis* (or "manly man") and exhorted intellectuals to "stand up and act" rather than "wasting" their days in idleness disputing about philosophical questions. Petrarch commended the pursuit of the laurel wreath. Although Skinner may go too far in suggesting that the work ethic began with fifteenth-century Italian humanism rather than with seventeenth-century Calvinism, one cannot deny a certain affinity (Skinner, I, pp. 98–99).

There were, of course, accomplishments of modernity worthy to be praised. As Benjamin Constant notes in his essay comparing the "freedom of the moderns" with that of "the ancients," those fortunate enough to live in a modern European state, at least on paper, enjoy

> . . . the right to be subject only to the laws, [and] the assurance of being neither arrested, nor detained, nor put to death, nor in any way mistreated, by an arbitrary act of will by some individual or many. It is for each the right to express his opinion, to choose his occupation and ply it in peace; to dispose of his property, be it abusively, to come, to go, without any permission and without rendering an account of his motives or his steps. It is for each the right to assemble with other individuals, either to confer with them upon common interests, or to practise the religion of his choice, or merely to use his leisure conformable to his indications or indeed his fancy [Quoted in Michael Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct,* p. 246, Oakeshott's translation].

Constant's catalogue of rights promised the individual citizen by the modern faith is instructive for its lack of a center. Indeed, a catalogue by definition has no center: it is a list in no particular order of value. Although the list contains "the right to practice the religion of [one's] choice," that right has no priority in the order of things over the right "merely to use [one's] leisure conformable to . . . his fancy."

In his book *Der Verlust der Mitte* (1947) Hans Sedlmayr explains modern art and architecture in terms of the "loss of the center." He contends that modern art is the expression of individuals who experience reality as an infinitely expanding horizontal field of forces. By contrast, premodern cultures reflect an experience of order irradiating from a common center, whether it be the *omphalos* (or "navel" of the world) in ancient myths or the theophanic event wherein the transcendent divine ground unveils itself as in the Mosaic experience of the Burning Bush in Exodus or the Pauline experience of the Resurrected or the Platonic vision *(opsis)* of the *agathon* reported in the cave parable. Premodern man had a center of gravity for his psyche.

Sedlmayr's interpretations of particular artists or architects are inevitably open to question, but I think his general thesis is correct. The symbol of the *omphalos* of the cosmos is ubiquitous in early cultures whether they are located in Sardinia, Indonesia, Africa, or North America. Each local community appears to have thought of itself as the center of the cosmos, the focal point for the emergence of divine ordering forces. The fact that forty miles away or so another local community made the same claim did not appear to disturb the first community's tranquility at all.

The difference between modern and premodern culture is not the difference between noble and ignoble human beings, of course. Human beings remain the same, and the "counterpull" of the appetites for wealth, fame, glory, and sensual gratification operates against the "pull" toward fulfillment in openness toward divine being in the psyche of both premodern and modern man. What changes is the support given the "pull" (to use Plato's language in the myth of the gold and iron cords) in the symbolism of premodern culture. When I asked my class in political theory recently whether contemporary society had a center, one answered "money" and another "the shopping center." From the Acropolis or the Covenant at Sinai to the shopping center is an experiential fall of considerable dimensions. Even the shopping center is a center in name only, of course, for there are so many of them that our cities typically lack an architectual focus.

With the movement from "compact" to "differentiated" symbolic language in Greek philosophy and Israelite revelation, the center of order was experienced in the open psyche's relationship to the extra-cosmic divine ground of being. (See Henri Bergson, *Two Sources of Morality and Religion.)* Although the experience of order occurred in the psyche of each individual, that experience was taken to be common to everyone. Israel related to Yahweh as one people, not as a collection of individuals, each with idiosyncratic perceptions of reality. The "private" experience of Moses and the Burning Bush led inexorably to the "public" experiences of the Red Sea crossing, survival in the desert, the Covenant at Sinai, and the penetration of the Promised Land. The prophets arose to call the people back to the community's founding experiences. The prophets were hardly modern "individuals." Their whole reason for being was to serve the community under God.

Similarly, in breaking with the intra-cosmic myth of the people, the Greek philosophers (Anaximander, Heraclitus, Parmenides, and others) did not claim to replace the common world of the gods to the cosmos with their own esoteric cogitations. The whole purpose of philosophy was to arouse in its followers a more adequate experience of the common world and its center than that afforded by the anthropomorphic stories of the gods. Bruno Snell even went so far as to say that the pre-Socratic philosophers "discovered" the human psyche in its openness to the divine intellect. Plato built on their discovery to provide what Voegelin has called the macro-anthropological principle as the basis for ordering society. Whereas the myths had been based on the "microcosmological principle" (society is the cosmos writ small), Greek political philosophy spoke the new truth that society was the psyche writ large. When Plato says "the psyche" he means not just any psyche but the philosopher's psyche.

Both Plato and Aristotle assumed that it was possible to rank character types in terms of their agreement with or divergence from the life of "reason." Thus in the *Republic* the life of reason is the highest life, followed by those based on spiritedness, wealth, the pleasures of the body, and the lust for power in that order. Other Platonic dialogues have other rankings, but the philosopher who takes transcendent divine Being for his measure remains the model for the rest of the population. Aristotle calls the model human type the *spoudaios* ("mature" person). The point is that Plato and Aristotle held that the non-metric reality in which human beings participate has a center present in the psyche of the lover of wisdom. Because the philosopher judges everything in the light of his experience of the Good, his symbolic language is authoritative and through use of that language anyone who so desires can re-enact in himself the meditative experiences giving rise to the language itself. In the cave parable Plato's Socrates compares the non-metric *agathon* experienced in the depth of the psyche to the sun, center of the visible world. Although the Greek sophists appear to have questioned whether there was a single human reality with a single center, Plato and Aristotle were alike adamant in rejecting the sophistic account. To the Sophistic admiration of "much-knowing" Plato juxtaposed the philosophic ideal of "deep-knowing."

In a recent book the cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz has declared that the "hallmark of modern consciousness is its enormous multiplicity. For our time *and forward* the image of a *general* orientation, perspective, *Weltanschauung* . . . is a chimera" (emphasis added). Our problem today, Geertz insists, is how to make it possible for "people inhabiting different worlds to have a genuine and reciprocal impact upon one another."

Geertz's image of "people inhabiting different worlds" vividly confirms Sedlmayr's thesis that the modern world not only lacks an intellectual and spiritual center but is in principle opposed to the idea of such a center. The word "world" originally meant "human existence." Using this definition, to inhabit different

worlds can mean only the disappearance of a shared human community. Geertz himself does not find this situation desperate or impossible, arguing that "we" [scholars in the humanities] have to "learn what it is like, these days, to live a life centered around [!], or realized through, a particular sort of scholarly, or pedagogical, or creative activity." We need, Geertz continues, "to construct some sort of vocabulary . . . in which econometricians, epigraphers, cytochemists, and iconologists can give a credible account of themselves to one other" *(Local Knowledge,* p. 163).

Geertz's insouciance over the loss of a center leaves one a bit puzzled. He tries to reassure his readers that a "general consciousness" can still develop out of "the interplay of a disorderly crowd of not wholly commensurable visions." How such a consciousness is to emerge from lives "centered around" epigraphy or cytochemistry is not made clear. Presumably we shall somehow muddle through and construct "some sort of vocabulary" through which super-specialized activities can give "credible" accounts to each other if to no one else.

In *Local Knowledge* Professor Geertz does not address or even seem preoccupied by what happens to the non-epigraphers and non-cytochemists in modern society. Presumably the search for unlocal knowledge of any kind is a poor substitute for whatever fragment one has in one's hand or brain. Indeed, he concludes that the idea of a "new humanism," forged out of "the best that is being taught and said" is at once "implausible," "utopian," and "possibly . . . a bit worrisome." (All quotations are from Geertz's essay "The Way We Think Now: Ethnography of Modern Thought.")

My purpose in citing Geertz at some length is to illustrate how the fragmentariness of the modern consciousness weighs even upon many sensitive contemporary attempts to transcend that fragmentariness. Geertz says in effect that we have lost the center forever: "Not only is the class basis for such a unitary 'humanism' completely absent . . . but even more important the agreement on the foundations of scholarly authority, old books and older manners, has disappeared."

To suggest that a future culture might overcome modernity's loss of the center goes against the basic postulates of modernity itself. With Voegelin's help, however, we have discovered that modernity rests on a faith. What has been produced by a revolution of sentiments may be undone by another revolution of sentiments, and that revolution may be as unlike modernity as modernity was unlike the Middle Ages.

One scenario for a postmodern age was supplied by Antonio Gramsci, martyr in the struggle against fascism and founder of the present-day Italian Communist Party. Gramsci dealt with the problem of the loss of the center by abolishing the periphery, so that in the future communist society everyone would be included in the center. He rejected in principle a politics based on prestige and power. By mobilizing the groups hitherto at the margins of society and history, the communist party could lead those groups to establish the "regulated society" wherein the modern state would disappear, Gramsci contended. "Civil society" would absorb "political society." A new order based on consent rather than force would prevail. Gramsci's centerless society would require the leadership of a political party to get under way. In his *Prison Notebooks* he called this party "the modern *Prince*" after Machiavelli's famous treatise. It would appear that the overcoming of modernity would require modern means, and, as Marx wrote, the new society would bear the birthmarks of the old.

Although Gramsci's theory of a new politics based on including all social groups formerly pushed to the margins of society may fall upon disconfirming practical realities, it does indicate the reason why the old politics of the center is unlikely to be reborn. The premodern symbolism of the center was invariably associated with what Ullmann called "descending" theories of authority. Such

theories were used to support a society based on caste and class. One excellent reason for not returning to a center symbolism based on caste and class is that if modernity replaced such a symbolism once, it could do so again if the old order were re-established. There is presumably something experientially deficient in the traditional version of the center symbolism.

Should a new experience of a spiritual center well up from below, however, the experiential deficiency referred to above could be remedied. An "ascending" theory of the center devoted to overcoming the fragmentariness of modernity would promote new forms of community based on a postmodern faith.

In his *Technological Society* Jacques Ellul argues that modernity's unprecedented reliance on technology has brought matters to the point of no return. Barring a miracle, technology's domination over man cannot be reversed. From a tool in the service of man, technology has become an end in itself. Its power over man increases geometrically as each new machine calls forth new artificial "needs" calling for ever newer, more efficient machines to meet them.

Ellul has spoken accurately. As the current "Star Wars" discussion illustrates, man's capacity to think critically about the implications of the technological revolution seems almost to have vanished. The individual's critical capacity is dulled by the manipulators of a consumer society, who themselves are unconsciously manipulated by the imperatives of the modern faith: human life is to produce, expand, acquire, dominate, etc.

Ellul overlooks one important point, however: the modern faith itself could never have been predicted by anyone living in the eleventh century, just as Christianity's victory over pagan Rome could never have been predicted during Hadrian's reign.

In considering what produces a change of sentiments, the historian may list various factors from population migrations to technological discoveries to linguistic innovations to new literary forms. Such a list remains a mere catalogue without the essential ingredient, the catalyst: human beings possess a consciousness out of whose depth emerge the sentiments whose existence we are asked to explain. In principle it seems impossible fully to understand what produces a change of consciousness from one age to another, because there is no way for any of us to get outside of the process and observe it from all sides, as it were. One hypothesis for explaining the rise of a postmodern faith should it occur, however, is that a widespread revulsion among all strata of the population against the Faustian drive to "torture nature" (Diderot) may trigger a moral and aesthetic revolt against the dominance of technical, instrumental rationality. If the formation of the modern consciousness took centuries to solidify, there is no reason to expect its dissolution and replacement to take place overnight, assuming, as we must, that there will be mankind left to enjoy a new age. The idea that there will be no new age—that we are consigned to modern fragmentariness "for our time and forward" as Clifford Geertz declares—is a tenet of the modern faith. The frequency of its reiteration today is an indicator of the continued strength of that faith. Such reiteration should not be mistaken for a description of political and social reality as such; instead it is a response to that reality from a perspective which denies the reality of an existential center of the psyche and society, *i.e.*, from the modern perspective. Geertz's essay is not a critique leading to an understanding of modernity, but an illustration of the very phenomenon in need of critical understanding.

TO SUMMARIZE: Eric Voegelin, to whose memory I dedicate this paper, has argued convincingly that intelligible periods of history represent changes of "sentiments" that in turn "evolve" new symbols inspiring human beings to create new political institutions and cultural forms. What Voegelin calls the "political cosmion" is the sphere in which the change of senti-

ments originates. Other activities—literary, philosophic, and artistic—take place within the political cosmion and take upon themselves its hue. The basis for Voegelin's claim for the primacy of the political in understanding historical periods in general and modernity in particular is that only in the political cosmion does man participate with his whole personality, which means with the core of his being—his psyche.

The primary obstacle to our recognition of the primacy of the political in historical change is, of course, the influence of fragmentary modern culture on each investigator. To the extent that we are modern human beings we resent any orderings of priorities in terms of a "center." Our academic specialties encourage us to view modernity in pieces rather than to see it steady and see it whole. Is it not the case, however, that our being has a core, or center, and that center is our psyche? This question cannot be answered by argument. It can be answered only by experience. Thus, to the many questions one must consider in discussing modernity, there must be added the question of why the truth that our being is centered in a psyche open to the world-transcendent ground of being is not evident to every sincere investigator of the problem.

One conclusion is clear from the foregoing analysis, however: if the political dimension is primary in understanding modernity, one can hope to change the modern world by challenging the constellation of sentiments on which it is based. At present what may loosely be called a movement in political and social thought calling for such change exists, comprising such diverse names as Voegelin, Sergio Cotta, Jacques Ellul, Norman O. Brown, Mircea Eliade, and many others. The movement is neither revolutionary nor reactionary. Almost every day one discovers a new name to add to the list. My most recent discovery is Wendell Berry, the Kentucky farmer-poet (or poet-farmer) whose collection of essays, *Standing By Words,* is a critique of the modern faith. I conclude with two quotations, one from Berry's book and the other from Hans Sedlmayr's work:

> The modern world is not necessarily the real world, and there is no virtue in being up to date in it [Berry].

> The lost center of man is simply God, and the innermost core of his disease is the loss of his relationship with Him [Sedlmayr].