

has gone from secular to neutralist to pagan extremes, jeopardizing the very possibilities that Walsh proclaims. But Walsh is also a Christian realist who fully registers the cruel mathematics of this situation, which at times approaches a totalitarian conclusion, made especially and inevitably obvious by the self-dissolution of liberalism. What is finally the most arresting aspect of *After Ideology*, what makes this book speak to our condition, is its thoroughly reasoned delineation of a modern world in which spiritual attrition has run its dreary course. In this post-modern stage of our civilization, thus, we live in a *meta-crisis* (with all of its dis-ordered symbolizations) in which liberal assumptions and demonic ideological approaches reveal their utter depravity. And it is precisely at this precarious point, Walsh insists, that we must begin to gauge our plight if we are to see again the stars.

The great writers whom Walsh uses to probe the experience of spiritual descent and ascent are not only prophets of destiny but also prophets of redemption. Their experience, worthy of our emulation, harbors hope for all of us. The fact, too, that they are writers and thinkers, not saints or holy men, further strengthens the relevance of their spiritual example and direction. Their search for post-modern truths helps to remind us that all constitutional order must finally rest on moral and religious foundations. No other time than the present provides us, then, with a better opportunity for genuine spiritual reorientation. It can be said in this respect that Walsh's book contains some basic lessons in metaphysics that are as assiduously argued as those of José Ortega y Gasset in an earlier era. Even this comparative reference should say something about the depth of thought in *After Ideology*.

Two exemplary acts of metaphysical courage make *After Ideology* a truly distinguished contribution in these trou-

bling and confusing times: the moral courage to see economic, educational, political, and philosophical problems tied to *the* religious problem; and the spiritual courage to re-affirm the values of our civilization as these have been interpreted and nurtured by the ancient Greek visionaries, the Hebrew prophets, and the Christian saints and martyrs. This dual courage places David Walsh among the keen-sighted few.

The God Question

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Eric Voegelin, Published Essays, 1966-1985: The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, Volume 12, edited with an Introduction by Ellis Sandoz, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990. xxii + 416 pp. \$32.50.

TO INTELLECTUALS who came of age in the era of the Weimar Republic a great philosophical religious crisis seemed on the point of ending meaning. Nietzsche asserted not only that God had ceased to be a meaningful idea but also that all meaning and order except that arbitrarily invented and imposed by the strong was devoid of reality. Throughout the eighteenth and the nineteenth century the crisis in philosophy had deepened and manifested itself in personal and social disorientation. The arbitrary inventions of the philosophes displaced the life of faith and reason. Political and social systems sought the transformation of the "vale of tears" into the utopian dwelling place of a perfected humanity.

While the crisis in philosophy and religion deepened, the study of history was being revolutionized. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the com-

parative study of religions, languages, and cultures was only getting under way. By the 1920s Troeltsch and others were asking how Christianity could maintain its claims to absolute validity as a final and ultimate revelation of the divine. Were not other "world religions" equally valid in their disclosure of the Divine? Moreover, how within a world limited by the symbolizations afforded by the language, art, and ritual of a particular culture was one to understand a Divine that was universal and uncontingent? Was there a progressive disclosure and revelation of the Divine in the historical process and if so how was this disclosure related to the "progressive" development of history in its social, political, and cultural forms? Was the process of historical development the result of a dynamic immanent in history or was the movement of history imparted providentially from the outside?

Moreover, the intellectuals of Central Europe in the Weimar period not only confronted a crisis in religion, philosophy, and history but also were faced by the collapse of the social, political, and moral orders in the wake of World War I in the countries in which they lived.

Eric Voegelin (1901-1985) confronted this crisis as a Weimar intellectual, (much as he disagreed with his fellow Weimar intellectuals in exile), and sought to reclaim the ground he thought had been lost in theology and philosophy by men blind to the truth of existence.

The nineteenth century had produced in the study of classical Graeco-Roman civilization a degree of historical sophistication and cultural insight and understanding unequalled in the study of any other past culture. At last it seemed the cradle of Western philosophy and Christianity could be understood by men who no longer considered themselves to be outsiders looking speculatively into an exotic past culture.

It is not surprising then that when

they confronted the crisis in philosophy, central European intellectuals turned to the Greeks. Nietzsche had done so and in their turn Voegelin, Strauss, Jaspers and Heidegger did so.

Indeed the comparison of Voegelin and Strauss is a very fruitful one. Both men were obsessed with the problem of religion. For both, the conflict between Athens and Jerusalem was of paramount importance. Strauss the "philosopher" remained a Jew but a pious agnostic. Voegelin the "philosopher" believed in the God of the philosophers and tried again and again, unsuccessfully I believe, to "put on Christ." Both saw in Greek philosophy, particularly that of Plato and Aristotle, the answer to the world's disorder. Both believed themselves to be philosophers pure and simple when in fact both were deeply mystical. Both, as was the style of Weimar intellectuals, founded schools of disciples not unlike the disciples left behind by Plato and Aristotle. It is yet to be determined, as Voegelin realized, whether the Weimar émigré professors harmed or helped American intellectual life, American culture, and the polity. It is demonstrable that both Voegelin and Strauss had an enormous influence on American life. It is not surprising that the disciples of these Platonists and Aristoteleans came increasingly to identify themselves as political conservatives, though Voegelin certainly and Strauss probably were averse to a political identification.

It has always been difficult to get beyond the catchy phrase to the core of Voegelin's thought. This is true not because Voegelin wrote little, but because he wrote so much, (as the twenty-three projected volumes of his work by Louisiana State University Press attest), and because he developed and modified his thought significantly in the course of time. For this reason Ellis Sandoz's edition of his essays published from 1966-1985 is especially valuable. Sandoz, who

has done a marvelous job of editing, gives us a careful and typo-free text and an introduction which provides an intelligent and elegant guide to a very difficult author. These essays written in the last decades of Voegelin's long life give us the essential Voegelin. They constitute the great theoretical statements which enable us to understand Voegelin's work. Of the twenty-three projected volumes this collection of essays will remain the book which makes Voegelin accessible to a public larger than his devoted students.

Voegelin's objective was the restoration of reason, order, and religion within the framework of a sophisticated historical and philosophical method. Voegelin saw modernist ideology and theology as deformations of the truth of man's experience in the depth of his soul. Yes, I said soul, for even though there is no article on the idea of the soul in *The Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, Voegelin insisted that the soul exists, that it is luminous to itself, that it is capable of attunement to the Divine; that indeed the Divine is the loving object of the soul's search and that as the consequence of participation in the Divine order the soul shares the immortality of essential Being. Out of this noetic participation in Being the soul orders the existential reality of the person, the society and history. Order as it exists in the world is a reflection of the Divine.

However, disorder is as frequently the lot of the person, the society and history as is order. All created things participate in deficiency as much as they do in order. Life is always a life in "the-in-between," confronted with evil, time's erosion, and death. Voegelin has argued convincingly that efforts to transcend the mystery of evil in this life, to achieve autopian perfection, are the consequence of a mistaken understanding, "a derailment" (*Entgleisung*) of the soul's experience. Gnosticism is the oldest and most

persistent of these spiritual misapprehensions. The contemporary efforts to achieve perfection through ideology and utopia have many elements in common with the older Gnostic patterns but are distinctive to our era. The reconstruction of our era is thus a spiritual, philosophical undertaking through which order will be reborn in the soul.

It is apparent that what we have here is Platonism reborn. Indeed the language of symbolization which Voegelin employs is the language of Plato, the Stoics, and the neo-Platonists. Aristotle is present but does not constitute an essential element in Voegelin's thought.

The bulk of the work is not, however, simply Platonic. It is an empirical exploration of man's culture, history, and psychology in terms of Plato's differentiated symbolization of the experience of the soul. Voegelin asks our assent on the basis of past and present human history. But to what extent, one asks, does the noetic experience provide direction in the existential choices one must make in everyday life; to the conundrums which one must face in person, in society, and in history? There has always seemed to me to be a terrible vagueness in Voegelin's possible ethics and politics. It is rich in injunctions as to what it is impossible for humans to achieve; it is less satisfactory as a guide to what we must do. No doubt it is very satisfactory as a contemplative guide for a fourth-century anchorite but is it a satisfactory life-guide for a late twentieth-century man? A little girl said consolingly to her mother who had lost a valued object and could not find it, "Remember, Mother, that everything is somewhere." However metaphysically profound that statement was it did not serve as guide to the location of the lost object.

The great unresolved problem in Voegelin's analysis of the experience of the soul and the articulation of order is the fact of revelation and the incarnation