

## FROM A WOODED SUMMIT: LEARNING TO LOVE THROUGH AUGUSTINIAN

### MEDITATION AT ASCONA

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Undt mir ist, als wuerdt ich aus zweien halbeten mannern wyder ain ainiger gantzer; undt war von den halbeten der ain von holtz (Heimito von Doderer, *Die Dämonen*)

It is one thing to see the land of peace from a wooded summit, yet not find the way to it and struggle hopelessly far from the way (Augustine, *Confessions*, 7.21.27).

God cannot live in mountains. Those romantic pinnacles surrounding Vancouver are strangely unmoving in their romanticism. Perhaps He lives in the foothills near Calgary. But, if there is a gracious God and if it is possible to find (and I am sure there is and I am sure it is possible to find him, even though he escapes and escapes and escapes because one is not willing to search), then there is no other that is God (George Parkin Grant, 1945).

Four contributors to Eranos, Eric Voegelin, Friedrich Heiler, Hugo Rahner, Gilles Quispel, utilized a philosophical understanding of Augustinian meditation and myth to address the visionary aspect of human existence because they objected to the truncated way that ideological modernity had distorted that experience and the means of communicating it.<sup>1</sup> Like the original Asconans, these scholars believed that the European

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Voegelin (1901-85), political philosopher and author of the five volume *Order and History* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press), escaped Austria to escape the Nazis, and taught many years at Louisiana State University and the University of Munich. He presented his paper to the 1977 Eranos conference. Eric Voegelin, "Wisdom and the Magic of the Extreme: A Meditation," *Eranos Yearbook* 46 (Frankfurt, 1977). The discussion here is based on the version found in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, Published Essays, 1966-1985*, ed., Ellis Sandoz, vol. 12, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 315-75. Hereinafter V:page number. Fr. Hugo Rahner, SJ, (1900-68) wrote *Church and State in Early Christianity* (English edition: San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), and presented papers in 1942, 1944-5, and 1947-8. His 1948 contribution was later incorporated in his *Man at Play*, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972). His 1945 contribution was published as "Earth Spirit and Divine Spirit in Patristic Theology," *Spirit and Nature: Papers From the Eranos Yearbooks*, vol. 1, trans.,

Enlightenment had produced a world dominated by ideology and scientism that had eclipsed and distorted the deeper longings experienced by human beings as participants in immanent and transcendent reality. All regarded Christianity as a key contributor to the situation, as they regarded the Christian tradition as sclerotic because it had come to reify humanity's experience of the divine. Their contributions to Eranos differed from the ideals of the early Asconans, however, who associated modern science with Christian asceticism and "puritanism." For instance, Martin Green defined the Asconan ideal in immanentist terms: "simply as nature worship, meaning the worship of the nature to be found in human beings as much as the nature in animals, plants, the soil, the sea, the sun."<sup>2</sup> Many early Asconans attached themselves to this immanent piety because they associated transcendentalism, especially Christianity, with modern science. As we shall see, however, Eranos scholars advanced our understanding of Christian mysticism and harmonization past this earlier view by appealing directly and indirectly to Augustinian meditation that experiences the divine and reorients one in the world under what Augustine symbolized as the eternal now (*nunc*).<sup>3</sup>

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Ralph Manheim, (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1954), 122-48. Hereinafter cited as R: page number. Gilles Quispel (1916-) is an eminent scholar of Patristics and Gnosticism, and taught at the University of Utrecht. He presented papers in 1947-48, 1950-53, and 1967-71. His 1951 contribution was published as "Time and History in Patristic Christianity," *Man and Time: Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks*, vol. 3, ed., Joseph Campbell, (New York: Bollingen Foundations, 1957), 85-107 (Hereinafter Q: page number). Friedrich Heiler (1892-1967) was an historian of religion at the University of Marburg, who contributed to the development of the phenomenology of religion, and wrote on ecumenism, comparative religions, and Catholicism, and is a key figure in the study of the phenomenology of religion (most significantly in *Erscheinungsformen und Wesen der Religion*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, Die Religionen der Menschheit I, 1961/1979). He presented papers to the 1933-34 meetings ("Contemplation in Christian Mysticism," *Spiritual Disciplines: Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks*, vol. 4, ed., Joseph Campbell, (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1960), 186-238. (Hereinafter H: page number).

<sup>2</sup>Martin Green, *Mountain of Truth: The Counterculture Begins, Ascona, 1900-1920*, (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1986), 5, 185.

<sup>3</sup> See *Confessions* 11. None of the authors considered here would have characterized themselves as Augustinian in a doctrinal way. However, they all rely heavily on him as a source of symbols that

This paper focuses on the way these Eranos scholars used Augustinian symbols to explicate the tensional relationship between time and eternity, finitude and infinity, creation and God, and human being and God that Eranos scholars have theorized about, and that thinkers have been grappling with since Plato characterized human existence as a cave and wondered how to convince philosophers to reenter it. If the Eranos symbol of Monte Verità evokes the mystical experience of transcendence as the basis of finding spiritual, religious, and mythical sources of human life, and if the symbol Ascona evokes the concrete, social, and existential reality that results from reentering the world, then this paper draws them together by exploring the meditative complex that these scholars explicated when they drew on the experiential sources of Augustinian meditation. These scholars responded to the crisis of modernity as a crisis of articulating transcendence in the world; this crisis was rooted in the way that Christian revelation had been articulated, and the way that that articulation had shaped the ideological character of modernity. They all thought that Augustinian Christianity, as it was traditionally understood, had created the conditions for ideological modernity by removing meaning from humanity's tensional existence within the world, which left the world open to ideology and scientific deformations that have characterized European civilization for the past several centuries and that rocked Europe with two World Wars this century. However, instead of rejecting

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articulate the meditative complex under consideration. Heiler notes, "[i]t was from St. Augustine that the Western world had learned the very meaning of mystical contemplation" (H: 196); Quispel relies on Augustine's theology to explicate eschatology in Patristic Christianity (Q: 93); Rahner focuses on the "Augustinian style" of the Church Fathers' meditations on the Holy Ghost acting in the cosmos and in the human soul (R: 140, 145, 147); while drawing on Plato's noetic symbols, Voegelin patterned his meditation on the patristic model of *fides quarens intellectum*: "If I may use a later Christian formulation, the philosopher's quest is a *fides quarens intellectum*, requiring clarity concerning both the *fides* and the *intellectus*, as well as clarity concerning their interaction (V: 337) I have treated some of these matters in Augustine's own writings in *Augustine and Politics as Longing in the World*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001), chaps. 4 and 6).

Augustinian Christianity outright, they reengaged with its experiential roots in order to show how its radical transcendence does not consist of an ascetic escape from the world, but actually reorients human beings in the world. Their efforts can be compared because all draw on Augustinian symbols and engage in a personal meditation to recover the experiential basis of those symbols as they signify humanity's condition between time and eternity and oriented toward the divine. In short, they each came to Eranos, independently, at different times and under different periods of Eranos, to reflect on the meditative complex identified here as Monte Verità and Ascona.

The paper is divided into three parts. Part I examines the way these Eranos scholars diagnosed the crisis of ideological modernity. While their diagnoses display differences, all of them thought that the technological worldview of the European Enlightenment was the result of a certain interpretation of Augustinian Christianity that evacuated the world of inner meaning, which made it possible to conceive of the world as the place of manipulation. Augustinian Christianity had opened up imaginative space that becomes deformed when ideologues create what Voegelin called a "secondary reality" that replaces the authentic experiences of transcendence first articulated by Augustinian Christianity.

Part II explicates the heights evoked by the symbol Monte Verità by exploring the theme of transcendence and contemplation. Part III turns to the more mundane symbol, Ascona. Each author noted how people can never be fully harmonized in the world, but all noted how this insight did not lead Augustinian meditation to regard the world as evil or hostile. Quispel's observation of Augustine that one lives in the world, hovering between "already fulfilled" and "not yet fulfilled" concisely summarizes the findings of Heiler,

Rahner, and Voegelin. Rahner's observations about the Holy Spirit and Voegelin's notion of "indelible present" explicate the notion that the world is the proper locus of the drama of transcendence.

Thus, the symbols of Monte Verità and Ascona fit together as part of the same experiential complex that was famously formulated by Plato in his cave analogy. The analysis shows how those two symbols necessarily fit together in a tensional relationship with each other; one cannot transcend unless one is situated in the world, and one cannot understand oneself as situated in the world unless one has transcended it. The truth of the matter lies neither on the mountain nor in the town, but somewhere in-between, in the foothills.

## **PART I: DIAGNOSIS OF CIVILIZATION'S SICKNESS**

These Eranos scholars all agreed that Western civilization is sick with a lust for technological manipulation and transformation of the world. Such a lust is rooted in modern humanity's spiritual schizophrenia, expressed in the statement by Doderer that serves as the first epigram of this essay, between a truncated view of reason as instrumental and the inability to connect that reason to the passions and to the Good. Heiler diagnosed the problem first when he opened his 1933 paper by contrasting the West with the majestic tranquility of the Eastern spiritual traditions: "The hallmark of present-day Western culture is an unlimited dynamism. The intense organizational activity, the rationalization and mechanization, characteristic of this culture have also seized hold of the Christian Churches of the West" (H: 186). Such dynamism led Heiler to focus on the theme of serenity and silence in Augustinian meditation, which he regarded as a proper antidote to

the modern demonic lust for extraordinary visions (H: 235). This earnest restlessness impelled Rahner to write *Man at Play*, and to counter the traditional interpretation that the Patristics viewed the world as simply demonic with an interpretation of the Holy Spirit as intimate with and a caring governor of the cosmos. In fact, he speaks of the “demonism of our times,” which may have impelled him to consider patristic understandings of demonism, and which he regarded as part of their more profound psychology than that found in modernity (R: 125). Finally, Quispel observes that the modern “pathos of progress is a secularization of early Christian conceptions” of history (Q: 88). While these authors allude to the general contours of the crisis of ideological modernity, the general character of this crisis was not placed fully into an Augustinian meditative context until Voegelin’s 1977 contribution, which consists of a *zetema* that begins with an analysis of the roots of contemporary disorder but shifts to a recovery the experiential basis of order. He provides the most extensive account of the recovery of order from ideological disorder. While consistent with the views of the others, his diagnosis is the more extensive and will be summarized to provide the context in which his and the others’ meditations operate.

Voegelin’s contribution runs sixty pages in his *Collected Works*, and touches on many topics that he would treat in his late, meditative works, including the final volume of his *magnum opus*, *Order and History*. While expressing many of the ideas that would receive final articulation in his final writings, the essay is really an anamnestic meditation of his own thinking (described as such on V:349). The essay articulates the ascent from the experiential basis of modernity, his cave and ours, and concisely restates his own view of the character of modern ideologies, which he had written about extensively earlier in his

career.<sup>4</sup> As such, the essay resembles Augustine's *Confessions* because it consists of a bit of a spiritual autobiography, and it resembles Augustine's *Retractiones*, which Augustine wrote late in life as a kind of restatement of the positions he took in his life's writings. It is unclear whether this similarity is purposeful, as he explicitly relied more on Platonic symbols to articulate the movement from disorder to order. He thought that Plato's symbols preserved the "balance of consciousness" (Voegelin's term) between Monte Verità and Ascona (my terms) better than Augustinian ones, which, being pneumatically more differentiated but "noetically less differentiated" than Platonic symbols, were vulnerable to Gnostic and ideological deformations (V: 339). Even so, Voegelin utilized Augustinian categories by characterizing his meditation as a *fides quarens intellectum* (V:361), by claiming "that it is difficult to discern the difference" between Plato's symbol of puppet-player God who pulls the golden cord and the account of God's pulls in the Gospel of St. John (6:44), and by making other direct comparisons between Plato and Christianity (V:365-71).

Voegelin thought that ideological modernity ultimately consists in what Nietzsche, in *The Will to Power* (749), called the charm of the wisdom of the extreme: "The charm (*Zauber*) that works for us, the Venus eye that fascinates even our foes and blinds them, is the magic of the extreme (*die Magie des Extrems*), the seductive force that radiates from all that is utmost (*das Aeusserste*)" (V:324). The "magic of the extreme" is an ersatz replacement for the divine Beyond that all human beings experience as the goal and source of their being. The extreme is an idol, to use Biblical language, and charms human


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<sup>4</sup> *In Search of Order, Order and History*, vol. 5, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987). For a complete bibliography of Voegelin (including secondary commentary), see Geoffrey L. Price, *Eric Voegelin: International Bibliography 1922-2000* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2001).

beings by holding out an immanent vision of perfection. Examples include the various ideological utopias that the twentieth-century coughed up. Voegelin follows Austrian novelists Robert Musil and Heimito von Doderer by characterizing a self-contained ideological system as a “secondary reality,” or a “hereinafter in the here” (von Doderer), that eclipses first reality. Voegelin emphasizes how their charming words intoxicate people, and he draws on Plato’s view that the speech of the sophists has a way of charming people to enter into a dreamworld. Voegelin’s insight was shared by Augustine, who confesses that the charming fables (*delectationes*) of the wicked were the source of his desire to know God.<sup>5</sup>

A full presentation of Voegelin’s understanding of modern ideology lies beyond the scope of this essay. However, at the root of modern ideology, for Voegelin, is the desire to drive the divine Beyond into time by creating an ersatz psychological and political replacement. Convincing oneself to undertake such an act requires a large leap of the imagination, but such acts of imaginative oblivion have been made possible because our civilization has tended to reify the divine Beyond into an intramundane “thing,” which leads people to forget that the divine Beyond is not an immanent “thing,” but the divine mystery that surrounds humanity. For Voegelin, this shift in categories was made possible in the Middle Ages when Christian theologians reified the noetic articulation of the divine-human encounter by using symbols such as “revelation” and “natural reason,” and by treating philosophy simply as the “handmaid” of theology, thus abandoning the harmony of theology

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<sup>5</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.2. He notes that *delectationes* is a Latin translation of the Greek , which can also be translated as “garrulity” or “idle talk” (*Expositions on the Psalms*, 119.85). Elsewhere, he speaks of the fascination of the extreme as the “fornication of phantasy (*phantastica fornicatione*)” that arises when one can only imagine God in terms of worldly realities (*De Trinitate* 12.9.14; see also 10.7.10).



and philosophy found in St. Augustine or St. Thomas Aquinas (Augustine, in fact, never makes such a distinction). The divine Beyond becomes immanent when the divine, nameless Beyond receives a name like “God” or “Being.” The potential for reification is permanent because human thought and language always consists of a mixture of visionary and discursive elements; even to say the term, “divine Beyond,” is in a sense to reify it. Deformation is possible “because the potential for deformation is inherent in a form that does not exist other than in the process of formation” (V:326). However, keeping silent also hinders it from being a formative force in history, and so Voegelin notes that such reification is a permanent possibility in the quest for truth in history. Thus, we shall see that the key to preserve the balance of consciousness is always to recollect that one’s own consciousness is an *event* in history that only becomes known by the irruption of the divine Beyond itself that we experience in both its “indelible present” as well as in the fact that it continually recedes from our vision (V: 326). Thus, modern ideology, in the attempt to control the vicissitudes and seeming senselessness of mortal existence, replaces the paradoxical experience of the divine Beyond as both present and permanently beyond our grasp, with a secondary reality, a “hereinafter in the here,” that demands perfection in the “here” but neglects the mysterious horizon that surrounds human existence.

Voegelin thus explicates a critique of ideological modernity that is, in varying degrees, shared by the other authors as well. Ideological modernity arises in the sclerotic Christian tradition where reification of the divine gives way to a libidinous and utopian desire to bring the world under human control. The problem that the four scholars confronted was whether Augustinian Christianity could recover the meaning of the divine to face the dominant problem of modernity in such a way that could provide a more robust

account of the human experience of the divine than previous articulations. Parts II and III explicate how they utilized Augustinian meditation to reintegrate themselves and their world back into tensional existence.

## II. RECOVERY OF REALITY THROUGH TRANSCENDENCE: MONTE VERITÀ

Coming from different scholarly backgrounds, the four thinkers returned to Augustinian meditation and mysticism to recover reality. The contributions of Heiler, Quispel, and Rahner consisted more of scholarly treatments of meditative and mystical topics, while Voegelin's meditation was more explicitly mystical. This characterization of Voegelin's contribution is somewhat surprising, given that, unlike Heiler and Rahner, Voegelin did not identify himself with any single faith group. Yet, he identified himself as a mystic philosopher, as recorded by his longtime friend, Gregor Sebba: "To me Eric Voegelin has always been an exemplary representative of rationality in the Greek sense, but when I argued that against a statement calling him a mystic philosopher, he wrote back: 'This will shock you, but I am a mystic philosopher.'"<sup>6</sup> All of the thinkers regarded Augustinian mysticism as a process that engages the intellect and the passions that are directed toward God. It requires not only intellectual virtue, but a formation of the passions as well. Thus, Heiler distinguishes three stages of the mystical ascent that are pertinent to the understandings of the others: (1) *via purgativa*, (2) *via illuminativa*, and (3) *via unitiva* (H: 222). The *via purgativa* consists of the purging of the soul of inordinate "worldly" desires, such as the charms of ideologies, that prevent one from focusing on one's meditation. This notion is most pronounced in Voegelin's analysis of the "charm" of

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<sup>6</sup> Gregor Sebba, "Prelude and Variations on the Theme of Eric Voegelin," *Southern Review*, NS, 13

ideology discussed above, as well as in Rahner's contribution on earth spirits on Patristic theology, where he notices that they regarded demons as "customs guards" that test the soul's renunciation of the world on its journey to God (R: 130).

The authors treat the *via illuminativa* as the intellectual ascent of the soul. It consists of the Augustinian turn inward (H: 233) that culminates in the mystical silence of contemplating the God with no name, and is a prelude to the *via unitiva*. All of the authors carefully emphasize the intellectual component of the mystical quest in this part of the journey. For Heiler, the "meditative soul seeks to analyze or examine the substance of his meditation from every angle, and thus to exhaust its inner meaning" (H: 225). The mystical ascent exercises the intellect, so its culmination in silence does not entail a cessation of intellectual activity, but the opposite: intellectual activity prepares one for grace: "The effect of contemplation and of prayer that sums up and expresses its results is an inner peace, ease, and suppleness, a passivity that releases the creative forces of the subconscious or, in religious terms, opens up a way to the full efficacy of divine grace" (H: 226). Quispel's contribution also reflects the process of the ascent exercising the intellect to open itself up to divine grace. His treatment of the Patristic understanding of time and history compares Augustine's meditation on time in the *Confessions* with his treatment of the *visio mentis* of God found in *De Genesi ad Litteram* XII. The turn inward consists of transferring the category of historical dispersion of the Israelites away from God into the soul; the historical eschatological form of the Israelites' relationship with God becomes the story of everyman's experience of the divine-human encounter in the soul (Q: 106). Quispel found that the Augustinian imageless contemplation of God illuminates one's utter dependence on God,

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(1977), 665.



the mystic. Heiler observes the “mirth in mind” of the mystic, while Voegelin places Plato’s image of human being as the play-thing of the Puppet-Master god at the center of his own philosophical anthropology (V: 342-5). Play is central to these thinkers’ understandings of the *via illuminativa* because it reflects the suppleness of the mind that gets exercised as it gets readied for the *via unitiva*.

The *via unitiva* consists of unity with God. For Quispel, it consists of the imageless contemplation of God, as described in Augustine’s *De Genesi ad Litteram* XII and in the Vision at Ostia (Q: 102-5). Voegelin emphasizes the contemplation of the nameless (and thus imageless) God: “The symbolization of ‘the god’ has to proceed with parsimonious caution because he is experienced as the nonpresent Beyond of his experienced presence in reality. We are touching the fundamental paradox of all symbolization in these matters: the noetic thinker has to symbolize the experience of something that he experiences as lying beyond the symbolization of being things” (V: 361). Heiler’s discussion of the *via unitiva* is the most extensive, and includes numerous examples of mystical experience. He points out that face-to-face encounter with God entails a complete separation of body and soul. He describes various accounts by mystics of the suspension of physical and psychic functions, and are sometimes characterized by “total anesthesia, often outwardly manifested by catalepsy or even apparent death” (H: 232). Similarly, Hugo Rahner noted the tendency of the Church Fathers (citing Ambrose and Augustine) to characterize mystical experience as inebriating and as a “losing of reason,” and summarizes as “sober-drunkenness”.<sup>9</sup> The paradox of “sober-drunkenness” reflects the antitheses of patristic

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also emphasizes the suppleness of soul in *De Trinitate* 3.4.9.  
 9 R: 145-6; Ambrose, *De fide ad Gratianam*, 1.135; Augustine, *Sermo ad Catechumenos*, 225.4, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 35.

theology that Rahner also develops in *Man at Play*.

Yet, the *unio mystica* is not a “suspension of man’s created nature” (H: 232), just as, for Rahner, patristic paradoxes do not cease for one in ecstatic *unio mystica*. The four thinkers note, not immoderation that may arise from mystical drunkenness or the “losing of reason,” but that “their sobriety never ceases to amaze us” (H: 234). The reason for this moderation and sobriety is that extraordinary manifestations of mystical union were considered inessential to the mystical experience (H: 234). Thus, Augustine on several occasions describes mystical experiences as brief: the contemplation of the eternal occurs “briefly and quickly, as in passing (*perstrictim et raptim, quasi per transitum*),” in the flash of a “trembling glance (*in ictu trepidantis aspectus*),” and describing the Vision at Ostia: “in swift thought we touched [the Eternal Wisdom] (*rapida cogitatione attingimus*).”<sup>10</sup> Instead of grandiose spectacles of the divine, they found that the *via unitiva* consists rather in moments of poignant perception of eternity that, as noted by Augustine, slip by as quickly and quietly as they unexpectedly arise.

Thus, humanity’s created nature is not suspended; grace adds to nature, to borrow a scholastic formulation. Heiler notes that medieval mystics were generally distrustful of extraordinary experiences, which they tended to regard as demonic temptations, and he lists four criteria for maintaining balance: (1) distrust of extraordinary experiences because they could really be demonic spectacles (like the “magic of the extreme” discussed by Voegelin); (2) silence regarding mystical experiences, which includes the insight that the “art of writing consists of keeping something silent” (see Q: 106; H: 235); (3) an emphasis on everyday, simple piety instead of on exalted experiences; and (4) the best sign of

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<sup>10</sup> R: 230, citing Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 41(42).9, *Confessions*, 7.17, 9.10.

ecstasy is, paradoxically, “perseverance in perfect devotion and trust in God despite total absence of contemplative experiences” (H: 235). The best sign of authentic mystical experience, of distinguishing primary from secondary reality, is this quiet, everyday perseverance in the unknown: “But precisely in this state of desolation, it becomes manifest whether the soul in its contemplative experiences has been seized by the reality of the eternal God or has merely grown drunk on delusive feelings and images of its own ego, whether its piety is rooted in a transcendent reality or is only the reflection of a sublimated egoism” (H: 236). By focusing on everyday persevering piety and trust as the culmination of mystical experience, these authors viewed Augustinian meditation as the appropriate therapy to reintegrate human personality within a technological civilization that emphasizes the busy spectacles of the “magic of the extreme.” They saw that the serenity of the depths were the best counterbalance to the *delectationes* of the wicked, not to escape the world, but to reorient themselves within it.

### III. REORIENTATION WITHIN THE WORLD: ASCONA

All of the authors shared in some sense the early Asconan critique of traditional Christianity as too otherworldly, and all sought a way to reintegrate the human personality within the world. However, they stopped short of adapting the early Asconan immanentist ideals. Rather than viewing mystical meditation as a form of otherworldly escape or idealizing the solitary contemplative, they all concluded that the mystical life was intimately connected with the life of the community in the world. As noted by Heiler, “The individual does not remain isolated in his communion with God, but is intimately bound up with his brethren, living and dead.... The community is no obstacle, but, on the contrary, an aid to

contemplative communion with God; sustained by all the faithful, the believer rises more easily to the vision of God” (H: 205). Humanity is thus at the intersection of eternity and the world. As we shall see, the paradoxical nature of the meditations led them to focus in an experiential way on the theme of the eternal *nunc* that humanity experiences under the divine and that orients human beings in their trusting quest into the unknown.

The authors discuss the cosmological and historical symbolisms developed in Augustinian meditation in order to show how those symbolisms signify the drama of the soul. We saw above how Quispel understood Augustine’s meditation on *distentio-intentio* of time as a narrative about the unity of the soul, and Rahner understood the symbol of earth spirit in patristic theology as a story of the drama of the soul: “the destiny of the cosmos is decided in man.... Since man is still demonic, so is the world” (R: 126). Later he writes: “the creative spirit acts in the soul as in the whole cosmos, the heart of man is the epitome and abstract of the universe, it is, one might say, the chaos, over which the fertilizing *pneuma* hovers and broods.... It was entirely in the spirit of this theology, which sees the visible cosmos as a reflection of the drama of the soul” (R: 141).

While Heiler focused on the Church’s liturgy as signifying mystical unity in Christ, Voegelin, Rahner, and Quispel discussed cosmological symbols as a way of explaining how the soul’s embeddedness in the world provides the materials of mystical contemplation. Rahner found that the Church Fathers thought the Holy Spirit, as analogous to the Stoic doctrine of *pneuma*, directed all of creation, permeating it right down to the innermost depths of the human psyche: “It was through them that the Church Fathers arrived at the powerful Christian conception of the Holy Ghost as a divine person, infinitely separate from any created world, and yet infinitely ‘*intimus*,’ filling the world,



guiding it, and in it carrying on the divine drama of its inspirations” (R: 138). Rahner juxtaposed the transcendent/intimate relation of the Holy Spirit with the modern notion of a cosmos devoid of divine presence. He explains how the Fathers utilized, paradoxically, cosmological symbolisms to signify the processes of the psyche while showing how the psyche is a part of creation. Citing Augustine’s *Confessions*, Rahner explains that Augustine “speaks of love as the fundamental force of all creation, the innermost essence of man, his own power of love, is also included in the dynamic of the *pneuma*: the stone falls downward, the fire flares upward, and thus it is with the spirit, it is weight and it is flame, it moved over the waters at the beginning of time, it draws everything to itself; and so it is with the spirit-filled man. *Pondus meum amor meus*” (R: 139, citing *Confessions* 13.9). Rahner notes how Augustine compares the Holy Spirit to a sculptor as both directing creation and remaining intimate with it: “As the creative will of a sculptor hovers over a piece of wood, or as the spiritual soul spreads through all the limbs of the body; thus it is with the Holy Ghost; it hovers over all things with a creative and formative power (*vi quadam effectoria et fabricatoria*)” (R: 139, citing *De Genesi ad Litteram*, 4.16). Rahner does not explain in detail what is meant by the Holy Spirit simultaneously directing the cosmos and ultimately directing the soul that he sees as differentiated from the cosmos, but one can see what Augustine meant by their having an intimate relationship in his frequent discussions of the cosmological structure of Church liturgy, as harmonized with the rhythms of the earth and sky, for instance. Humanity participates in all strata of being, and the noetic direction of the cosmos is a physical signification of the highest principles that guide the soul. Indeed, Augustine’s view that the planets are images of the holy angels remains rooted in the same primary experience of the cosmos that led Aristotle to characterize the

star-divinities (*phanerotata*) as higher than human beings in the scale of being.<sup>11</sup> For Rahner, the Patristics' view of the intimate relationship of the Holy Ghost with creation countered the empty cosmos governed by the distant watchmaker deity of modernity. Yet, the cosmological symbolisms ultimately signified the innermost depths of the psyche that transcend the cosmos; the Fathers' understanding of the Holy Ghost was also a story of differentiation between soul and cosmos: "at the innermost center of man stands his spiritual love: and consequently the Holy Ghost dwells and acts in man's soul in an entirely new and special way" (R: 140).

Rahner's reflections on the divine spirit take us far enough to see the intimacy of the Holy Spirit with creation, and the appropriateness of using cosmological symbols to signify the drama of the soul. Voegelin's meditation advances the analysis by showing not only why cosmological symbols are appropriate, but why they are *necessary*. By doing so, he advances our understanding of the unified human personality within the world. Put simply, philosophizing seeks the Beyond that is beyond all beings, and cannot be adequately signified by any single sign. Yet, it must be signified if human beings are to make sense of their longings. So, Voegelin found that the best minds utilized the symbols that were available to them in their historical settings. In the case of Plato and of the early Christians, these were cosmological symbolisms: "Plato knew quite well that the god of his vision was the same as the God of the fathers, of the *palaioi*; and since he was the same god there had to be more to him than only the divinity of noetic salvation; he also had to be, as for the ancients, the god of creation and order in the cosmos" (V: 367). Plato identified the god of the cosmos with the god of the Beyond in his myth of the god of Nous that succeeds the

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11 Augustine, *City of God*, XI.29-34; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI.7.

ages of Kronos and Zeus. Voegelin stresses that Plato's Nous does not replace Zeus and Kronos in the sense that a monotheistic deity destroys pagan polytheism. Instead, Nous represents a more clearly differentiated noetic reality that reorients humanity within the cosmos: "the god becomes the divine force that pulls the golden cord of the Nous that is meant to move man toward the immortalizing, noetic order of his existence" (V: 361). The "new god" more clearly differentiates the permanent structure of reality already incipient in the older tradition: "Experientially we are faced with a reality that is on the move from its structure of mortality toward the imperishability of an immortal Beyond. Reality moves beyond itself; it is engaged in a process of transfiguration. This is the core of what is called the experience of moving toward an *eschaton*, an eschatological experience" (V: 369). One can notice a movement in history from less to more differentiated symbols, from Kronos to Nous, that is analogous to the Christian narrative from Old to New Testament, from the dispersion and return of the Israelites to the dispersion and return of the soul, as Quispel observes. As noted above, Voegelin borrowed more from Platonic symbols than Christian ones because the former were less prone to Gnostic deformation because they were less "otherworldly" in a reified sense. Yet, Voegelin, echoing Heiler's observation of the community of the church, also notes how Augustinian Christianity could, like Plato, maintain a balance of consciousness by harmonizing the divine with the world: "In the Christian visions, this great imaginative realm of intermediate immortality, of star gods, Olympian gods, daemons, immortal souls in various states of catharsis, is paralleled by an equally well populated realm of angels of various ranks and function, of rulers and powers, daemons, and immortal men in their various states of salvation and damnation" (V: 366). This integration of the noetic with the cosmological is comparable to Augustine's

understanding of the liturgical calendar (see also H: 205-21).

Nous is not an escape from reality nor is it “otherworldly.” It reorients human being within the world to recover a sense of immortality, and the unity of the human personality, as the experienced presence of the divine within the world. Echoing Quispel’s discussion of Augustine’s meditation on time, Voegelin writes: “The consciousness of divine presence as the formative appeal endows every such event with the indelible character of a ‘present.’ Unfortunately, this part of the vision has never attracted sufficient attention to have developed a satisfactory terminology beyond Plato’s own *pareinai* and *parousia*. By introducing the term *indelible present* we shall be able to speak more fluently and intelligibly of this important insight into the structure of history.” Voegelin identifies humanity’s participation in the *indelible present* as the metaxy, the intersection of “external time with the flux of divine presence” (V: 346-7). Thus, the “vision reveals the indelible present as the center of meaning in the events of history. But it does more.... The vision, however, reveals the dynamics of the flux by revealing itself as a dynamic event within the flux.... In recognizing these structures, finally, the vision reveals their recognition as an event in the process of reality becoming luminous for its truth” (V: 347). For Voegelin, Augustinian meditation does not “produce” knowledge per se about the structure of reality, because such knowledge is necessarily intentional and reifies the divine. Rather, like Heiler’s persevering mystics, Augustinian meditation does not “produce” anything at all, but simply makes the participant luminous of the movement of reality: “The truth of symbols is not informative; it is evocative. The symbols do not refer to structures in the external world but to the existential movement in the metaxy from which they mysteriously emerge as the exegesis of the movement in intelligibly expressive language” (V 344). Voegelin’s analysis

adds to our understanding of the unity of the human personality using Augustinian meditation. While Rahner, Heiler, and Quispel identify, in various ways, the “indelible present” in Augustinian meditation, Voegelin goes further in explaining its *necessary* connection with the structure of the *via illuminativa* and *via unitiva* by showing how the moderation and balance of the vision enables the participant to understand the vision as a meaningful event in history. While Quispel notes that Augustine remembers Jerusalem in his reorientation in the world, Heiler sees the sacramental life of the Church as both signifying and sustaining mystical contemplation, and Rahner’s man at play remains conscious of the paradoxical structure of existence even in mystical ecstasy, only Voegelin explicates that tension as an experienced event that originated the quest within history and is incipient in the various historical civilizational symbolizations of the divine. Voegelin’s meditation, then, was meant to preserve the balance of what he called the:

truth between the intentionalist desire to know reality as an object, and the mystery of a reality in which such a desire to know its own truth occurs. Such a movement has to cope with the forces of imagination and language which emerge mysteriously in man’s experiential response to the reality of which he is a part. From the experiential response arise, within reality, images of reality and language symbols to express the images. Neither images nor symbols, however, are ultimate. The imagery of intentionalist consciousness is subject to correction by the advances of knowledge concerning the structure of reality as an object; and the comprehensive vision of the mystery finds its imagery corrected by such differentiating events as the noetic and pneumatic revelations (V: 372).

Voegelin’s meditation on wisdom and the magic of the extreme is meant to protect the search for wisdom from the *delectiones* of the wicked by showing how the meditation is itself an event within history that always requires the questioner to distinguish the desire to know reality as an object from the awareness that the quest is set within a Beyond beyond

beings that can never be adequately symbolized. Voegelin thus gives content to the others' phenomenological observations that man at play "hovers" between the world and the divine in a "delicate middle point between immanence and transcendence" (Rahner), and exists between "fulfilled" and "not yet fulfilled" (Quispel).

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Eranos participants Heiler, Quispel, Rahner, and Voegelin recovered Augustinian meditation in an attempt to recover reality in their age of disorder, and found that instead of being otherworldly, such meditation on the visionary aspect of existence reoriented human being within the world in such a way that reintegrated the human person within the world. Such a reorientation was not completely immanent, as each observed the paradoxical nature of humanity's existence in the world by characterizing it in terms such as hovering between "already fulfilled" and "not yet fulfilled" and in terms of serious play. Thus, they discovered that meditation does not entail otherworldly escape. Rather, it reveals the tensional nature of reality where "transcendence" and "world" are indices of the experience of the movement within reality, where one cannot "transcend" the world unless one is situated within the world, and where one cannot understand oneself as being situated within the world unless one has transcended it.

Like other thinkers in the twentieth-century, such as Hannah Arendt and Michael Oakeshott, who have looked to Augustinian thought to recover reality, they did so to recover the experiential reality of those meditations and not simply to defend Church doctrine. All did so as scholars seeking a philosophical basis with which to engage culture, but also as scholars who regard the quest for wisdom as engaging the entire human person

and not simply as a disinterested intellectual. By taking this approach, they were able to speak across cultures, not exclusively from the summit of Monte Verità, nor exclusively from the center of the town of Ascona, but in-between, in the foothills.