

Representation in Politics:¹ Transcendental Dreaming² and Existential Crisis

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2020 continues to be a difficult and unrelenting year. The continued rise of sophist-like populism in western democracies threaten not only the foundations of democracy, but western societal order itself. All quadrants of the political sphere are sounding the proverbial alarm in the wake of rising populism and its many opposing strains that seek to eliminate the other. With this in mind, one cannot simply amalgamate populism into a single entity and ignore the inherent dangers of right-wing fascist-like groups threatening the wellbeing of all peoples. While populism is not a new phenomenon, our increasingly digital world has allowed populist movements to effortlessly spread across the horizons of *immediate space*.³ Populist movements have created a world of constant attack on societal order; thereby, generating a precarious and unstable socio-political order. We can, however, seek solace in the fact that we are not alone in this battle for the soul of our social being. By looking through the pages of history we will discover this battle is not all new and was more or less predicted time and time again. For this

¹ While this is a complete paper, it must be prefaced by the fact that it is still a work in progress and I welcome all feedback and criticisms.

² It is important to note, before we begin, that the term “dreaming” found within this paper does not follow the ideas of ‘dreaming as theory,’ or ‘theorization through dreaming’ discussed within indigenous scholastic works by theorists such as Dian Million in her paper “Intense Dreaming: Theories, Narratives, and our Search for our home.” Rather, the kind of dreaming discussed within this paper revolves around the issue of living while dreaming. I am working within the confines of the history of western political thought dating back to at least Plato and his work *The Republic*, specifically books VIII and IX, where dreaming is positioned as a problem of worldly misrepresentations by those with democratic and, more troublesome, tyrannical souls. (Mis)representation through living while dreaming is a central issue discussed in Eric Voegelin’s work explored within this paper, and thus, is the kind of dreaming we will focus on.

³ “Immediate space” refers to the physical barriers of non-digital space. While the physical can be, and is argued as a part of the digital, one cannot ignore the fact that digital space(s) allow one to speak beyond their immediate physical space—where one finds themselves is not inherent knowledge when an unbounded digital space is brought into the light.

particular paper, I will be looking to Eric Voegelin and his work *The New Science of Politics* wherein he rightly concludes: the threat of “modernity without restraint” brings about “strong institutional traditions” of economic materialism, racism, corrupt psychology, scientism and technological ruthlessness.⁴ That is, for Voegelin, modernity—like knowledge through language for Aristotle—ends in infinity. Ultimately, this paper puts forward an understanding of the contemporary woes of western society by determining how avowedly backwards institutional traditions either come into being, or persist during the post-enlightened era.⁵ The purpose of such an undertaking is meant to provide a means of helping us overcome the menace of dangerous socio-political conventions by reminding of what we always already knew as means to move beyond rampant harm—one step back, two steps forward.

My search for understanding will, unsurprisingly, focus on what Voegelin calls “unrestrained modernity” alongside an exploration of the problem of infinity in language representations discussed by Aristotle in *Physics*. Focusing our search on unlimited-representation will lead us towards a discussion of what tradition is, how one represents traditions both in life and politics, and how modern (in particular) traditions fail to transcend beyond the occasion of their becoming, ultimately leading towards a crisis of existential stability. For Voegelin, the failure of transcendental social representation creates the “phenomenon of a dream world” wherein the ‘end of modernity’ finds itself.⁶ Voegelin asserts that we can only realize the problem of living while dreaming through critical reflection of uncritical opinions

⁴ Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics: An Introduction*, (Chicago, US: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 188-189.

⁵ I write *post-enlightenment* here as a nod to Foucault. For Foucault enlightenment was not, and is not a process. Rather it was an event that created the “modern ethos of critique.” See Michel Foucault, “What Is Enlightenment,” in *The Foucault Reader*, 32-50, ed. Paul Rabinow, trans. Catherine Porter (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1984), 39. I believe talking in terms of post-enlightenment in this regard—i.e. as an acceptance of a critical frame of view—fits well within the Voegelin process of theorizing through the “critical opinion.” That is, like Foucault, Voegelin (and myself) is bound to the *ethos of critique*.

⁶ Voegelin, *New Science of Politics*, 167.

regarding self-understanding. The self he discusses and the one we will reflect upon in this paper is not necessarily meant as the psychological individual self, rather it is meant as a social-self represented by society itself. As such, the inquiry of modern traditions is as much a reflection of symbolic semantics as it is an inquiry of political representation through government and its varying institutions—hence the need to explore problems of representation in language. The institutional traditions most important to us for this paper are those of western representative democracies. While government, according to Voegelin, always seeks to be representative of some aspect of society, representational democracy is the most obvious in terms of being representative—it is a form of government that has the most to lose in our contemporary world of sophistic populism.

My use of Aristotelian philosophy seeks to accomplish what I see as two necessary goals. The first, the already stated need to explore the problem of infinity within representative semiotics. The second, I employ the Aristotelian method of understanding in order to situate the paper within a Voegelin frame of understanding so that I may begin from a similar place to solve problems separated in time. As such, Aristotle's hermeneutic process of beginning with what has been said in order to properly understand that which must be understood will be followed. Employing this critical tradition will force us to sail through the world of representation like a nautical vessel seeking new horizons.⁷ It is these new horizons that we must venture past in order to see why modernity, for Voegelin, placed itself upon a path that can only lead to its own destruction. As such, let us, like Socrates, head down to the Piraeus and witness the spectacle of

⁷ The hermeneutic method is not only the anglicization of *hermēneutikos* (interpreter) or *hermēneuein* (to interpret), but it also is the amalgamation of *Hermes* (god of communication) and *nautikos* (to navigate, or to sail). As such, the Aristotelian method of hermeneutics is a process of navigating that which has been communicated as a means of interpretation.

what is, and then during our ascent back to better understanding let us be stymied by the horizons of what can be known.

Starting with the consideration of what it means to be representative of something, let us first consider Aristotle and the study of things as represented through language as being-there.⁸ Because, for something to be representative, it must be capable of representation, or, at the very least, one must be capable of articulating a representation of the thing being represented. For Aristotle, all things that are being or becoming must have “thereness,” or, for Voegelin, it must be present, i.e. they must be there in order for one to come to know what they are.⁹ Such an approach gives off an essence of always already being-there. That is, in order to be represented as being, it must already be there. If it is not already there, it cannot be represented—it must first come into being. Once it has come into being it becomes representable. It is this line of thinking that one makes the argument that something represents itself—an obvious impossibility. For example, a chair does not represent itself to the person, since the chair cannot give an account of itself to the person. The person gives an account of the chair. While some idea of chair must be known, *chair* was not out-there-in-nature waiting to be discovered; rather, the person put *chair* into existence and then articulated its reality as being a thing. While this may seem antithetical to the idea of that the thing must be present in order to be represented, it is in fact the same thing.

Chair does not become and then the being of *chair* is noted after a chair is built; rather, the need

⁸ While the term ‘being-there’ is typically used to represent the Heideggerian use of “Dasein,” we can take note that the term is not exclusive to him. Greek is a notably difficult language to interpret (and translate), and some translators, such as Joe Sachs, argue that one must approach Aristotle with a more simplistic “English.” According to Sachs, Aristotle had a tendency to write in simple terms. When we avoid mirroring that with simple English terms as a means of being “educated” adds too much interpretation on the part of the translator. (Joe Sachs, “Introduction,” *Aristotle’s Physics: A Guided Study*, Joe Sachs trans., (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 5-6). While this approach to understanding Aristotle may add complexity, it is through that complexity that we force a critical eye, rather than always seeing what is commonly held—for, as we know, the common can be an uncritical and possibly false opinion.

⁹ Aristotle, *Aristotle’s Physics: A Guided Study*, Joe Sachs trans., (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 50-51 (192b-193b20); Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, 47.

for a chair is noted and built upon from things that were already being done, e.g. sitting on a variety of objects. That is, the chairness of a object becomes apparent through the sitting on it, i.e. one does not need to learn that a stump can be sat on like a chair. Rather, one simply sits on a stump because it is simple and easier than sitting on the ground. The stump does not exist for the purpose of being sat on, but it can be seen as something to be sat on. Chairness of things (things that can be sat on)¹⁰ becomes apparent and better seating arrangements can come into existence, i.e. an actual chair, or a couch, a stool, etcetera.

Those lines of argument are how we see what Voegelin is talking about when he posits the idea that things represented in language, especially the self, appear to pre-empt themselves.¹¹ That is, for Voegelin, when we consider a thing it always appears to have already been there. We cannot consider something without first having some starting point to consider the thing in question. A thing is always assumed to be prior to considering it. The self, for instance, is assumed to be considerable. When one begins from a point of assumed being, their thought is always clouded by that starting point. For instance, if one considers chair to be something explicitly manufactured, the conversation regarding the chairness of a stump is completely and utterly absurd. For how can a stump share in the reality of chair if a stump is natural. One would have to argue into the definition of chair the necessity of sitting on as the most important component. From there the stump-chair nonbeliever could be persuaded into the idea that a stump and chair actually share representable realities—making a stump a potential *chair* candidate.

¹⁰ While sitting on something is a rather simple and rudimentary definition of chairness, the simplicity is not counterintuitive or destructive to the overall argument.

¹¹ Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, 27-29.

However, simply because something can share realities with something else does not make it that thing—especially when it must become something it is not. The stump does not become a chair simply because it is shown to be a chair. Which, as Voegelin argues, can only be understood through “critical clarification.”¹² Which for him, is the process of critically exploring opinions, or held beliefs. Simply because one holds something to be true, or is what one bases their understanding upon, does not cause one to accept that reality and move on. Or, on the same hand, once one has redeveloped an opinion, they cannot simply base all new knowledge upon that idea. If one were to do so, they risk the possibility of always thinking stumps are chairs. While the idea that someone would think a stump is a chair is clearly absurd. The simplicity of the analogy highlights the ridiculousness of blindly following what is already held.

As we continue this quest, it should be apparent that something can be shown to appear as different from what it is, and if it is so easy to engage in absurd discussions of objects that are clearly not something else, yet can be seen as that entirely different thing, we can see how the world of appearances may have such a strong hold over the representations of our worldviews. The debate regarding what appears to be and what is, is not, by any means, a new one. Looking to Plato we can see how this is a long-standing issue.

In “Book VII” of the *Republic of Plato*, Plato put forward the ‘Allegory of the Cave.’ This famous story shows the absurdity of seeing the world as it appears rather than how it actually is. Plato wrote—through the characterization of Socrates—about a hypothetical group of people living in a cave. A particular sub-class of these troglodytes would have been chained-up in such a way that they are forced to look at a wall whereupon shadows of puppets are reflected. They could memorize these puppets as they appear to them. The ones that could predict the

¹² Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, 28.

things coming next and those that could memorize the most shadows, would be regarded as the best in the society.¹³ What is important for Plato, and for us, through the telling of this story is the idea of living in a world of appearances rather than a world of truth. That is, one may live in the world and never actually know they do not know the truth about anything—they always see shadows. For Plato, people can very easily live a life in a false reality. Just as for Voegelin, people live a life of uncritical knowledge. They live their entire life believing what they have always believed or have come to believe, regardless of its truth, goodness, or lack thereof. While this is not profound and unobvious, it is relevant to the issue at hand. Representations of reality can be of what appears, not of what is.

A less fictional telling of the idea of living with uncritical representations of the world around them is best illustrated by Michel Foucault in his book the *History of Madness*.¹⁴ Foucault tells of the history of the mad and lepers in Europe (I focus on the history of France) and the attachment of place to sickness.¹⁵ Foucault explains that once lepers were of sufficient population in French cities, space was allocated and wealthier cities built special hospitals outside of the cities to house these people. As leprosy became less of an issue (the disease ran its natural course and they all appeared to have died off) the spaces outside the city did not go unused or return to their natural state. The spaces and hospitals started to house the homeless and the mad (the mentally unwell). While none of these people were contagious—they had no illnesses that one need could catch—the people of France had placed a mental attachment of sickness to the spaces outside the cities. The mental representations caused them to avoid the

¹³ Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, Allan Bloom trans., (US: Basic Books, 1991), 194 (515a-516a).

¹⁴ I say “less fictional” due to the fact that there is some debate regarding the authenticity of historical truth within the *History of Madness*—most notably Derrida’s critique. However, there is, even for Derrida, some acceptance of some truth that can be found within the history represented.

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, Jonathan Murphy trans. And Jean Khalfa trans., (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 16-17.

spaces as though everyone there had “the plague.” That is, they could not empty the space of its past reality.

It is here that we see the true effect of not only living in a world of appearance, but also a world of uncritical opinion. While Foucault would have called this the inability to “unthink,” Voegelin described this phenomena as, once again, being uncritical. One must approach their world critically if they are to understand the unnecessary harms (or injustices) of their traditions, beliefs, and institutions. For instance, there would have been less harm to the people living in the hospitals post-leprosy had the people of France critically evaluated the representation of the spaces. They would have realized that the new people occupying those spaces were not contagious, nor harmful to society and did not need to be treated like the lepers of the past. That is, they needed a different kind of care than that of a leper.¹⁶ The townsfolk of France were unable to do away with old representations thereby causing unnecessary harm. Before discussing this issue of representation within the guise of representative politics, let us fully understand why representations persists beyond when they are unreal.

Following Aristotle’s discussion of giving an account of the world as it is, we will see that *representation* is like a container.¹⁷ The container is the thing in question, and we fill it with the knowledge of the thing. For instance, a chair is something we represent through language. A chair can take many forms. It can have legs, a back, or none of that and still be a chair (e.g. beanbag chair).¹⁸ Or let us consider a tree: it is wooden, it might have leaves, pines, bear fruit, or none of that, and yet, it will still be a tree. Returning to the definition of chair, we can say that a

¹⁶ Foucault, *History of Madness*, 38.

¹⁷ Aristotle, *Aristotle’s Physics*, 98. While Aristotle is discussing place here, his discussion of place is a discussion of how one represents place in language. That is, place is only understood through language and is therefore always a representation. It is through this understanding of place as a representation that we begin to understand representation of things. Which, for Aristotle, the representation of a thing is like filling a “jar”—hence the use of container.

¹⁸ While one may argue that a beanbag chair is not a chair, for all intents and purposes for this paper, it is a chair.

chair must have a back, otherwise it becomes a stool. Upon doing that, we must be rid of the idea that *back* is optional. Thinking to a child, who might learn the word chair before stool may have always called a stool a chair. However, as they grew and learned of stools, they may still continue calling stools chairs. Back to the container analogy, we can see that *chair* had the option of back, but then we took that portion out and put in the necessity of backs. Then beside this we added the container of *stool* and to this definition we did not add backs, because stool in our conversation has no back and therefore does not need that as part of its definition.

While considering stools and chairs within the confines of definitional containers is all well and fun, how does it relate to the question at hand? How we represent something does not change because it is something of greater importance. That is, how we represent society in government is not different from how we represent menial things like trees, stools and chairs in language. How one sees society is both limited and malleable. As we learn about something we are always in a process of adding and subtracting (knowing it better).¹⁹ Nothing represented in language is infinite, and as we saw with the leper hospitals of France, representation is not empty of stuff, i.e. representation always has some substance.²⁰ If it were to be bereft of substance that would make it a(the) void and as a result it would never be anything. Because anything that is devoid of substance cannot be given substance as though the void is simply an empty container waiting to be filled.²¹ The very essence of ‘void’ is that it is infinitely empty and will always be as such. If one is able to put substance within some container it ceases being a void. This is not to say that the void goes from being void to being something else entirely—for Aristotle, the void is

¹⁹ This approach to representation may appear as “relative” however, it is the form of representation that we are arguing against that is relative. Simply because we come to know something better does not make it relative to now. Rather, we better understand it and as a result must let go of incongruities.

²⁰ Aristotle, *Aristotle’s Physics*, 107-109 (213a12-214b)

²¹ Aristotle, *Aristotle’s Physics*, 108 (213b30)

always a void and has no use in understanding representations. For him, the void (like infinity) only has purpose in mathematics. From here we may argue that representations comes into being from having not been (it becomes). However, for Aristotle, representations are discovered, not created. For instance, education is not created from nothing, rather it is discovered to be and then given representation.²² Or, one may consider the social.

For Voegelin, while wielding the Aristotelian procedure, if we consider the social, it is not created in the moment of realization. That is, the social does not become when one inquiries about it; rather, one discovers something about the social when they question what it is. From there, the social-representation gains some substance concerning its reality.²³ And again, we have come face to face with the problem that the self-representation appears to pre-empt itself. For Voegelin, this is not an inherent issue. Rather, one ought to realize that the social was always already there. One does not discover something and then invent it in the moment—representations are not created *ad infinitum*. Furthermore, one does not discover the social from a point outside the social. They whom are inquiring into the thing always have some attachment to the thing in question. That is, the idea of the thing in question always comes from a pre-existing opinion, belief, or understanding (what we may call a bias). While that is not controversial, Voegelin argued that the positivist-object view point assumes in a capacity of unburdening oneself of these pre-existing “knowns.” That is, the positivist assumes they can completely empty the representation of the thing. Or, to the other extreme, it means they believe they can destroy the representation and build a new one in the moment. This would only be possible if representations existed in a void, or were *void*.

²² Aristotle, *Aristotle's Politics*, 37 (188b).

²³ Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, 27.

It is here that we see the transcendental nature of representations. That is, if the representation cannot be destroyed, nor fully emptied, it always transcends beyond the occasion of its discovery, change and abandonment. That is, even if you pour out the contents of the container, some remnant is always left behind. Even if one believes they have done away with a belief, the representation (or at least some portion of it) has some capacity to persist. We can consider this with the notion of the stool and chair. Upon discovering the stool (a backless chair), all stools ought to be stools and chairs, chairs. However, as we discussed, the stool continues being called a chair. Or, take Voegelin and his apparent disdain for the Gnostics. The Gnostics are the embodiment of a positivistic, transcendently inept, unrestrained modern people. That is, For Voegelin, they believe they are capable of doing away with pre-existing knowns while simultaneously cherry-picking parts of representations. They believe they can be Christian, without Christian ideals, without the transcendental—they believe they are outside the “ordered cosmion” of reality.²⁴ For Voegelin, the Gnostic order of the modern is bereft of the cosmic reality of transcendental ties to how they have always lived. The Gnostic is unaware of the hold their abandoned Christian ideals still have on them. They are living in a reality that is incapable of seeing the truth of the issues at hand—they are living a dream bereft of transcendental representations.

The consequences of these apparent issues are a threefold unfolding. It creates a representative politics of imagined truths burdened by incommensurate beliefs (1) that leads into a socially dreamed reality (2), ending in a socio-political existential crisis (3). Consider the first fold: representative politics. When I speak of representative politics, I am speaking of what a government represents, how a government represents the social, and what the social thinks their

²⁴ Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, 162-169.

government represents. All of these things can be commensurate, or they can be somewhat commensurable or completely incommensurate. For our purposes we will consider the latter two options.

Focusing on constitutional democracies,²⁵ we can see where the government gets its political will—the constitution and the public. Therein lies the first potential incommensurability. Those that represent the government make a claim to power from the constitution or the people. Focusing on the people, we might argue that an elected official most clearly gains their power from the electorate. So long as they are popular with the social that elected them, they may be representative of that social. If they are not, or lose popularity, they may turn to the constitution for power. In this sense, they cease being representative of the population and become representative of the constitution. Which, in and of itself, is the essence of constitutional democracies. However, the obvious issue becomes clear. They never cease being representative of the government, however, how the power of the government is represented through them, changes.²⁶ That is, the representation that is government is emptied of one aspect and then filled with another—people for constitution, or vice versa.

Here we see the transcendental components of constitutional democracy at odds. The social as an entity is transcendental. It exists regardless of the government and the people alive in the moment. Furthermore, the constitution seeks to be a transcendental entity that gives power to the structure of the social being governed. These things do not have to be in agreement. Thinking of this more abstractly, the government or those that govern believe a specific social-self-representation that is bound to some previous belief that is not necessarily held by the social.

²⁵ Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, 49. While Voegelin argues that the issue of representation in government is true for all forms of government, I will focus on constitutional democracies, as a means of highlighting the issues most clearly.

²⁶ Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, 52-53.

Furthermore, neither the social, nor the government require a social-self-understanding bound to a cosmic order, or unapparent truths. The incommensurable representations appear to be at odds with each other. One may believe in the long-standing tradition of colonialism as a source of social injustice that persists into the present, and another may believe that colonialism is in the past and as a result it cannot be a source of harm and all the perceived colonial harms by BIPOC²⁷ populations are imagined. Regardless of which diagnosis is correct, whomever governs, will act based on their truth. The colonial harm will persist if the latter governs, and if the former governs, the latter will perceive injustices as their social order (colonial order) is dismantled. These incommensurable representations bring out the difficulties of being-there-together.

What must be realized here, is not that colonial harms do not exist—it is most likely very present—rather, one must understand that neither approach can fully rectify the issues of the unrestrained modern being. Each superficial social diagnosis²⁸ only hits on a portion of the issue at hand. The problems of the past will continue to persist and the false truths will continue to transcend the occasion of their era—the colonial era does not end after independence. Voegelin explains this issue through the problem of the Gnostics. For him, the Gnostics do not realize that their having done away with a portion of their Christian beliefs while keeping selected western ideals creates a false reality that can never hope to solve its own issues.²⁹ The Gnostics were (and still are) unaware of where their true beliefs come from and how the old ideals of Christianity endures into their present and will continue well into their future. It is at this point that Voegelin prescribed a sort of Christian returning to solve the issues at hand. However, I do not believe a Christian returning is truly necessary. Furthermore, I do not think Voegelin thought this is the

²⁷ Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour.

²⁸ This is not to say that colonial theorists are superficial, rather it is to say that some social dialogue or rhetoric from governing officials, the electorate, and/or some activists lock onto superficial arguments to solve complex issues.

²⁹ Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, 169-170.

only remedy. Rather, focusing on the issue of “unrestrained modernity” we can see that we require a proper understanding of the problems that plague the modern era.³⁰ The Gnostics believe they can continue to pour substance into their representation of reality to no end. That representation is a void that can be infinitely filled and that we simply move along through the void filling it. Or, we empty the container completely and add new content all the time—nothing transcends. They are blind to the reality that representation can only fit so much and that representation transcends beyond its abandonment.³¹ Furthermore, due to their Christian past, i.e. all creation was created out of the void, they believe that representation is a void, as such, believe it can be fully emptied and replenished as though the history of harms can cease to exist. Therein lies the dream. The Gnostics, or, from here on out, the unrestrained modern, lives a dreamed existence of transcendently destructive ideals.

A dreamed reality in of itself is not inherently destructive. What makes it destructive is the inability to see social harms—as stated in the introductory remarks: *strong institutional traditions of economic materialism, racism, corrupt psychology, scientism and technological ruthlessness*. While these concepts are not new, or found purely within the modern and post-modern era, Voegelin emphasises the reality that the unrestrained modern has a seemingly neoliberal³² drive to imbed its ideals beyond the occasion through legal tradition, constitutional order, social norms, bureaucratic best practices and institutional structures. This drive leads to their dreamed reality transcending time within these strong institutions. As one seeks to change

³⁰ Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, 189.

³¹ A quick and clear example of this would be to consider the secular Canadian state, whose constitution begins with: “Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law.” See: Canadian Constitution Act, 1982, Part 1, Charter of Rights and Freedoms, <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/const/page-15.html#h-38>.

Here we can see how a secular state fails at being secular when it invokes the name of ‘God’ in the outset of its framing document—the reality of its Christian past endures into the representation of its present.

³² While Voegelin does not discuss neoliberalism, the concept is not far off from what he was discussing towards the end of the text.

these institutions, or alter the structure of what is, the representation of social existence comes under attack.³³ Those that live within the social representation upheld by the traditions come face to face with the perceived end of their society—as the dream comes to an end, an existential crisis ensues.

As they attempt to save the social-representation of their reality, their ideals become further entrenched and their dreamed reality is further distorted. They are unable to deal with the reality that their way of life is incapable of any sort of true justice. The unrestrained modern cannot face the fact there is no good to living in ignorance simply because the other refuses to bend to their will as a means of having a pure social as represented by their ideals. The three folds of the unrestrained modern societal quilt tears apart at the seams never to be fixed. For Voegelin, society is at this point that in time where most injustices occur. Either the unrestrained modern accepts their reality, or a new fascism ensues. However, the opposite end of this existential battle is neither destined to win, nor destined to create a good and just world. As with the Gnostics, the substance of the previous representations will not simply die overnight. It will persist in some fashion and one must accept this reality and affect change overtime in a prudent and accepting manner. If they do not, they create the same fascism the unrestrained modern is toying with. Furthermore, any change would have to accept that it may not be perfect and must always engage in a process of critical clarification, or risk becoming unrestrained once again—that is, one cannot live in the void. This is not to argue against any change, rather it is to argue for good and just change, in a prudent and affective manner—so long as it is possible.³⁴

³³ Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, 171.

³⁴ Violence may be disdained by some, but we must always be prepared for the inevitability and reality that it is unavoidable and the best course of action. We can think back to many historical actions that were seemingly unjust violent acts that are now seen as just acts. That is, some good deeds can only be seen in hindsight.

Let us, for the time being, end our query here. At the cross-roads of unrestrained being. The ultimate realization that all beliefs run the risk of becoming unjust, even if one starts with the best of intentions. Let us end with the understanding that an unrestrained state of being is a recipe for societal harm and existential destruction.

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