

THE QUESTION OF ORDER.
ERIC VOEGELIN'S *INTRODUCTION TO A NEW SCIENCE OF SOCIOLOGY**

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Motto:

“What is permanent in the history of mankind is not the symbols but man himself in search of his humanity and its order”. (E. Voegelin, *Equivalents of experience and symbols*)

ABSTRACT

The philosopher and the political scientist Eric Voegelin, caught in the most troubled period of the twentieth century, proposes a reevaluation of human sciences, affected by positivism and political disorders. His extensive research brought a tremendous contribution for these sciences, and his criticism opened some new paths for a reappraisal of sociology. Thus, we find in Voegelin's work a rich fundament for a *sociology of order*. One that imperatively demands the return to the experiences of human and social reality, for a truly scientific enquiry in search of truth. Recently, the contribution of Ilie Bădescu through noological sociology lifts Romanian sociology at a similar endeavor. We try to establish the main lines for a *Voegelinian sociology*, using his most important categories, the question of order being his fierce quest amidst the disorders of his century. With the help of E. Voegelin and I. Bădescu we could lay the foundation of a *sociology of order*, one that views order as a cardinal social and individual dimension.

Keywords: Voegelin, sociology of order, noological sociology, disorder, spiritual dimension.

* After the title of E. Voegelin's book, *The New Science of Politics* (1952), in which he proposed a refoundation of political science, badly affected by the troubled Western history, where modernity proved to be a climax of modern gnosticism.

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IN SEARCH OF A SOCIOLOGY OF ORDER

Eric Voegelin's lifetime efforts meant to understand the disorders that humanity faced (World Wars and modern ideologies) shaped him from the philosopher and political scientist that he was to an even more valuable scholar for sociology. Using his philosophical categories and studies we acquire another level in sociological understanding, one that breaks from the positivist legacy, still lurching in social research. In this respect we bring Voegelin's categories in the service of sociology, daring even to mirror his *New Science of Politics*, with the possibility of a *New Science of Sociology*, one concerned with the order of existence reflected in the order of society, as he proves.

Closer to us, in Romanian sociology, we have the *noological sociology* of Ilie Bădescu, which analyses the spiritual latencies in the manifestations of the spiritual teachings in society, according to a spiritual profile, or, on the contrary, the deformation of this spiritual fundament in pathological manifestations. I. Bădescu applies this theory on Christian communities, also reaching political ground in *Noopolitics*. (Bădescu, 2006)

Both authors have a common point of departure, being concerned with the spiritual forms of degradation that have a tremendous impact on social and cultural levels, and which are violently visible in modern politics.¹ It is safe to say that the question of order is common to these authors, and a *sociology of order* could be the result of their contributions. The stake here is understanding the spiritual dimension of man and society, a key element for human sciences, especially for sociology and philosophy.

We discover the foundation of Voegelin's thought concerning the question of order and of Bădescu *noological sociology*, in an attempt to outline a *sociology of order*. In this theoretical context, we can see this study as a programmatic endeavor to create a methodological path for this type of sociology, laying first and foremost its theoretical ideatic ground.

IN SEARCH OF ORDER

Western culture, the locus of great scientific achievements, as well as the space of two massive political shocks (Communist and National Socialist totalitarianisms), cannot be understood and researched without two fundamental pillars: Greek philosophy and Christian legacy, warns Voegelin. The social and spiritual disorders like religious wars, ideologies, totalitarianisms, modern gnosticism determined Voegelin to search the question of order, in its philosophical and political dimensions. In regard to this, his thinking could have a large applicability for sociology.

¹ Măndiță, M. (2020). Neo-totalitarianism, The beginning of anarchic civilization? A Voegelin reading of our time, upcoming article, in *Romanian Journal of Sociological Studies*, no. 1 / 2020.

Voegelin proposes an understanding of man's humanity from two sources of European culture, noetic and pneumatic differentiations, Greek philosophy and Revelation. His premise is that the order of existence is transferred to the order of society², and here we confine a type of sociology which identifies the sources of order, and their specific manifestations in social space, with impact on the past and present, thus designing possible lines for the future.

VOEGELIN AFTER WEBER

For sociology Voegelin is a very provocative and stimulating intellectual, one that has not been valued at all, within the effort to reconstruct the image of sociology, relieved by its modern bias, indebted to natural sciences and their methodologies. Maybe it is not irrelevant that the chair of Max Weber in political science at Munich's Ludwig Maximilian University, unoccupied since his death in 1920, was filled by E. Voegelin in 1958. Indeed, an intellectual that was rising at the level of Weber's greatness, probably even exceeding it.

Voegelin opposes the limitations of modern methodology imposed in human sciences, proving the improper inquiry into the spiritual dimension of man, society and culture, in the effort to imitate a natural sciences methodology. In this ideatic context and contesting the establishment of a *value free science*, Voegelin views Weberian sociology as "the last of the great positivistic systems". (Voegelin, [1952], 1987: 22) In this sense he identified a hiatus in Weber's theory, namely:

"the fact that in his sociology of religion, wide as it ranged, there was no treatment of early Christianity or of Classic philosophy. That is to say, the analysis of experiences that would have supplied the criteria for existential order and responsible action remained outside his field of consideration. If Weber nevertheless did not derail into some sort of relativism or anarchism, that is because, even without the conduct of such analysis, he was a staunch ethical character and in fact (as the biography by his nephew, Eduard Baumgarten, has brought out) a mystic. So, he knew what was right without knowing the reasons for it". (Voegelin, 2011: 40)

Weber's impact on E. Voegelin was acknowledged and his status admired, starting with the analysis of Marxism, *Sociology of Religion, Economy and Society*, its wide comparative studies and familiarity with ancient civilizations, modern and mediaeval, of Western and Asia or Near Eastern cultures.

However, a reproach of Voegelin towards Weber was the unanswered question of transcendence, along with Weber's inability to develop a philosophy of history, to make the next natural step in his research. The problem with the accumulation of information, of a scientific activity that will be superseded, determined Voegelin to consider that this "last meaninglessness (...) can only be

² Voegelin, E. (2000b).

resolved by openness to transcendence in the sense of life's opening toward meaning. It does not lie in the world. Weber was very conscious of this meaninglessness, and this should partly explain the fragmentary character of his work". (Voegelin, 1999: 269)

Voegelin considers that the deformation of science reduced only to immanent action is not in line with the contribution of Aristotle and Plato, and, generally, with a philosophy of order. For this, a recommendation is made, namely "to go from there in the direction of the openness to transcendence and the restoration of those symbols by which the experiences of reason and spirit can interpret themselves. Max Weber has overcome this situation for us. We must in our age restore reality again" (ibidem).

To see sociology through different lenses, as we try to do here, demands a return to the experience, following Voegelin, to a restauration so needed after the positivistic age, being safe to say that sociology started with a non-human view of human sciences, but it does not need to remain there. In this way, Voegelin warns us concerning the fetish for methods, used as a "criterion of science that abolishes theoretical relevance. As a consequence, all propositions concerning facts will be promoted to the dignity of science, regardless of their relevance, as long as they result from a correct use of method. Since the ocean of facts is infinite, a prodigious expansion of science in the sociological sense becomes possible, giving employment to scientist technicians and leading to the fantastic accumulation of irrelevant knowledge through huge 'research projects' whose most interesting feature is the quantifiable expense that has gone into their production". (Voegelin, [1952], 1987: 8)

A PARADIGM SHIFT

In the process of reviewing human sciences, one that does not negate or ignore the basic elements of humanity (like faith, soul, transcendent, immanence, mortality, immortality), Voegelin brought a *paradigm shift* in political science. (Liedhold, 2018) This direction is assumed also for sociology in an endeavor to discover the categories of a *sociology of order*.

If Voegelin practiced philosophy in order to understand the disorders of his time, profoundly weakened by the modern ideologies (Hegelianism, Marxism, Communism, National Socialism), in a search for order, he demanded the imperative of recapturing the reality, a return to the experience badly distorted under the aggressiveness of the new modern man. (Voegelin, 2011) If in philosophy he demanded a return to experience, then especially in sociology we must respond to this request, actually researching the humanity of society.

For this, a short introduction to a potential *sociology of order* is based on the categories of E. Voegelin and I. Bădescu, having in mind that an extensive theoretical foundation must stand on an ample research of relevant categories and

their symbolized experiences. This could bring coherence needed for such an endeavor, bringing the other methodological steps made by I. Bădescu in the books *Compared Noology of Jewish and Romanian peoples. A sociology of communities* (2017) and *Sociology of Spiritual Manifestations* (2017) to a unified sociological approach. In this way, this study is a programmatic one, establishing here the basis. The following part is the most important contribution of E. Voegelin that could substantiate a *sociology of order*.

Voegelin's way is a very simple one, and, at the same time, rich in possibilities, especially for sociology, meaning that "the methodologically first, and perhaps most important, rule of my work is to go back to the experiences that engender symbols". (Voegelin, 2011: 121) This is the beginning of the *paradigm shift*, one focused upon understanding the disorders of his time, making this scholar to elaborate his *opus magnum*, *Order and History*, vol. I–IV.

This specific rule of Voegelin, combined with the thesis that "the substance of history consists in the experiences in which man gains the understanding of his humanity and together with it the understanding of its limits" (Voegelin, [1952], 1987: 78), brings this paradigm shift to remarkable bearings on sociology. The reality of an empirical field without contact with experience, with methods acquiring a too important status surpassing theoretical explorations, means that "the present-day situation is even more difficult, because the mainstream of social sciences transformed into a branch of applied mathematics, processing masses of quantitative 'data' generated by standardized methods either using electronic technologies for 'data mining' or the bureaucratic paperwork approach of filling in questionnaires, considered to be the epitome of 'empirical survey'". (ibid.: 2)

A VOEGELIN... A START FOR SOCIOLOGY

The main theoretical elements of Voegelin's thought became the focal points for a *sociology of order*. Among them we mention: experience, symbol, participation, equivalents, *In-Between* or metaxy, the tension of transcendence and immanence.

Starting from a comprehensive definition of science, he develops a philosophy of consciousness, another understanding of political sciences, the studies of *History and Order* surpassing the series on *History of Political Ideas*. All in search of the truth of order, contrasted by massive disorders, especially the aggressiveness of modern ideologies:

"Science is a search for truth concerning the nature of the various realms of being. Relevant in science is whatever contributes to the success of this search. Facts are relevant in so far as their knowledge contributes to the study of essence, while methods are adequate in so far as they can be effectively used as a means for this end". (Voegelin, [1952], 1987: 4–5)

Among his elaborated criticism of modern times, the most pressing is the deforming of the truth, the decapitation of man and his culture, thus erasing hundreds of years, a massive retrogression in the research of man and society and of their *various realms of being*, situation which actually is a regression of science.

Two short propositions are relevant starting points in a Voegelinian sociology, with peculiar value for sociology: “the order of history emerges from the history of order” (Voegelin, 2001: 19) and “God and man, world and society form a primordial community of being. The community with its quaternarian structure is, and is not, a datum of human experience. It is a datum of experience insofar as it is known to man by virtue of his participation in the mystery of its being. It is not a datum of experience insofar as it is not given in the manner of an object of the external world but is knowable only from the perspective of participation in it”. (ibidem: 39)

First, following Voegelin, each and every society, irrespective of its type of development, creates, needs and represents a type of order that contains a vision of its experience, a specific meaning concerning its divine and human dimensions, and its purposes as well. These take the form of symbols engendered by experiences, that maintain and contain the truth of their order. The initial types of order identified by Voegelin, that were designed to be analysed in the series *History and Order*, are: the order and symbols of Near East, of the Chosen People, the polis (Plato and Aristotle), the empires up to the development of Christianity, the modern state with its specific gnosis. Under the complexity of the types of order with their symbols, and under the accumulation of increasing empirical discoveries, Voegelin rethinks this project. His final volumes *The Ecumenic Age* and *In search of order* represent the heights of his thought as a philosopher of history, probably as a sociologist as well.

Second, this quaternarian structure is fundamental in a sociological analysis, having double vectors of existence and nonexistence at the same time. The key-element here is participation, which for sociology is of great importance, because “participation in being, however, is not a partial involvement of man; he is engaged with the whole of his existence, for participation is existence itself” (Voegelin, 2001: 39), one that is between freedom and necessity, underlines the author.

It must be retained here that *existence* is a fundamental category of understanding the ways that different types of order are created in history in this complex participation of these fundamental dimensions – God, man, world and society. Their lived participation is seen in the symbols that express different experiences.

A break in the history of humanity, with its multiple types of order and their symbols, occurs, when Voegelin identifies a leap, a transition from compact to differentiated symbols. “One is the symbolization of society and its order as an analogue of the cosmos and its order; the other is the symbolization of social order by analogy with the order of a human existence that is well attuned to being. Under

the first form society will be symbolized as a microcosmos; under the second form as a macroanthropos". (Voegelin, 2001: 43)

In the cosmological order Voegelin studies the ancient civilizations and the dissolution of their social order, making place for a new type of symbolized order, one that "is more lasting than the visibly existing world – that is, toward the invisibly existing being beyond all being in tangible existence. This invisible divine being, transcending all being in the world and of the world itself, can be experienced only as a movement in the soul of man; and hence the soul, when ordered by attunement to the unseen god, becomes the model of order that will furnish symbols for ordering society analogically in its image" (ibid.: 44), a process observed in Egypt, China (Lao-Tse, Confucius), Buddha, philosophies in the Hellenic and Christian worlds.

This order of being is symbolized through an analogy of plant and animal life, of celestial order, multiple orders for divine force existing as well. All this is happening in a medium of pluralism of truths, according to Voegelin, and of tolerance, which brings the doubt of the power of symbol to truly represent the order of being. However, "only when the originating, ordering, and preserving source of being is experienced in its absolute transcendence beyond being in tangible existence, will all symbolization by analogy be understood in its inadequacy". (ibidem: 47)

This brought a change in "the order of being and existence itself (...), a turning around, the Platonic periagogé, an inversion or conversion toward the true source of order. And this turning around, this conversion, results in more than an increase of knowledge concerning the order of being; it is a change in the order itself. For the participation in being changes its structure when it becomes emphatically a partnership with God" (ibidem: 48). This means a new community, a new symbolism, a new order in / of existence.

MAN SEEKING GOD, GOD IN SEARCH OF MAN³

Philosophy, "the love of being through love of divine Being as the source of its order" (ibid.: 24), is the chance of Voegelin to diagnose his troubled times, thus providing a rich ground for sociology to research the orders and disorders of current times. Especially those experiences of participation that open man and society to a multiple level of orders confer a vision over the world, God, and the other spiritual components.

The phenomenon of *participation* is considered by Voegelin the center of consciousness, also present in Plato's concept of *In-Between* or *metaxy*, which means that:

³ Voegelin, E. (2000b): "the In-Between character of the tension and its site is admirably clear: the tension of God seeking man, and man seeking God – the mutuality of seeking and finding one another (p. 398).

“the experience is neither in the subject nor in the world of objects but *In-Between*, and that means *In-Between* the poles of man and of the reality that he experiences. The *In-Between* character of experience becomes of particular importance for the understanding of response to the movements of divine presence. For the experience of such movements is precisely not located in man’s stream of consciousness – man understood in the immanentist sense – but in the *In-Between* of the divine and the human. The experience is the reality of both divine and human presence, and only after it has happened can it be allocated either to man’s consciousness or to the context of divinity under the name of revelation”. (Voegelin, 2011: 98–99)

Human consciousness is characterized by this *In-Between* reality, in which participation is viewed like an experiential tension, and the *luminosity* of consciousness “stresses this *In-Between* character of the experience as against the immanentizing language of human consciousness, which, as a subject, is opposed to an object of experience. This understanding of the *In-Between* character of consciousness, as well as of its luminosity – which is the luminosity not of a subjective consciousness but of the reality that enters into the experience from both sides – results furthermore in a better understanding of the problem of symbols: Symbols are the language phenomena engendered by the process of participatory experience. The language symbols expressing an experience are not inventions of an immanentist human consciousness but are engendered in the process of participation itself. Language, therefore, participates in the metaxy character of consciousness”. (ibidem: 99)

Ellis Sandoz, a student of Voegelin, gives the following explanation of his philosophy of experience, in the introduction of *Published Essays 1966–1985*. To discover the dimension of human existence, a special emphasis is put on this non datum character of experience, as Voegelin stressed, meaning that:

“At the level of common sense, it is evident that human beings have experiences other than sensory perceptions, and it is equally evident that philosophers like Plato and Aristotle explored reality on the basis of experiences far removed from perception. (...) It is evident that the primarily non sensory modes of experience address dimensions of human existence superior in rank and worth to what those sensory perception does: experiences of the good, beautiful, and just, of love, friendship, and truth, of all human virtue and vice, and of divine reality. Apperceptive experience is distinguishable from sensory perception and a philosophical science of substance from a natural science of phenomena. Experience of ‘things’ is modeled on the subject-object dichotomy of perception in which the consciousness intends the object of cognition. But such a model of experience and knowing is ultimately insufficient to explain the operations of consciousness with respect to the non-phenomenal reality men approach in moral, aesthetic, and religious experiences... The participatory (metaleptic) experiences of human beings in the *In-Between* (metaxy), which are the constitutive core of human reality, are transactions conducted within consciousness itself and not externally in time and space; hence Voegelin sometimes calls the realm in which they occur nonexistent reality..., or the realm of spirit”. (Embry, 2008)

Here, on this realm of spirit, in the non-datum character of experience as participatory tension, we consider the *locus of sociology, par excellence*, the fundament of social relations, institutions, of sociality per se. Considering sociology as being made up of two phases: *phase one* of sociology characterized by the visible part of society, measurable, physical, whose research is suitable for an imitation of natural sciences methodologies, along the most important; and social *phase two*, concentrated on this pure sociality, the weight being on the realm of spirit, on the tension expressed in participation of social and individual existence.

Going back to experience, acknowledging the elements of participatory action, the creative or destructive tension of this *In-Between*, all are steps recommended by Voegelin, but to which sociology should also respond. The question of *equivalents* assures to the sociologist the possibility of making comparative studies, understanding and explaining specific experiences, as well as the access to the fundaments of a society in history.

SEARCHING FOR THE EQUIVALENTS OF SYMBOLS

The diversity of symbols is a very complex reality in communities and peoples, and it is of special interest for sociological inquiring too. What Voegelin recommends is to find their *equivalents*, which means a search for the constants that engendered the experiences, as these represent “man himself in search of his humanity and its order”, i.e. his existential order. (Voegelin, 2015: 1)

Studying the symbols and their equivalents means a participation in “the time dimension of existence, accessible only through participation in its reality” (ibidem: 2), an openness towards the experiences engendered. The search for constants is not a set of rules for the right order, underlines the author, because “existence does not have the structure of order or, for that matter, of disorder, but the structure of a tension between truth and deformation of reality (...). Existence has the structure of the *In-Between*, of the Platonic metaxy, and if anything is constant in the history of mankind it is the language of tension between life and death, immortality and mortality, perfection and imperfection, time and timelessness; between order and disorder, truth and untruth, sense and senselessness of existence; between amor Dei and amor sui, l’âme ouverte and l’âme close; between the virtues of openness toward the ground of being such as faith, love, and hope, and the vices of infolding closure such as hybris and revolt; between the moods of joy and despair; and between alienation in its double meaning of alienation from the world and alienation from God”. (ibid.: 4–5)

Another warning is made by Voegelin concerning the separation of these poles of tension, which could “destroy the reality of existence as it has been experienced” (ibid.: 5), leading us to lose ourselves in all sorts of deformed lived reality, such as different kinds of social activism, drugs, hedonism, despair, depression, which are all mere substitutes for the lost reality, states Voegelin.

We can say with Voegelin that man is a participator in reality, a fact of which he is conscious, thus engendering symbols that reflect the experience of reality, of himself, of this participation.

Between experience and symbols there is a very important relationship. If the symbols lost the reality from which they derive their meaning, their experience is lost, they became meaningless or unimportant. If we want to truly understand them, we have to return to the experience that produced them, and to their meaning.

Starting from the structure *God, man, world, and society*, from the fundamental experiences viewed in symbols (making comparable the research of different people and cultures), we could develop a *sociology of order* relevant for a large design of social relations, identities, social processes and behaviors, which could unify or disintegrate societies, cultures. Also, there could be analyzed the deformities, *second realities*⁴ constructed with the aim to obscure this tension and to annihilate one pole of existence. Here stands the meaning and purpose of sociological knowledge.

A HEADLESS AND HEARTLESS MAN – WHERE TO?

An important category selected by Voegelin in order to understand the disorder in the world is the question of *the ground* or *search for the ground*. Finding this sort of general categories makes it possible the comparison between different culture and civilizations, and we will underline this postulate when trying to establish the main elements of a *sociology of order*.

The category of *the ground* is considered by Voegelin a constant in all civilizations, even though the forms and manifestations are different. The concept, *aition*, developed by Plato and Aristotle, has a few meanings: a cause in time and space, and four types of cause differing from the physical one (*materialis*, *formalis*, *eficiens*, *finalis*), and as a *ground of existence*, which is comprehended in *Nous – Reason, Spirit, Intellect*. (Voegelin, 2000b)

This reality provides man an ultimate purpose of his existence, the only one that has the answers needed by reason as pragmatic type, for a rationality in action. *The ground*, analyzed by classic philosophies and Christian religion, according to Voegelin, is “an experienced reality of a transcendent nature toward which one lives in a tension. So, the experience of the tension toward transcendent Being is the experiential basis for all analysis in such matters”. (ibidem: 229–230) This tension is found in concepts like faith, love, hope, from Heraclitus up to Saint Paul, Saint Augustine, or Bergson, analyzed as the “openness of the soul toward transcendence – which means openness towards the Ground of existence, because we all experience our own existence as not existing out of itself but as coming from somewhere even if we don’t know from where”. (ibid.) The tension, that we could

⁴ *Second reality* is a concept used by Voegelin to designate a *dream reality* invented by alienated man or ideologies which eclipse a reality. (Voegelin, 2011)

sociologically analyze as well, is a “participation in divine Being because you are engaged in tension toward It”. (ibid.)

According to the philosophers, the place for living this tension towards *the ground* is the *psyche*, which paved the way to the *noetic self*, derived from *Nous*, states Voegelin.

Another element worthy of sociological inquiry is the *community in the Nous* which we find in Aristotle, according to Voegelin, *Nous* having here an ordering power. The reality of another concept, *homonoia*, found also in St. Paul designing the Christian community – “instead of the transcendent nous as reason, the Logos of Christ has now entered as that community substance that constitutes homonoia”. (ibid.: 231) This reality is translated as *like-mindedness*, a sociological concept replaced by *consciousness of kind*, underlines Voegelin.

Irrespective of how this reality is experienced in the participatory tension, this quest towards *the ground of existence*, this restlessness of human yearning still thrills man and societies, in different forms and shapes, with deformative accents in modern times.

Here is the reason that Voegelin searches for answers to the experienced deformative disorders of the twentieth century. The most visible effect was *ideologies*⁵ that flourished in direct fight with and opposing the transcendent *ground of existence*. What happened, says Voegelin, is that there was a relocation of transcendent ground in the immanent reason of man, known as *The Age of Reason*, when human reason is thought to be the ultimate measure.

The fight with classical philosophy, and with the Christian legacy, with *noetic* and *pneumatic* experiences, means the *de-capitation* and the *de-hearted condition of man*, with tremendous impact on social and political level, as proved by Voegelin in his studies on totalitarianisms and modern ideologies. If man is not open anymore towards the *divine ground* of existence, he will be open to see and act on the basis of race, blood, instincts, specific political actions, warns the author.

This multiple relocation of *divine ground* brought the exhausting of places that man worshipped in his search of meaning, “we have had it” (ibid.: 236), and “ideologies are finished” (ibid.: 237), believes Voegelin. And, in spite of this denouement the direction is not seen, no one could say where to, or what to do. Anyway, Voegelin reminds us of the diagnostics of K. Lowith about the period from Hegel to Nietzsche, of P. Rieff on psychoanalysis, A. Huxley, G. Orwell, A. Camus, including his own, we must add, especially for philosophy and political science.

What remains to be done, and what began from different sciences “is a sort of convergent development of a science of general structures that are not peculiar to our Western civilization but have their root in the nature of man and are in their variants, therefore, to be found everywhere, in all societies. One can develop a sort

⁵ Voegelin, E. ([1952], 1987).

of system of the structural common denominators in such matters; I have given you (...) just one example: the quest of the ground". (ibid.: 239) Paying tribute to this study, and to the other one dealing with *Neo-totalitarianism*, we begin to enroll and subscribe to this mission, and hopefully to the next ones as well.

Returning to the subtitle of this part, we are reminded the confusion made between *pragmatic reason* (actions correlating means to ends, applicable to external world developed under the pressure of industrial innovations) and *noetic* and *pneumatic reason* (all rational actions in the sciences of society, man, history, applicable in the search for the *ground of existence*, where originates the question of order), and the contributions of philosophy and Revelation that should not be neglected. (Voegelin, 2000b)

The annihilation of the tension toward the transcendence, having its climax in modern times, brought various forms of denaturation of reality, and derailments, as proved by Voegelin, one being the power of a modern gnosis of salvation, of substituting transcendence by political ideologies and scientism, which became "socially dominant ideas". (ibidem: 206)

Without criticizing modernity, we just mentioned these realities or deformities developed out of misunderstanding cultural fundamentals and history. Today we are still vulnerable to the influences of ideologies, in spite of their invalidation⁶. In this way we dare to see man as a headless and heartless human being, probably one who could be of use in the post-industrial society. A modern man that could be seen as a non-being, if we understand man as the highest evolution of life, as one that witnesses *leaps of faith*, as Voegelin considers, through the noetic and pneumatic differentiations of consciousness, a creator of civilizations.

SOCIOLOGY OF ORDER

If Eric Voegelin, in response to the disorders of his century, searched for solutions in philosophy to understand the causes of modern political deformations, the same thing could be tried in sociology, a science born in the age of positivism, from which it appears to not have been yet liberated. Voegelin has proved that the essence of man and societies stands in its spiritual dimension, in the most human place, his consciousness, in the tension that man has towards the divine *ground of existence*, in the order and disorders that man created and reflected. (Voegelin, 2000a) This study is a programmatic approach, focused on the human element in the social reality, often attacked, ignored or forgotten under the impact and interests (economical, political, ideological) brought by an alienated vision of man,

⁶ We see in present days that ideologies are not finished, but are subject to transformations while conquering new aspects of individual and social lives. In the study on *Neo-totalitarianism*, we have an analysis of these developments, finding a new type of totalitarianism, an invisible one, felt in all the dimensions of social reality.

society and culture. A vision without any contact with *the ground of existence* or one falsified in the form of *second realities*. This brings a massive impact on the fourfold structure of reality, as presented by Voegelin, which translates in the massive derailments analyzed in his studies, *modern gnosticism* being one of them.

Here sociology should intervene and deepen these premises, acknowledging the problems and understanding the solutions, descending to concrete problems, making researches that could offer understanding not only of the effects, but also of the causes of social problems and dissolutions. For this reason, we envisage a sociology in two phases:

- one that concentrates on the factual, material problems, in reporting the data of various dimensions of society, a descriptive documentation, a social portrait of facts and numbers;

- one that concentrates on what is most *human* and *social* in society, concentrating on explaining and understanding the causes of problems, proposing the ways to reach the social and cultural dimensions of people according to their specific spiritual profile. This phase is starting from the first stage, from data, but it does not remain at this level, going towards extensive explanations with powerful theoretical valences.

Thus, inspired by the philosophy and studies of Voegelin, we could define sociology as an essential part of human sciences as follows: *Sociology of order focuses on the participatory tension of man and society between the poles of immanence and transcendence, following the experiences expressed in symbols, which reflect the structure (political, economic, cultural, religious), relations, and behaviors endowed with meaning.*

The start to reconsider this discipline is the *noological sociology* of I. Bădescu, a novelty for a science still indebted to the positivistic model, where the methods are criteria for choosing themes of research.

With the help of *noological sociology* and of Voegelin's categories, which are extremely useful for a *sociology of order*, we developed a framework applicable to different people, through a series of categories, that could become specific to different cultural spaces or identities. More so as sociology does not look at man and his society as facts, physical elements to be weighted, measured, arranged and used in the logic of economic and political enterprise of a global humanity. This could be a start for the establishment of a *general noology*, essentially a *sociology of order*.

Such a view on society is concerned with identifying the types of order, their symbols up to the experiences that engendered them, along with their equivalents. In this way it is possible to draw a comparison between different cultures and societies, and a first step was done in *Compared noology of Jewish and Romanian people. A sociology of communities* (2017).

Searching for the order of a society means that it is inevitable not to reach the social disorders, a kind of barometer for fundamental order on which every society

stands. Having in mind the two phases of sociology, we must start from a measurement of data at the first level, followed by an exploration of their symbols and equivalents (if needed for comparative studies) that would offer an extensive explanation with theoretical substantiation.

Sociology of order gives the possibility to identify a series of *types of existence* in the same society that creates *types of orders*, with their differentiations and manifestations, either taken for granted or consciously assumed. The result will be a *noological profile*, an image of assumed and lived identity that has specific types of individual and / or social behaviors and manifestations.

Society supposes a continuous movement and challenges, to provide answers to social problems, a process in the lives of peoples, to which everyone contributes, but one that transcends individual lives, which has a *meaning of its existence*. In this perspective the question of order deserves the special attention of social scientists, being also of interest for political, economic, cultural, strategic or other social dimensions.

A special place in this sociology is taken by the spiritual outburst, *leaps of faith* (E. Voegelin), or spiritual teachings (I. Bădescu), which become “the sources of meaning in history and of such knowledge as man has of it. By letting man become conscious of his humanity as existence in tension toward divine reality, the hierophanic events engender the knowledge of man’s existence in the divine-human *In-Between*, in Plato’s *Metaxy*, as well as the language symbols articulating the knowledge”. (Voegelin, 2000a: 50)

Men and society spend their lives between *the beginning* and *the beyond*, as Voegelin lengthy elaborated. The fundamental element for a sociology worthy of really being a part of *human sciences* is this *participation, the tension between these poles, between divine and human, mortality and immortality, life and death*. Along these fundamental categories, man and society create meaning, in a profound social process, which requires the attention of this type of sociology.

Here are the main elements of the *noological sociology* of I. Bădescu, with the mention that it was largely applied to Christian communities⁷ in his extended studies elaborated since 2002.

NOOLOGICAL SOCIOLOGY

In the line of acknowledging the weight of spiritual dimension in social research and understanding man as creator of society, we have another position that values this fundamental dimension of social life – the *noological sociology* (I. Bădescu). The research starts from the spiritual order specific of the social unit analyzed, the elements that constitute either the spiritual power, if they are actualized (experienced), either spiritual weakness, if they are forgotten or

⁷ Bădescu, I. (2006).

unrealized. These are the categories of the noological view over society: *spiritual latencies* (these are the potentialities, the virtualities that people have); *spiritual teachings* (the most important spiritual ideas, religious dimensions, traditions etc.); *noological frames* (the frames in which the spiritual latencies are actualized according to the spiritual teachings). (Bădescu, 2002)

These elements of theory were applied using especially the religious dimension, which acquires an important role for the specific identity manifestations. The noological frames are the most visible elements, concrete units of experiences, becoming indicators of the spiritual power or weakness, if they are not actualized, experienced (an example could be celebrations and their role for the unity of a collectivity, the legends, myths). These manifestations create *spiritual places*, following I. Bădescu, in which the members of a community find themselves, contributing to their identity, strength or weakness, if they are vulnerable, or lived in a deficient mode.

In noological sociology “spiritual power of a people, of a society in general manifests itself entirely in *spiritual places* in which we can see a growth in number and intensity of social interactions towards a wholeness of existence”. (Bădescu, 2002: 167) The absolute spiritual place in which man finds the wholeness of his existence is considered by I. Bădescu to be *the relation of man with God*.

Analyzing in an extensive manner the spiritual dimension reflected through the religious identity, I. Bădescu also reminds us of a very important triad – economic, intellectual, and spiritual – that represents “the part of the people’s defensive potential”. (Bădescu, 2007: 215) However, the most important fact is that spiritual teachings confer unity to identity, to culture. The potentiality of this theory is extensive, reminding here the application of this type in understanding politics, as *Noopolitics*, with the theory of *asynchronous factors*, the analysis of exceptional phenomena with impact on social, political, religious dimensions, like the phenomenon of prophets. (Bădescu, 2006)

Noological sociology also speaks about the disorders of societies, of de-actualization of spiritual latencies, of a false or denaturated experience of spiritual teachings, reflected in a pathological manifestations, at individual and social levels.

If noological sociology is indicative of spiritual power that people could have if the spiritual latencies were actualized in the specific frames according to their fundamental teachings, it is also possible to analyze their degradations and the aggressiveness toward the fundamental data of existence. Here we have the effects of a de-spiritualization of communities, discussed by I. Bădescu when speaking about the *spiritual death* of modern man, dominated by the biological dimensions, egoism, alienation. (Bădescu, 2002) In the same line of thought is the *noogenic neurosis* analyzed by V. Frankl in his *logotherapy*, an existential analysis which shows a more spiritual layer of human psychological disorders, speaking of the *will to meaning*. (Frankl, 2009) In this type of disorder, which has spiritual causes, man

is vulnerable to an existentialist crisis, to an existential frustration determined by a lack of a meaning in life. This disorder, i.e. the *noogenic neurosis*, represents the desperation that a meaning exists, but man cannot reach or see it.

All these social realities are documented and researched by E. Voegelin in different cultures and times, under the specific categories that allowed him to establish a philosophy of history, concentrated on the tension of man and societies towards the *ground of existence*, towards transcendence and the major *leaps of faith* that molded human history and its destiny.

GENERAL NOOLOGY

On the basis of *noological sociology* we tried to look at sociology from a different perspective, in which the spiritual dimension is the defining characteristic of man and society, and the first step towards this normality is made in Romanian sociology by I. Bădescu. We discovered that the same foundation are the pillars of E. Voegelin's philosophy of history and his reevaluation of political science. His extensive studies concentrated on subjects relevant for sociology as well, of peculiar interest being his appeal to return to the empirical experiences of symbols, in order to understand their evolution and deformation under specific historical conditions.

Starting with E. Voegelin's study on *Neo-totalitarianism*, an application of his thinking on current times, we try to stress the importance of introducing in sociology his contribution, which can be of great importance, especially for *noological sociology* and *general noology*. For the contribution of Voegelin's extensive research that should be valued in sociology, he can be considered to be quite as (even as) a founding father of this discipline.

These being said, sociology as a science born in modern times needs the opportunity to reconsider the most human element in society – the reality of spiritual dimension within social existence.

In the endeavor to value the spiritual identity of two peoples in order to understand their identity, and on the premises of *noological sociology* established by I. Bădescu, we thought of four categories that could be applied for other communities, in comparative studies. These were inspired by the religious dimension and proved to be helpful in explaining the identity characteristics and specific historical patterns that two people had⁸. These helped to develop a spiritual profile that indicates the main spiritual patterns of social manifestations. These are:

- the latency of discovering divinity,
- the latency of thrills in front of evil,
- the latency of redemption (salvation),
- the latency of meaning in / of the world.

⁸ Măndiță, M. (2017).

In the research of a community, of people, we begin by identifying the main *typifications* that apply to the specific profile investigated, followed by the *phenomenal* phase, with the identification of specific behaviors, activities, processes of interest for sociological inquiry. This was the first phase in applying the *general noology*, with the purpose to underline the main spiritual dimensions reflected in the religious sphere, for Jewish and Romanian people.

Another phase in developing a methodological path for the noological approach was a larger one, in which we tried to extend the social categories included in the research of a spiritual perspective. Thus, in *Sociology of Spiritual Manifestation* (2017)⁹ the premise was that the religious sphere is a crucial one with sufficient potential to confer an important image of society, without forgetting that religion is only one aspect of spiritual dimension, which includes other social manifestations as well.

In the line of Dimitrie Gusti's Sociological School, concerning the spiritual manifestations as constitutive dimensions (along with the economical, judicial, political manifestations), we focused on the spiritual manifestation, adapting Dimitrie Gusti's categories to current times.

This methodological path includes two layers: spiritual manifestations at the *community's level*, and manifestations at the *elite's level*. This *sociology of spiritual manifestations* is motivated by the special relevance of religion in any society, proved by the founding fathers of sociology, which gives us the opportunity to understand social relations, historical processes, types of inter-subjective and collective behaviors and identities, not to mention that religion is a social reality old as man himself.

I. At the *community's level* the approach is forked in:

1. a research of *religious foundation*, teachings, ideas, institutions, cults etc.; the descriptive phase one of a *sociology of order*.
2. a *noo-phenomenology of religion*, of experiences of faith and beliefs. This results in the evaluation of the impact of religious beliefs over man and society (the impact on social level, on identity, history – concerning the religious man and the evolution of society through history), and the impact of man and society on religion (remarkable personalities that consolidated the belief, the phenomena of saints, the changes of belief – religion in the history of man and society).

For this *noo-phenomenology of religion*, on the community level, we identified a series of beliefs such as: *belief as magic* (seen as help for problems, and miracles), *belief as duty* (the strict following of religious canons, without the expectation of magical salvation – the purest form of religious belief and attitude); *belief as habit* (a superficial relation with the religious faith, going to church only on celebrations, as socially convenient); *belief as nonbelief* (trauma, personal

⁹ Ibidem.

shocks that transform the individual in the adversary of religious dimension, not as a-theism, but as anti-theism¹⁰, the belief of fight with God); *belief as power* (the shocks that pull the man towards the divine mystery, the pull of faith regained).

II. Along this component found at the community's level, we have the *elite's level*, where the sociological interests are concentrated on identifying the elites on professional criteria and inquiring about:

1. *the vision of their mission, gift*, vocations – attitudes of oneself, about the meaning of one's professional activity; the purposes of specific gifts;
2. *the attitudes about others* (family, neighbors, employers etc.);
3. *attitudes about society*, community, people, mission in life, destiny, justice, politics, history etc.

With the inquiring of community and its elite, we can elaborate a spiritual profile, one that is relevant for the noological orientation of a social unit, for a *sociology of order* that discloses the unseen forces in society, as well as the disorders that could make people vulnerable amid the challenges of history.

A SOCIOLOGY OF ORDER

These were the steps made until now in a sociology that can explain and offer a different understanding of human and social destiny in society. Having in mind that scientific knowledge is a dynamic process, we try to develop a *sociology of order* indebted to E. Voegelin's contribution in discerning the humanity (spiritual dimension) of man and his society, along its degradations. This study could be extended in order to draw a different view on sociology, one with a comprehensive theoretical power.

If the *noological sociology*, *general noology* or *the sociology of spiritual manifestations* were inspired mainly from religious dimension of human existence, and largely applied to the religious sphere, a *sociology of order* is intended to reflect the orders/disorders of the entire society, in all its sectors, starting with a larger spiritual frame.

From our definition of a *sociology of order*, based on E. Voegelin's philosophy and on the *noological sociology* of I. Bădescu, we try to widen this approach by including larger manifestations of the spiritual reality in society and culture. Having in mind that this spiritual reality, experienced so differently by societies and cultures throughout history is the *only* human characteristic of people's existence, and that is why it is important to put it in the right place.

This step allows us to view society in his complex web of relations and dynamics, surpassing, not ignoring the religious dimension on which the previous sociological research focused, to integrate it more accurately in a new and larger approach.

¹⁰ Lordan, T. *Eric Voegelin and Henri de Lubac: Reason seeking Transcendence, Nature longing for Grace* (August 21, 2014), available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2484352>.

Following the connection established by Voegelin *experiences-symbols-equivalents* indicative of *order*, we access a perspective appropriate to reveal the complex social interactions and their effects in time. It is important to mention that this way of researching also allows comparative studies, contributing to a dialogue of cultures, possible by true knowledge.

As we saw in Voegelin's philosophy, a key element is the *tension of participation* between many poles of existence: life-death, mortality-immortality, transcendence-immanence, truth-untruth etc. In this tension is to be found the creative element of human societies, of man, of cultures formed or disintegrated in history. The tension becomes creative, as well as destructive, under specific circumstances. Here, man and society create their order, disorder, their destiny, their culture. Another aspect not to be forgotten, warns Voegelin, is not to lose this tension or to annihilate one of the poles. In this case, the imbalance produces different effects, like the murder of God or the divinization of man. Man's existence takes place *In-Between*, i.e. in the tension towards *the ground of existence*, which means that man is attuned to his existence, while he is the creator of meaning, order, but also of disorders, when his human reality is challenged.

The concrete way to inquire and to elaborate a noological profile based on the research of order/disorder in society could be as follows:

I. Documenting the status-quo of a society (demographics, historical characteristics, development of institutions, their type, mission, type of political, economic, cultural, religious organization etc. Factual data, the portrait of a society, people in raw number should be studied as well.

II. Inquiring about the order that founds all social institutions, social relations, dynamics, and social structures. This phase, the most sociological one, is attained by following the relation proposed by Voegelin between experience-symbols-equivalents (when necessary, in comparative studies). These are capable of contouring a scientific image of a specific social unit.

In this phase, there must be analyzed all the dimensions of a society, a focus being put on the existence / nonexistence of a relation with transcendence, on the meaning assumed at the social level, in different relations to which the perception of existence has meaning, purpose, beyond individual reality.

For acquiring this type of sociological knowledge, one dualism is selected to help understand how the society works, which is the *immanence-transcendence* dimension. For this, it must be kept in mind that it is centered by Voegelin around the *participation* element, the *In-Between* character of experience, where reality is created and revealed. A concentrated formula for this way of approaching reality is *the search for meaning*, which is framed in a larger conception about man, society, God and the world. Another important mention is that this dualism must also reveal the balance of the two poles. If it reveals an imbalance, the disequilibrium is indicative of individual and social disorders, which should be further analyzed.

Immanence-transcendence, the essential dualism in a *sociology of order*, means that the conception over *man* and *God* is extremely important for the ways that *society* and *world* live, create history or disappear in history. The phases of a *sociology of order*, based on the dualism *immanence-transcendence*, *life-death*, *mortality-immortality*:

I. Identifying *types of experiences* (at social and individual levels), like analysis of family relations (conjugal and parental relations, sexuality, the effects of redefining family, the impact of gender issues etc.), neighborhood relations, societal (administrative, work related etc.), judicial, political, religious, cultural.

Losing the transcendence pole (God) means the possibility of *intra-mundane salvations* (immanent salvations) like: escaping / flight in movies, prolonging life through medical procedures, the phenomenon of nutritionism, personal salvation by personal growth, belief / hope that science continues to prolong life expectations or obtain immortality, the question of artificial intelligence and the ethics of developing consciousness by artificial systems etc. All these realities are experienced and reflected in symbols, showing the oscillation between the following poles: transcendence-immanence, order and disorders.

II. Identifying the associated *symbols*, their meaning, evolution, reevaluation under the impact of changing times and attitudes.

III. Identifying their *equivalents* in other cultures or societies of interest to be compared.

IV. *Order* revealed, analyzed and found as reality experienced in the participatory tension between these poles, of immanence and transcendence. This evaluation reveals a *sociology of order* and of disorders, about the provocative and continuous challenges of social and individual lives.

The complexity of studying the question of order is overwhelming and totalizing, and could not be realized without an interdisciplinary collaboration and explorations. However, this study is one that could illuminate the dynamics of cultural spaces of interest for different scientific specializations. This is only the frame to be filled by different contributions made in sociology, in focusing on the problem of order / disorder, but which have not been integrated yet in a comprehensive sociological conception. *Sociology of order* has the possibility to offer the meaning of experienced reality.

STILL... IN SEARCH OF ORDER

In Search of Order was the last book upon which Voegelin worked until his death. It has remained unfinished, probably not coincidentally, if we acknowledge that this search of order could ever be a finished work, especially in present times, when the discoveries of sciences are exploding and challenges are everywhere. Times are also marked by provocative social and individual disorders that demand answers and understanding, brought especially by sociologists, philosophers.

This is a too short article if we consider the weight of such a subject. Our study is a mere attempt to introduce Voegelin's research in sociological inquiry, having in mind that his analytic categories are essential in understanding man and his place in society and in the world, in or out of the relation to God.

As Voegelin underlines, knowledge is not to be contained in a system, it is not a closed process, but one that reaches indefinitely into the future, with adaptive directions that need answers to the continuous challenges for human and social destiny. This attempt is open to development and improvements, and can be adapted to the needs and realities in the complex field of reality.

In this respect we assume Voegelin's position, when he underlines that "the system is a distinctly modern phenomenon, though its modernity has been obscured by a climate of opinion in which the system as the mode of philosophical thinking is taken so thoroughly for granted that the reality of non-systematic philosophizing has been eclipsed (...). If anything was ever clear to a thinker like Plato, who was able to distinguish between the experiences of being and of not-being and acknowledged them both, it was that for better or for worse reality was not a system. If therefore one constructs a system, inevitably one has to falsify reality. One of the important objects of inquiry concerning modern politics would have to make an inventory of the phenomena of systematic falsification, because they are a highly important factor of disorder in the contemporary situation". (Voegelin, 2011: 102–103) It is required from the *sociology of order* to respond to all these falsifications of experiences, of symbols, of individual and social realities.

Thus, the question of order brings a continuous challenge which needs careful analysis, especially when the personal and social disorders are taking control over our manifestations (addiction, exacerbated liberty, egoism, depression, deculturation, etc.). In these troubled times, the *sociology of order* is interested in the tension of human and social participation in *In-Between* immanence and transcendence. In other words, between man and God we have society and the world, a tension amidst so many demanding disorders, which means the attempt to build the *sociology of order*.

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