Augustine’s Confessions and Voegelin’s Philosophy

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Though Eric Voegelin took his epigraph for Order and History from Augustine, he wrote little about the saint and published nothing about the Confessions. He linked his philosophy of history to Augustine’s by commenting on a text from the Enarrationes in Psalmos: both thinkers understand personal and universal history as an exodus from time to eternity. Yet despite Voegelin’s lack of attention to it, the Confessions concretely embodies his philosophical analysis of human nature and history. For all the marked differences in idiom, the meditative texture and structure of the Confessions enacts Voegelin’s “paradox of consciousness” in the divine-human encounter. Moreover, exploring what Voegelin and Augustine have in common renews our understanding of why their idioms differ.

The “Restless Heart” and “the Paradox of Consciousness”

The best-known sentence in the Confessions comes in its first chapter and epitomizes Augustine’s understanding of human nature. The praying speaker acknowledges that God stirs human beings to delight in praising him “because thou hast made us toward thyself and our heart is restless until it rests in thee” (quia fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te; 1.1.1). (I have translated this literally, and thus awkwardly, to point up certain features.)

The allusion to Genesis 1:26-27, God’s creation of human beings, resounds explicitly, for our ears, in “thou hast made us” (fecitis nos). But for Augustine’s readers it was also evident in ad te, “toward thyself,” because the Latin Bible renders the act as God’s creating humans “toward [his] image” (ad imaginam) rather than “in” it. According to this understanding, Christ alone is the Image of God, and human beings are made “toward” that Image. But Augustine’s “toward thyself” also implies an innate inclination in human nature: by our very nature we are drawn toward God. That is why the human heart is “restless” amidst all the goods of the created world. So many things please, but none of them, finally, satisfies. Augustine presents the restless heart and the joy that comes from worship as indices in this world that human beings are made by and for Someone beyond it. Hence, the Augustinian heart has both an incompleteness, for it is “restless,” and a directionality, toward God. His phrasing, moreover, links the individual and the race: “our heart is restless until it rests in

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thee.” This restlessness is manifested in every human heart and in the human race as a whole. In its context, the sentence explains why we delight in worship, and thus implies the Church. And the Church, as we shall see, carries Augustine’s understanding of the meaning of creation and the purpose of human history.

Hence, creation is not merely an event that happened once, long ago, to Adam and Eve. Every human being is made “toward God’s image,” the restlessness of every human heart manifests its creation by God. Later in the Confessions Augustine touches on the divine presence in human beings even when we are not aware of it. Remembering when the young Augustine sought for God outwardly “according to the sense of the flesh,” the bishop declares that God is “more inward than my innermost and higher than my uppermost” (interior intimo meo et superior summo meo; 3.6.11). Interior intimo meo may be freely rendered as “more intimate to me than I am to myself.” The divine presence proves more intimate than the self because the self is formed by the contents of experience. The divine presence, however, constitutes the human being as such, as the creature made “toward [God’s] image,” and thereby enables human experiencing in the first place.

Similarly, addressing the divine Beauty “ever old and ever new,” Augustine recalls that “You were within, and I was in the world outside, and sought you there” (10.27.38). Augustine unambiguously affirms that God is somehow present in actuating the consciousness of human beings, whether we know it or not. The divine presence proves more intimate than the self because the self is formed by the contents of experience. The divine presence, however, constitutes the human being as such, as the creature made “toward [God’s] image,” and thereby enables human experiencing in the first place.

Voegelin pairs “luminosity” with “intentionality” as the two structures of consciousness: they can be distinguished but not separated, and their inter-involvement creates “the paradox of consciousness.” Intentionality is oriented to “thing-reality,” as luminosity is toward “It-reality.” When we direct our intentionality to things outward or inward, in the world or in consciousness, we do so by participating in a larger “It-reality” that illuminates what we do. Luminous receptivity is the ground of all intentional acts. However slight an intentional act may be, it is done by a human being concerned with the meaning of his or her acts, and “meaning” implies our luminous orientation to larger contexts, even to the ultimate context. Conversely, even a luminous experience, like poetic inspiration or mystical prayer, occurs in a person seeking to write or worship intentionally. This mutual co-
presence generates “the paradox of consciousness.” On the one hand, every intentional act is grounded in luminosity: every instance of apprehending a form involves the whole mind’s capacity. On the other, this luminosity of consciousness can only be recognized by an intentional act, and it often goes unrecognized. Because we so direct ourselves to the intentional contents of our knowing and loving, we easily neglect the luminous capacity enabling them at our ground.

In the Confessions, this paradox plays itself out in the realm of desire, in the young Augustine’s quest for the happy life. The young Augustine, rising rapidly in his career, satisfied one desire after another and yet remained unsatisfied. In fact, the more desires he satisfied, the more they seemed to proliferate. The paradox of the young Augustine’s desires is all too familiar: Nothing fails like success. Adapting Voegelin’s terms, we may say that he was satisfying his intentional desires at the expense of his luminous Desire. His attaining wealth, influence, prestige, and sexual partners did not assuage the luminous unrest at their ground. Only his conversion to Christian faith brought a ray of peace to his “restless heart,” for it clarified and attuned him to the divinely luminous Desire interior intimo, in the ground of his consciousness.

The paradox of consciousness clarifies the paradox of “participation,” the central term in Voegelin’s philosophy. Though participation is a common experience, it is weirder than one normally thinks, for a participant is a partner, and a partner proves simultaneously a part and the whole. Consider a marriage. Both the wife and the husband participate in the marriage, as partners. Where is their marriage? Obviously, the marriage is not located in space, though they live together. When she travels alone on business, she leaves her home behind, but not her marriage. Evidently, then, the marriage exists, not in space, but in consciousness, and thus illustrates the paradox of consciousness, as does every instance of participation. As a distinguishable yet invisible entity, a marriage is both an intentionalist thing-reality and a luminous it-reality. It exists wholly in the wife’s consciousness and wholly in the husband’s, not in any physical place. By definition, then, a participant in anything must apprehend the whole of which he is a part, for without some consciousness of the whole, one cannot properly “take part.” Each partner is both intentionalistically a part, by analogy to parts-and-whole in things, and luminously the whole of the marriage, albeit in a perspective.

Hence, Voegelin’s “fundamental proposition: Man participates in the process of reality,” should be understood in light of the paradox of consciousness. Man is intentionalistically a part and luminously the whole of the process of reality. Though every existence is involved in reality, only human beings participate in it because we alone (so far as we know) symbolize it consciously. Every culture we know of, however technologically primitive, symbolizes the whole of reality in some fashion and so, obviously, its members thereby participate in the It-reality thus symbolized. Voegelin’s “process of reality” is general enough to cover not only the cosmos of myth, with its processes governed by intra-cosmic gods, but also the transcendent God of Christianity, who providentially governs all the details of human history and the universe.

But his formulation proves still more radical. For my participation in the process of reality is not something, like a marriage, I can choose to enter or not. Voegelin’s paradox of consciousness implies that “Man participates in the process of reality” because the process of reality participates Man. “Participates,” here, is awkward English but good scholastic philosophy, where Being is said to participate beings. The process of reality participates human beings because the
lt-reality brings us into existence and we alone among beings participate consciously in it. In myth, for example, humankind originates from the cosmos and its intra-cosmic gods, and the social-and-cosmic order is renewed by rituals featuring our participation in it. Analogously, in the Bible, God creates by the word and makes humankind “in his image,” the only creatures who can receive the word of his creative act. Voegelin formulates the truth of Genesis I in a universal way: “every man is really conscious of participating in a process that does not begin with the participants but with the mysterious It that encompasses them all.”

From this vantage point, we can see that “creation” in Augustine and “participation” in Voegelin are equivalent symbols. Their idioms differ because Augustine writes as a Christian while Voegelin devises terms general enough to embrace a variety of symbolic forms from all of world history. Still, despite these differences of scope, the antique theologian and the modern philosopher are concerned with experiences of the same character. For Augustine, creation is a constant feature of human life because the divine presence _interior intimo_ constitutes a human being as such, an “image of God.” For Voegelin, because we participate in the process of reality in every moment, It participates in us. In the philosopher’s It-reality, as in the theologian’s God, “we live and move and have our being.” And so our being is not merely ours: human life is shot through with paradox of consciousness, which is the paradox of the “restless heart,” where God is present and yet still to be found.

**Meditative Texture and the Paradox of “Story”**

The whole of the _Confessions_ unfolds in the dynamism of the heart restless toward God because God is present to it _interior intimo_. The work is not merely “about” Augustine’s quest for God: it also enacts that quest in its literary form. In so doing, it embodies Voegelin’s analysis of the paradox of consciousness as it plays itself out in “story,” the account of a seeker’s quest for the truth of existence. To understand these correspondences, we must first attend to some basic characteristics of the _Confessions_.

It is well understood that the _Confessions_ is a prayer, a dialogue with God. Peter Brown notes Augustine’s originality in making prayer the literary form of so long a work and terms it a “lively conversation.” Solignac also calls the work “a dialogue with God” and, arguing that God is present throughout as “an invisible interlocutor,” he insists that “Throughout these thirteen books, Augustine allows himself to be taught by God” (his emphasis). G. Bouissou describes the _Confessions_ as “a dialogue in one voice” because “only Augustine speaks—or rather, we only hear his voice—but from his language, his feelings, the tone of his discourse, and in a certain way the reactions of his countenance, we sense the divine replies.” Scholars have often recorded their understanding and appreciation of this aspect of the _Confessions_.

But they have not understood its consequences: we must distinguish Augustine the narrator, the voice of the unfolding prayer, from Augustine the author, who designed, wrote, and revised the whole work. Though historians have often argued for a difference between the occurrences recorded in books 1-9 and what actually happened in the young Augustine’s life, they have neglected the disjunction between the _narrator_ in and the _author_ of the _Confessions_. The work presents itself as a prayer that unfolds in an ongoing present, in which Augustine the narrator is guided by the spontaneities of his dialogue with God. The work presents itself as though it were an
oral dialogue with God, recorded in its unfolding, and as an oral and spontaneous prayer, it is necessarily unrehearsed and unrevised. A dialogue, by definition, cannot be revised by the speakers in it, nor can a genuine dialogue be rehearsed. Augustine the narrator is a literary figure, the persona of Augustine the author, and I use the present tense to describe his activity: he prays the Confessions whenever we read it. Augustine the author, in contrast, was the historical Augustine, and I write of him in the past tense: he designed, wrote, and revised the Confessions as a whole.

Augustine the narrator and Augustine the author thus parallel Socrates and Plato in a Platonic dialogue. The speaking Socrates cannot properly revise what he has spoken: he can only add to it. He may recant, as in the Phaedrus, or rephrase or qualify, but only by speaking further. So, too, Augustine the narrator may correct an earlier statement on, say, the nature of time, not by erasure and revision but only by adding to what he has said. On the other side, we assume that Plato revised his dialogues as he perfected them, as did Augustine the author with the dialogue of his Confessions.

The meditative texture of the Confessions is full of surprises for the reader because full of surprises for Augustine the narrator, praying in an ongoing present. The narrator expresses surprise at what is happening as he prays: “Why do I speak of these things? Now is not the time to be putting questions, but to be making confession to you.” (4.6.11) He affirms that God leads his prayer in surprising directions: “From whence and to what point have you led my memory to include these events in my confession to you, when I have passed over much else I have forgotten?” (9.7.16; cf. 2.7.15) Augustine the narrator is not in full control of his Confessions, because the work unfolds as a prayerful dialogue between him and God. By definition, however, Augustine the author was in full control of the work. Because he stood beyond the shaped whole, as its composer and reviser, it contained no surprises for him.

Why are these distinctions important? We need them for a sure grasp of the meditative texture of the Confessions as a spontaneously unfolding dialogue with God, full of discoveries and surprises, unrehearsed and unrevised by Augustine the narrator. Only from this perspective can we see the crucial parallel between the young Augustine’s life and the narrator’s prayer: just as God led the young Augustine to Christian faith, even through all his moral wanderings, so does God guide the narrator’s ‘Confessions,’ even through all its digressions. In other words, just as the young Augustine’s life, in all its errors, reveals God’s providential guidance, so does the Confessions enact, moment by moment, the same dialectic between divine grace and human freedom in its unfolding prayer. By means of this homology, the Confessions does what it says, is what it talks about. A treatise, featuring its author’s control of his argument, can analyze the dialectic between grace and freedom, but cannot embody it. Only the meditative texture of a spontaneously unfolding dialogue with God can embody and enact this dialectic. The Confessions thereby unites indissolubly logos and ergon, content and form. Its very unfolding manifests the dynamic interaction of the human quest for God and God’s grace drawing it forward.

Voegelin describes a similar indissolubility in what he calls “story.”14 As always, he is reflecting on the discovery and the communication of “the truth of reality.” This truth is no mere knowledge-content but a truth to be lived, and in being lived, it brings right order to persons and societies by attuning them to “reality,” the large context that gives meaning to their lives. “The story,” he writes, “is the symbolic form the questioner has to adopt necessarily when he gives an account of
his quest as the event of wrestling, by the response of his human search to a divine movement, the truth of reality from a reality pregnant with truth yet unrevealed. The italicized words are technical terms. The “divine movement” gives rise to a “human response,” because a human being, seeking to attune himself to “the truth of reality,” questions reality in his quest to live truly. This questioner experiences an epiphany, or revelation, or conversion, some life-changing “event.” His “account” of this “event” must take the form of a story because a life-changing event implies a “before” and an “after,” a narrative sequence.

This story embodies the paradox of consciousness in motion. The divine movement engenders the event, or epiphany, in the mode of luminosity. The human response to this movement eventuates in a narrative, in the mode of intentionality. But the story itself is simultaneously luminous event and intentionalist narrative. These two can be distinguished, but they must not be separated. Without the event in the seeker, he composes no narrative; without a narrative, the event cannot be effective in society and history. The seeker’s “story” unites indissolubly the luminous-divine event and the intentionalist-human narrative. Its language is simultaneously luminous-intentionalist, divine-and-human.

Augustine’s Confessions embodies Voegelin’s understanding of “story,” but its meditative texture as a prayer enacts it on a higher level. Imagine the Confessions, not as a prayerful dialogue with God, but only as a spiritual autobiography, in Books 1-9, followed by the reflections in Book 10 and the treatment of Genesis in Books 11-13. The work would still be a “story” in Voegelin’s sense. The young Augustine’s conversion to Christian faith would remain the crucial event, with its before-and-after. The “before” would be treated from the perspectives engendered by that event: the mature Christian envisions his pre-Christian youth as a wandering journey to faith. The “after” would still emerge from that event, as Augustine reflects on his present self (Book 10) and engages in his bishop’s task as expositor of Scripture (Books 11-13). Implicitly, the luminous event of Augustine’s conversion would inform the intentionalist narrative of the whole work, making it the “story” of a human response to the divine movement.

But the Confessions is a dialogue with God, from its first words to its last, and as a prayer it enacts, moment by moment, a human response to the divine movement. The luminous event of faith is not simply a past conversion that informs the work implicitly. Rather, the event of the divine movement manifests itself explicitly in every moment of Augustine the narrator’s prayer. Hence, the Confessions enacts Voegelin’s paradox of consciousness in story. The intentionality of the human narrator interacts continually with the luminosity of the divine presence. We can distinguish the partners in this ongoing dialogue, which enacts the dialectic of human freedom and divine grace, but we cannot separate them. Because God is present interior intimo within Augustine’s restless heart, we cannot separate the narrator’s response from the divine movement. The luminous divine Presence actuating Augustine’s consciousness makes his heart restlessly God-seeking. Augustine the narrator and God can be distinguished, but not separated, for they are partners in a participatory event. In the meditative texture of the Confessions, the luminous event of the divine presence is intertwined with Augustine’s intentional narrating, explicitly, continually, and inextricably.

Meditative Structure and the Divine Movement

The Confessions unfolds as a Christian Platonist ascent, and before examining it,
we do well to recall its governing thought-patterns. The ascent is based on the exitus-reditus scheme: as all things come forth (exitus) from God, so do all things (in some fashion), and especially human beings, return (reditus) to God. This “return to the Origin,” then, is an “ascent to principles” (or “first things”): it moves progressively to principles logically prior and, therefore, ontologically higher. These Platonist principles are not mere ideational abstractions but universals, and they thereby name realms of being. Hence, the ascent moves not merely to categories progressively more general, as in our nominalist way of thinking, but to realms of being more universal and real, because they comprehend more of reality. In this meditative movement to origins, then, the way forward is the way back, and what comes last is really first, as what comes first is really last. At the same time, the Platonist arrives at these realms “above himself” (supra se) after taking the inward turn, away from things “outside him” (extra se) to the principles of the soul within (in se). In the De Vera Religione, Augustine urged this inward turn: “Do not go outside, return within yourself, for truth dwells in the interior man.”17 The Platonist ascent, then, moves not only “upward” but also “inward,” to universal principles ontologically higher because more interior. In this way, the meditator moves toward the divine presence interior intimo.

Let us see how this pattern works itself out in the Confessions, first as a progress to what is prior, logically and ontologically, and then as an interior movement.18 After examining certain of his memories in his spiritual autobiography (Books 1-9), Augustine the narrator explores memory, in Book 10, and time, in Book 11. Memories cannot exist without memory, and memory cannot exist without time. Memory, then, is logically and ontologically prior to memories, as is time to memory. Time, as the precondition of memory and of memories, is prior to and higher than both. Book 12 is largely taken up with Augustine’s interpreting “heaven and earth” in Genesis 1:1. He holds that “heaven” refers to the “heaven of heavens” (12.8-9) the “incorporeal creation,” and “earth” refers to the “formless matter” from which the world would be made (12.3-7). Both of these, he argues, exist prior to time, though neither is properly eternal (12.12-13). Before the world exists, there is no time; “heaven and earth,” pure form and pure matter, are the pre-temporal constituents of the world. Hence, “heaven and earth,” in Book 12, are logically and ontologically prior to time, in Book 11.

Book 13 concludes the work, and it closes by interpreting the seven days of creation as an allegory for the creation and growth of the Church (13.12-38). Summarizing his treatment of the six days in chapter 34, Augustine begins, “We have seen into (inspeximus) these things according to the mystical purpose (figurationem) with which you willed (voluisti) them to come into being in such an order, or to be written in such an order” (13.34.49, my translation). Augustine claims that his allegory for the Church reveals the purpose for which God willed the sequential order of the creation, or of the creation-story. Odd though Augustine’s allegory and claim may be to us, the fundamental point was entirely traditional. The Shepherd of Hermas affirmed that “The world was created for the sake of the Church,” and Clement of Alexandria explained, “Just as God’s will is creation and is called ‘the world,’ so his intention is the salvation of men, and it is called ‘the Church.’”19 God created the world for human beings, and human beings for himself, to share his life with them.

For Augustine, then, the allegory of the Church in Book 13 reveals God’s purpose in creating the world, or in inspiring its account in Genesis. Since purpose is logically and ontologically prior to act, the Church, as God’s purpose, is logically and
ontologically prior to creation. Moreover, as the mystical body of Christ, the Church is understood to be eternal: it preceded the world in God’s mind and will endure beyond the end of the world in the “eternal Sabbath” (13.35-38) of his presence. God’s purpose in creating is logically prior to and ontologically higher than all created things. Augustine’s meditative ascent can go no further, and the Confessions comes to a close.

Now let us consider the progressively interior movement of this ascent. It proves obvious in the progress from memories, in Books 1-9, to memory, in Book 10, for the faculty of memory proves deeper than its contents. In Augustine’s view, the innate power of memory underlies and therefore governs our individual memories. In Books 11, 12, and 13, the interior progress of Augustine’s ascent emerges in the final chapters. Near the end of Book 11, Augustine concludes that time contains memory as one of its aspects. Discovering that only the present exists, he analyzes time psychologically, as “attention” (attentio; 11.28) in the present to various things: memory is attention to things past; the present is attention to things present; expectation is attention to things future. Attention, then, is necessary to memory, prior to it and deeper in the soul. There could be no memory without the innate power of attention, which underlies and governs it.

From “attention,” near the end of Book 11, the ascent moves to “the will” (voluntas) in the final chapters of Book 12. After treating his own and various other interpretations of “heaven and earth” in chapters 2-22, Augustine the narrator begins to reflect on hermeneutic principles. These all turn on the desire (voluntas) of interpreters attempting to understand the intention (voluntas) of Moses and of God in Genesis 1 (12.23-24). Book 12 closes with Augustine’s prayer to understand “what your Truth willed [voluerit] by his words [in Scripture] to say to me, who also spoke to [Moses] what it willed [voluit]” (12.32.43). Clearly, the directing of attention depends on the will, for the will is a principle prior to attention, more important and powerful because more interior, deeper in the soul. Augustine’s progress from “attention,” at the end of Book 11, to “will,” at the end of Book 12, marks a movement into the interior of the soul.

Book 13, as we have seen, closes with the purpose God wills in creation. Obviously, God’s will (voluisti; 13.34.49. above) is prior to and higher than the will (voluntas) of human beings. At the same time, the purpose that God wills in creation is the Church, to share his life with human creatures made in his image, and this divine desire is stamped by its presence interior intimo within the restless human heart. “Thou hast made us toward thyself, and our heart is restless until it rests in thee.” This formulation points to the Church: not only is every human heart restless toward God, but also a single corporate heart seeks rest in the divine presence. In the Church, the divine creation continues in the divine providence guiding our restless heart, individually and corporately, toward its eternal rest.

When Augustine recognizes the Church as God’s purpose in creation, at the end of Book 13, he recognizes the deepest aspect of himself. Here is the divine ground of the longing that animates his will (Book 12), his attention (Book 11), and his memory (Book 10). Further inward he cannot go. His innermost is his uppermost, for God is “interior intimo meo et superior summomeo” (3.6.11). Just as God led the young Augustine, despite all his errors, to Christian faith, and just as he guides the Confessions, despite all its digressions, on an ascent culminating in a vision of the divine purpose for creation, so does he direct human history, despite all its vagaries, to salvation in himself. The providence guiding Augustine’s life and his dialogue with
God leads him finally to envision the providence guiding all human history. Augustine’s life and *Confessions* prove, in the end, instances of Church, that divinely guided universal movement that begins before time and ends beyond it.

The allegory of Book 13 thereby completes Augustine’s understanding of his restless heart in his very first chapter. The meditative structure of the *Confessions* moves to progressively deeper, and therefore more universal, self-understandings. Augustine would have us recognize deeper and deeper aspects of ourselves in this movement and so come to see ourselves as he does, stamped in his origin, longing, and end as God’s. For Augustine in the *Confessions*, Church is at once the deepest, highest, and most universal form of human self-understanding.

Voegelin transposes Augustine’s Church from the “known world” of the late Roman empire to the modern context of world-history and its many religions. In this light, Church is simply one version of the universal divine-human movement, which manifests itself in many forms. “Movement,” as we have seen, is a technical term in Voegelin, but it has an extended and double meaning. For once the divine movement finds its human response in an adequate “story,” it draws other human beings into its truth and so becomes a social and historical movement. The event of the divine movement acting in the human response becomes effective in society and history because all human beings seek to live truly, and at least some find their lives illuminated by the story of that luminous event. The truth of the story draws them together into a social, and therefore historical, movement. But there have been many such movements, all over the world, in the course of history. There is “a plurality of quests, telling a plurality of stories,” and all of them are true. None are true “literally” because, as we have been told endlessly since the Enlightenment, their intentionalist narratives differ. But all are true when we learn to see how their stories point symbolically to the experience of the luminous divine movement in human consciousness.

Voegelin created a philosophical language to treat the unity underlying this plurality of true stories, even as he worked to discover and define the differences between types of symbolizing. He attended chiefly to how the symbolisms of revelation, in Israel, and philosophy, in Hellas, emerged from cosmological myth and were related to it. But he also studied the emergence of historiography in ancient China and the *Upanishads* in India.

In all of these symbolic forms, including myth, he found the true story of the human response to the divine movement. The symbolizations differ because cultural contexts differ, and so do nuances in the experience: Hellenic philosophy, for example, features the human search moved by the divine ground, while Hebrew prophecy emphasizes the divine irruption in the human being. Voegelin’s work is difficult largely because he had to invent a language to deal with this unity of experience and typology of symbolisms. The language he invented is properly philosophical: religiously neutral, semantically precise, and experientially comprehensive.

But Voegelin invents this language with reference to great predecessors who have wrestled with the same problems in their own contexts. He praised St. Augustine for being “well aware that the structure of history is the same as the structure of personal existence,” particularly admiring this formulation from the *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 64.2: “He begins to leave who begins to love. Many the leaving who know it not, for the feet of the leaving are affections of the heart: and yet, they are leaving Babylon.” In this text, “the historical symbols of the exodus from Babylon express the movement of the soul when it is drawn by love toward

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Here is one version of the human response to the divine movement, simultaneously personal and corporate. It symbolizes a movement at once divine-and-human, individual and ecclesial.

The same movement is symbolized, as we have seen, in Augustine’s “Thou hast made us toward thyself and our heart is restless until it rests in thee.” It also animates Voegelin’s more general formula, “Man participates in the process of reality.” The process of reality is divinely moved and, therefore, in some sense universal. Voegelin’s phrase covers the divine-cosmic rhythms symbolized in ritual and myth, as well as the divine-human movements in history, symbolized in revelation, philosophy, and other forms. Through these forms human beings participate in the process of reality, consciously attuning themselves to it so as to achieve meaning and order in their lives.

For Voegelin, in short, spiritual symbolisms from all over the world and its history reveal a universal divine-human movement. Augustine’s Church is one instance among many.

With respect to these fundamental issues, then, a profound agreement links Augustine in the Confessions with Eric Voegelin’s philosophy. Different as their idioms are, the existential substance of their insights proves equivalent. We might even say that Augustine was a late-antique Christian Voegelian, and Eric Voegelin, a late-modern philosophical Augustinian. Both would agree that, ultimately, all human nature and activity, personal destiny, and universal history can be summed up in two equivalent statements: “Thou hast made us toward thyself, and our heart is restless until it rests in thee,” and “Man participates in the process of reality.”