

# CRIMINALITY UNDER THE LIGHT OF ERIC VOEGELIN'S WORK: PROPOSAL FOR A FOURTH CRIMINOLOGICAL PARADIGM

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- **ABSTRACT:** This article analyzes the issue of criminality from the perspective of the philosopher and political scientist Eric Voegelin, proposing a fourth criminological paradigm: the paradigm of order through participation. Traditional criminological approaches revolve around three paradigms: the act-transition paradigm, focused on the perpetrator; the social reaction paradigm, centered on society and control instances; and the social interrelations paradigm, which seek to juxtapose the previous two. In the wake of Voegelin's thought, this article proposes a perspective which goes beyond these historical paradigms. The paradigm of order through participation views criminality as a matter related to culture and civilization, more specifically to the lack of adequate symbolization by a civilization of the transcendent values that structure it. This new paradigm suggests that the problem of criminality can be analyzed from a field historically neglected by criminological studies: the investigation of the presence or absence, in any given society, of a symbolic structure referenced to transcendence. It is argued that this perspective offers valuable insights for understanding and preventing criminality, complementing and expanding existing approaches.
- **KEYWORDS:** Eric Voegelin; criminality; criminology; paradigm of order through participation; transcendence.

## A CRIMINALIDADE À LUZ DA OBRA DE ERIC VOEGELIN: PROPOSTA DE UM QUARTO PARADIGMA CRIMINOLÓGICO

- **RESUMO:** O presente artigo analisa a questão da criminalidade a partir do pensamento do filósofo e cientista político Eric Voegelin, propondo um quarto paradigma criminológico: o paradigma da ordem por participação. As abordagens criminológicas tradicionais gravitam em torno de três paradigmas: o da passagem ao ato, focado no autor; o da reação social, centrado na coletividade e nas instâncias de controle; e o das inter-relações sociais, que busca justapor os dois anteriores. Na esteira do pensamento de Voegelin, este artigo propõe um olhar que vai além desses paradigmas históricos. O paradigma da ordem por participação encara a criminalidade como uma questão relacionada à cultura e à civilização, mais especificamente à falta de simbolização adequada, por uma civilização, dos valores transcendentais que a estruturam. Esse novo paradigma



sugere que o problema da criminalidade pode ser analisado a partir de um campo historicamente negligenciado pelos estudos criminológicos: a investigação sobre a presença ou ausência, em dada sociedade, de uma estrutura simbólica referenciada à transcendência. Argumenta-se que essa perspectiva oferece *insights* valiosos para a compreensão e prevenção da criminalidade, complementando e expandindo as abordagens existentes.

- **PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Eric Voegelin; criminalidade; Criminologia; paradigma da ordem por participação; transcendência.

## 1. Three criminological paradigms: a brief historical overview

Historical analysis of criminological thought reveals three major paradigms, each offering a broad approach to understand criminal phenomena.

To the first one, Álvaro Pires, referring to a concept specific to the *psi-sciences*, gave the name *act-transition paradigm*. This approach fundamentally focuses on the *perpetrator* of a given criminal act, investigating the reasons or conditions that led to such behavior. Although studies under this paradigm can vary substantially – with significant differences between Cesare Lombroso’s infamous search for biological-atavistic causes that determine criminal behavior, approaches founded on depth psychology, and more recent neurophysiological studies – they all share a common trait: they do not question why certain acts are considered criminal, nor do they examine the existence of population groups more vulnerable to the punitive system. According to Pires (1993, p 130) “As a general rule, crime is given an ontological character”. The author also points: “The central object of criminology is defined as the study of the *delinquent* and *criminal* behavior considered as a crude social fact” (Pires, 1993, p. 130, our emphasis). The *act-transition* paradigm, with its markedly etiological tone, harbors within itself a vast range of ramifications, but the focus remains on the crime perpetrator and the reasons for their actions.

The second criminological paradigm is called the *social reaction paradigm*. Directly linked to the so-called *labeling theories* (or *labeling approach*), the focus shifts away from the perpetrator of a certain offense and turns toward the instances of control. Now, instead of questions about the reasons why a particular subject committed a given crime, the formulated questions change radically. They inquire, for example, into the reasons



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why certain acts are considered criminal while others are not (however, this is done not in search of possible ontological foundations of crime, but with the aim of uncovering the power dynamics behind the selection of criminal conducts); the reasons why certain groups are more susceptible to punitive measures than others; the foundations for the criminal justice system's preference for afflictive penalties; the effects of such penalties on those who suffer them etc. From this paradigm emerged the vast path of *criminological critique*, and even that of *radical critique* with its Marxist bias (Sá, 2011, p. 235-239).

Álvaro Pires, Françoise Digneffe, Christian Debuyst (the latter two being criminologists from the so-called *School of Louvain*), and, in Brazil, Alvino de Sá - to cite just a few recent prominent names in Criminology - shared identical yearning for a *third paradigm*, that could harmoniously juxtapose the tensions of the two previously examined paradigms. This third way was named the *social interrelations paradigm*. "The object of Criminology," Sá (2001, p. 257) writes,

[...] would integrate problematic behavior, the problematic situation, without resorting to the idea of crime as a crude social fact, as well as integrate the penal system, the process of crime construction and social reaction to it, without resorting to a closed constructivist conception of this system (Sá, 2011, p. 257).

This view neither ignores the scientific interest in the criminal and the reasons for committing certain acts (first paradigm), nor does it disregard the importance of studying the complex processes of selection, labeling, victimization, and stigmatization (second paradigm), but rather seeks to harmoniously compose the historical diversity of criminological approaches, remaining open to both previous paradigms - which, in a way, become partial approaches to the multifaceted field of criminological studies under the social interrelations paradigm.

In analyzing these three paradigms, we can perceive an evolution. Under the *act-transition paradigm*, Criminology found its birth as a science; under the *social reaction paradigm*, Criminology turned its focus to areas largely ignored until then, paving the way for studies that would increasingly occupy academia, especially in the line of critique; and finally, the *social interrelations paradigm* sought to do justice to the merits of its predecessors, harmoniously combining them to construct a criminological science of greater ontological and epistemic breadth.



The field of criminological studies is, however, complexly multifaceted. This article's proposal is to argue that, beyond the three paradigms examined so far, there are still fields to which Criminology pays little or no attention – fields that, nevertheless, would deserve attention for an even more comprehensive understanding of the criminal phenomenon in its multiple aspects. Based on Eric Voegelin's thought, it becomes possible to approach criminological themes from a perspective which goes beyond the three major historical paradigms, making it possible to conceive of a *fourth criminological paradigm*: the *paradigm of order through participation*, to be presented in this article.

## 2. Eric Voegelin: in search of order

Eric Voegelin was a relatively little-known German philosopher and political scientist, but his importance should not be neglected: Hannah Arendt and Thomas Mann engaged extensively in dialogue with him, and Hans Kelsen, his advisor, dedicated an entire book to discussing some of his fundamental ideas. Despite the voluminous and original intellectual production, Voegelin remained largely ignored not only by the public in Brazil but also by academia, and his recent rediscovery is certainly due to conservative circles – although the author himself firmly rejected such a label.

Castro Henriques, emphasizing the importance of Voegelin's thought in the context of the twentieth century, wrote these important lines:

Eric Voegelin's work surely has a major place in the recovery of political theory carried out in the 20th century by many voices. We must put him along philosophers such as Franz Rosenzweig, Henri Bergson and Emmanuel Lévinas. We can compare him with the theories of history of Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee. He evokes analysts of modern rebellion such as Hannah Arendt and Albert Camus. He sympathized with those who recovered the role of myth in pre-philosophical civilizations (Henry Frankfort, Mircea Eliade, Wilhelm Jaeger). He was aware of the epistemologies of the tacit dimensions of science (Michael Polanyi, Bernard Lonergan) (Henriques, 2020, p. 108).

Voegelin's work spans various fields, such as symbolic analysis and philosophy of consciousness. However, his main focus, or at least the one that has aroused the most public interest, gravitates around the connections between history and a philosophy of



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order, connections which found their best expression in the volumes of what has been considered his magnum opus: *Order and history*. His text, far from limiting itself to a superficial explanation of historical facts, deeply analyzes the central political ideas in various cultures and different periods, interweaving considerations related to his other fields of interest, such as symbolism and consciousness. Ultimately, the entirety of Voegelin's intellectual production provides an unquestionably original panorama of human experience in the world, characterized, in his view, by the varying capacity to express a universal order (Voegelin, 2001, p. 43).<sup>1</sup>

Fundamentally, Voegelin conceives the position of human beings in the universe as *intermediate*, following the Platonic concept of *metaxy*. The term, derived from Greek, refers to an intermediate or “in-between” state, indicating the human being's position between the mundane and the transcendent. “Existence has the structure of the in-between, of the Platonic *metaxy*,” he wrote, “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” (Voegelin, 1990, p. 119, our emphasis). In this context, mankind's ultimate goal is to *participate* in transcendence, bringing to the concrete world the truth and order whose ultimate source lies – and in this Voegelin is profoundly Platonic – in the supersensible world.

In *The Symposium* (211B5-212a7), Plato presents this illuminating speech from Diotima of Mantinea to Socrates:

It is there, if anywhere, dear Socrates, said the Mantinean Stranger, that human life is to be lived: in contemplating the Beautiful itself... Do you think it a worthless life, she said, for a man to look *there* and contemplate *that* with that by which one must contemplate it, and to be with it? Or are you not convinced, she said, that there alone it will befall him, in seeing the Beautiful with that by which it is visible, to beget, not images of virtue... but true virtue?... But in

1 It is worth noting that, although we have preferred the original English versions for references and citations, all volumes of *Order and history* have been published in Portuguese by Edições Loyola, under the title *Ordem e história*. Additionally, many other works by the author have been published in Brazil by É Realizações.



begetting true virtue and nurturing it, it is given to him to become dear to god, and if any other among men is immortal, he is too (*The Symposium*, 1991, 211b5 - 212a7).<sup>2</sup>

In Plato, “the Beautiful itself” refers to the world of Ideas. In the transcendent universe of Ideas lie the foundations of universal existential order. On the other hand, there is earthly life: a life of multiplicities, conflicts, dualities etc. A rule, then, applies both to the individual human being and to society as a whole: what is truly virtuous in them - “real virtue,” not a “phantom of virtue” - is measured by the level of correspondence to and manifestation of universal order, eternal beauty, perennial justice etc. The more humans and society become *bridges*<sup>3</sup> or the concrete and immanent expression of transcendent truths, the more order and harmony there will be, whether in the individual soul or in society. The ultimate realization of the human being is the life of the spirit or *nous* - the “most divine part (*to theiotaton*) of man,” (Voegelin, 2000b, p. 359), by which he participates on transcendence.

In Voegelin’s thought, human beings find themselves in an intermediate position between opposing forces. The *order of being*, objective and universal in character, is neither a reality to be forcibly constructed, nor the manifestation of some personal conviction about good and evil; rather, it is a reality to be *discovered* by human beings, through their noetic capacity (that is: derived from the spirit or *nous*) for openness to transcendence: “The discovery of transcendence, of intellectual and spiritual order, while occurring in the souls of individual human beings, is not a matter of ‘subjective opinion’” (Voegelin, 2000a, p. 256). Society will be more ordered the more human beings, opening themselves to transcendence, order themselves and become capable of manifesting order in the world. Disorder, in turn, can be seen as a *tendency toward dissolution*, revealing itself whenever objective order fails to find proper vehicles - from linguistic-symbolic to political structures - for its manifestation.

Voegelin, thus, does not believe in violently imposed orderings, nor does he defend reactionary impulses that simply aim to reconstruct already superseded *cosmions* (we will return to this term later). What he defends is a *philosophical attitude* - in the classical, especially Platonic, sense of the term - of *openness to transcendence*, leading

2 See Reale, 2004, p. 353-354. We have used the English translation of *The Symposium* by R. E. Allen (Yale University Press).

3 In this regard, a symbol is, etymologically – *sym-ballein* – a mark of union between separate realities, and the term *pontifex* also expresses the same idea in its etymology.

human beings to become aware of the order of being, assuming the mission, from this point forward, of transmitting it to others (Voegelin, 2000a, p. 257).

Examples of transcendent openness to order include Plato himself. Platonic philosophy, which greatly inspires Voegelin, can be characterized as a yearning for the order of the One in opposition to the dissolution of the Dyad, as mentioned earlier.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, in the Far Eastern context, Lao Tzu's words in the *Tao Te Ching* convey a universal order through a different linguistic-symbolic structure. In both cases, these authors not only revealed aspects of universal order through their noetic experiences but also aspired to political and social transformations based on this revealed order (see Platonic dialogues such as *The Republic* or *The Laws*, and chapters of the *Tao Te Ching* on sociopolitical order), even though their primary aim was the ordering of human consciousness.<sup>5</sup>

When the revealed order becomes fixed as *axis mundi* - as the central axis of a world, frequently symbolized by a construction (as in the Islamic *Kaaba*), by a tree full of meaning (as in the biblical Eden), or in the specifically Christian context, by the wood of the cross - around which a society structures itself harmoniously, we have what Voegelin calls *cosmion*. The *cosmion* is “[...] a small world of order, [...] a shield against disorder and decay [and the reflection] of a broader and higher order that implies the need to subordinate human will to transcendent reality” (Federici, 2011, p. 193). The *cosmion*, Voegelin further states, is structured based on “an adequate symbolization of truth concerning the order of being of which the order of society is a part” (Voegelin, 2001, p. 19).

Every *cosmion* is necessarily, however, positioned halfway between order and disorder, which is why the “shield against decay” will not be immune to the risks of dissolution. Any historical *cosmion* sooner or later succumbs - and, as dissolution advances, an undesirable scenario is created where the rebellious forces of disorder will find themselves confronted by the brutal forces of a reactionism already ignorant of the true center it supposedly defends. In this sense, it becomes clear that, from the Voegelinian perspective, a world violently divided between the forces of “progressivism” and the forces of “reactionism” can be seen as a world in dissolution. In the criminological orbit, a world where the intensification of criminality shares the stage either, on the

4 See Reale, 2004.

5 See Federici, 2011, p. 143-147.





right, with calls for brutal penal responses, or, on the left, with proposals that tend to remove responsibility from the criminal, also reveals signs of its own entropic journey away from being.

The *paradigm of order through participation*, proposed at the end of this article, takes a distinct approach from the existing paradigms. This fourth criminological paradigm, based on Voegelin's thought, does not aim to replace existing paradigms, but rather to complement them, offering an additional and comprehensive perspective on the criminal phenomenon. As mentioned above, the act-transition paradigm focuses on the individual; the social reaction paradigm, on society; and the social interrelations paradigm seeks an integration of the previous ones. Through the *paradigm of order through participation*, we will present a proposal that, without disregarding the contributions of the others, seeks to go further, considering the relationship between immanent order and transcendence.

Before detailing this *fourth paradigm*, however, some additional considerations about Voegelin's thought are necessary.

### 3. Roots of the crisis: Christianity, Gnosticisms, and derailment

Alexander Solzhenitsyn achieved worldwide fame for his denunciations of the atrocities perpetrated during the Stalinist regime. However, he is less known for his other accusations, as important as those directed at Russian communism: in a speech delivered at Harvard, Solzhenitsyn proceeded with a painful inventory of a Western world in profound crisis, although such crisis concealed itself behind a surface of material benefits.

On this point, Voegelin meets Solzhenitsyn. "Solzhenitsyn, like Voegelin, identified the spiritual disorder spread throughout Western and American life," writes Federici (2011, p. 49). "For him, as for Voegelin, social disorders such as crime, drug use, high divorce rates, and unbridled materialism reflected man's alienation from transcendence" (Federici, 2011, p. 49). The Voegelinian position holds that when a certain society largely breaks access to that universe *beyond*, to the field of transcendence, where the ultimate axiological and teleological roots of existence are found, such society ceases to occupy its position in the *in-between*, and life no longer has the structure of the Platonic *metaxy*.



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When the link to transcendence is broken, the human being becomes limited to the material world. No longer capable of seeing meaning beyond the merely earthly, it begins to conceive of itself and its yearnings as the ultimate end of existence. “Every society,” Voegelin (200a, p. 68) wrote,

[...] is organized for survival in the world and, at the same time, for partnership in the order of being that has its origin in world-transcendent divine Being; it has to cope with the problems of its pragmatic existence and, at the same time, it is concerned with the truth of its order (Voegelin, 2000a, p. 68).

When society ceases to participate in the order of being, also ceasing to glimpse the foundation of its temporal order, the *cosmion* moves toward its dissolution.

Voegelin’s perspective is sufficiently open to identify authentic symbols of transcendence across various human cultures. The diversity of these symbols demonstrates that the transcendent world has penetrated the sensible world in numerous and varied forms. We have already mentioned the examples of Plato and Lao Tzu, but we can, following Voegelin’s steps, also cite the Mesopotamian empires, the mysterious Egyptian symbolism, or, of course, the revelation to Israel – the latter of great didactic value, insofar as it remains a living tradition. We can observe that from specific instances of transcendence manifesting in immanence – in the Hebrew case, from, for example, the revelations of Yahweh to Moses extensively narrated in Exodus – a richly spiritual tradition is born. The mere existence of human institutions and rigid dogmas does not indicate, for Voegelin, that society remains in connection with transcendence; in fact, Voegelinian thought frequently shows itself critical of institutional dogmatics. However, as long as the original spirit present in the primordial revelations remains alive, the *cosmion* subsists, even though it often faces destructive impulses.

On the other hand, Voegelin diagnoses that Christianity lacks a vast natural symbology that could connect the earthly world to the transcendent – for example, there are religions (especially the “ancient mythical cosmological religions”) in which the sun, moon, or trees are direct symbols that point to certain aspects of transcendence, while Christianity has a much more specific symbolic structure. From this results that a living Christianity tends to depend on *faith*, a “very thin” thread, following that Christian life becomes quite harsh to be lived – for every man must keep his faith “by the strength of his soul”, but “not all men are capable of such spiritual stamina”



(Voegelin, 2000c, p. 310). In Voegelin's view, Christians can easily lose their bond – primarily based on fragile faith – with transcendence, redirecting their yearnings toward the purely material world.

Of course, this diagnosis about the fragility of faith must be nuanced and contextualized. During the Middle Ages, for example, the belief in a static Earth prevailed, above which were the Heavens and, below, Hell. With the Copernican revolution and the development of the Newtonian physical system, that deeply symbolic medieval worldview ceased to sustain itself, which undermined one of the pillars of integral Christian experience. Beyond cosmic symbolism, the force of humanist philosophy, with its impulse in the Renaissance and notable increase in vigor during the Enlightenment, shook new pillars of the previously prevailing Christian worldview. Hence, the Voegelinian observation about the relative insufficiency of Christian symbolic structure is particularly relevant in a Western context characterized by a disconnection between immanence and transcendence – with faith proving insufficient to reconstitute the broken bond.

It is in this scenario that one must understand one of the most important terms in Eric Voegelin's theoretical construction: Gnosticism. Drawing from works by Hans Jonas<sup>6</sup> and others, Voegelin maintains that Gnosticism, existing since the beginnings of Christianity, has always presented itself, so to speak, as the “counterpart” or as the adversary par excellence of the Christian worldview – an adversary that, for centuries, remained at the margins of a dominant Christendom, but gains strength as the latter weakens. We can highlight some striking oppositions between Gnosticism and Christianity: (i) while for Christianity earthly existence must be oriented by transcendence, with human life becoming worthy of being lived insofar as it *participates* in divine life, for Gnosticism there is an absolute rupture between human and divine orders; (ii) while for Christianity there is a human order that reflects divine order, for Gnosticism the earthly world is, by its very nature, disordered and evil; (iii) while for Christianity earthly life can be redeemed by direct divine intervention, for Gnosticism the concrete world, given its intrinsically evil nature, is comparable to an odious prison or to an “[...] alien place to which man has strayed,” (Voegelin, 2000c, p. 297-298) leaving escape from the world as the only option (as defended by the Cathars, for example).

6 See Jonas, 1958.



However, Voegelin posits that Gnosticism extends beyond a mere yearning for liberation from an intrinsically evil world. He views the development of the Gnostic ideal as a human desire to redeem this evil world through its own forces, without any reference to transcendence (Voegelin, 2007, p. 107). “The gnostic truth that was produced freely by the original gnostic thinkers is now channeled into the truth of public order in immanent existence,” as Voegelin states (Voegelin, 2000d, p. 240). In the Gnostic attitude, as he further writes in *Science, Politics, and Gnosticism*, “we recognize the construction of a formula for self and world salvation, as well as the Gnostic’s readiness to come forward as a prophet who will proclaim his knowledge about the salvation of mankind” (Voegelin, 2000c, p. 298). Ideologies with a Gnostic foundation, for Voegelin, seek the “salvation” of the immanent world through human effort.<sup>7</sup>

Analyzing the history of the Christian West, Voegelin points out that, while Christianity remained strong in its mission of grounding a *cosmion* with transcendent roots, Gnostic ideas always remained at the margins - never entirely abolished, but also never capable of destroying the fortresses of a deeply Christian society. However, with the gradual disintegration of Christianity - the weakening of conviction about the human position in the universe, the loss of symbolic meaning, the emergence of humanist philosophies, etc. - the ground was created for Gnosticism, with its multiple strands, to finally prevail.

“Gnosis presents various forms,” wrote Galvão de Sousa (1982, p. 8).

In its predominantly intellectual modality, it seeks to speculatively penetrate the mystery of creation and existence. Such is the speculative gnosis of Schelling and the Hegelian system. Volitive gnosis, turned toward action and establishing the primacy of *praxis*, aims to redeem man and society. This is the case with Comte, Marx, Lenin, and Hitler, “revolutionary activists (Galvão de Sousa, 1982, p. 81).

As examples of immanentized Gnostic manifestations in recent times, Voegelin points to a series of ideologies, such as Positivism, Nazi-fascism, Liberalism, Marxism, technological progressivism, etc.

7 This is a frequently criticized point in Voegelin’s work. Indeed, since Gnosticism is marked by the rejection of the earthly world, it is counterintuitive to assert - as Voegelin does - that ideologies with a Gnostic foundation seek precisely the salvation of the material world. Nevertheless, this is a central thought in Voegelinian work, which the author endeavors to defend and justify through various means - and it would not behoove us, in this short article, to take a position or deeply explore the debate, this brief mention of the problematic being sufficient.

Although often combative, such as the clashes between liberal and neo-Marxist ideas, these ideologies share a common goal of substantially modifying reality to create a future world of complete happiness. Each promises an immanent salvation of the world in its own way. It is in this sense that Voegelin understands that all these ideologies, which stem from the same Gnostic trunk, are characterized by the pretension to *immanentize the Christian eschaton*; that is: if, in Christian Eschatology, the redemption of the world will only occur through a decisive action of transcendence upon immanence, ideologies with a Gnostic foundation intend, *through human force alone*, to redeem existence on a purely immanent or worldly plane, constructing an *earthly paradise* without reference to transcendence.

Voegelin calls special attention to an author who seems fundamental to him for the prospering of ideologies with Gnostic foundations: this is Joachim of Fiore, or Joachim of Flora, a mystical theologian from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. In his Christian-based thought, humanity had passed through the Age of the Father, marked by law, and the Age of the Son, marked by redemption. The future held, however, the most glorious of the three ages: it would be the Age of the Holy Spirit, marked by fraternity, universal peace etc. He points out that, by bringing the eschatological promise of redemption into the scenario of conventional human history, Joachim of Fiore immanentized the *eschaton*, providing the foundations for ideologies that would emerge later, bringing new promises of fullness on a purely horizontal plane. “Joachim’s division of history into three epochs, where the third and final epoch represents the end and fulfillment of history,” wrote Federici (2011, p. 102), “[...] served as a symbolic model for future thinkers such as Turgot, Comte, Hegel, Marx and totalitarian mass movements like National Socialism and communism.” In the words of Voegelin: “Joachim of Fiore had created an aggregate of symbols that dominated the self-interpretation of modern political movements in general” (Voegelin, 2000d, p. 238).

A schematic overview of this transition of the tripartite historical structure, from Joachim of Fiore to ideologues like Turgot, Comte, Hegel, and Marx, was very well presented by Eccel (2016, p. 47):

For Voegelin, the waiting for the age of the Holy Spirit as a third phase had such influence on Western thought tradition that Joachim of Fiore was merely the first to prophesy a third era as a symbol of consummation, as “the symbol of the three phases is present in a great number of



Gnostic ideas.” To demonstrate this, one need only observe the traditional division of history elaborated by Biondo, who conceives of Ancient, Medieval, and Modern Ages, with the modern being the most developed and best of them. From this followed Comte and Turgot and the evolution of types of knowledge from theological in Ancient Age, passing through metaphysical in the Middle Age, and reaching its apex with scientism in the Modern Age. There is also Hegel’s philosophy of history, which conceived of the despotic period, in which there was freedom only for one, the era of aristocracy, in which only some were free, and, finally, the period in which all would be free. From this, in part, would have resulted Marx and communism, formed by the first phase composed of a primitive type of communism, to then pass to a bourgeois society and finally reach the phase of communism formed by a classless society (Eccel, 2016, p. 47).

Each of these ideologies conceptualized by Voegelin as Gnostic constitutes a type of *derailment* of the Christian worldview. This means, on one hand, that they are ideologies that *could only have been born within a society of Christian roots*; on the other hand, they are ideologies that, in the Gnostic track, *subvert the Christian worldview in one or more aspects*. It is possible to glimpse a suggestion that, for Western society of our times, it would be necessary to open itself again to the primary experience on which classical philosophy and Christian revelation are based, so that a harmonic *cosmion* could be forged again, in which Gnostic ideologies would return to having merely marginal space. However, if there is no *restoration of order* from new original experiences of transcendence, and from a symbolic structure capable of favoring them, the tendency is that, more and more, human beings cease to see themselves as participants in a transcendent reality that is superior to them, coming to seek only *within themselves* - in their impulses, their inclinations, their very personal desires, their own thoughts - the source of an expected happiness not only personal, but also collective.

To the process of “[...] reawakening Western consciousness to the experiences of order that are the very substance of civilization” (Federici, 2011, p. 31), Voegelin gives the name *anamnesis*, or process of *recollection*. Voegelin admits, however, that *anamnesis* is not a simple task. It is not, after all, about simplistically and forcefully trying to revive an already superseded past - and here is another quite clear reason why he refused the label of *conservative* or *reactionary* -, but rather about promoting, within present reality, symbolic structures capable of allowing current reenactments of the *primary experience* that lies at the base of our *cosmion* now in dissolution. His proposal is not,

therefore, dogmatically closed, but seeks, on the contrary, to enable a reopening to the transcendent source of meaning (Federici, 2011, p. 169).<sup>8</sup>

#### 4. Disorder and Criminality

In a *cosmion*, there is an adequate symbolization of transcendence, forging a unifying meaning for immanent life: this is the *communitas*, a true *community*, in the etymological sense of the term. Perhaps, indeed, there is no spiritual tradition in which such an idea presents itself in a more fully developed form than Christianity, which has *communion* as its central sacrament: the diversity of the social fabric, with infinite differences between people, becomes sacramentally *one*, insofar as, *through participation*, all that multiplicity finds its ultimate and single foundation in the absolute simplicity of transcendence.<sup>9</sup>

In Criminology, the so-called *Schools of Consensus* also refer to some unifying sense that enables and grounds social consensus. It should be clear, however, that Eric Voegelin's approach goes far beyond merely social and political consensuses, or even consensuses forged by common religious feelings that unite small groups. After all, for Voegelin the unifying foundation of any culture lies, ultimately, in the *experience of transcendence* and its adequate symbolization.

When such a transcendent unifying foundation is present and honored, there is a *cosmion*. In a *cosmion*, much more than in any social reality referred to by criminological *Schools of Consensus*, crime would undoubtedly be a *marginal* reality. There would be no doubts, except marginal ones, either about the ontologically *evil* nature of the crime committed, or about the need for a response to its perpetrator - preferably, within a *cosmion* with traditional Christian foundations, a response that seeks to *reorient* the criminal, making them again part of the *communitas* (in opposition to the brutal responses that the reactionary tends to want to employ). In any case, just as with crime, the need for responses will also tend to be marginal. Overall, it is the very existence of the *cosmion* that is the predominant factor in crime prevention.

8 The difficulty of *anamnesis* is, however, enormous: Voegelin admits that, in cases like that of the highly corrupt Athens portrayed in Plato's *Gorgias*, there may be societies so thoroughly broken from transcendent order that, in them, there can no longer be hope for restoration. See Voegelin, 2000b, p. 93.

9 See Cavanaugh, 1999. On *communitas*, see Esposito, 2022.



When the *cosmion* begins to dissolve, society ceases to have a unifying center; in its place, countless new centers arise, each presenting itself as bearer of truth. Ideological disputes for predominance and power are born, and, at the individual level, each person is also invited to submit to a particular ideology or to make oneself their own center - in either case, without any reference to transcendence. In this entire scenario - of Gnostic ideologies fighting for power and of unsubmissive individuals, seeking their own selfish interests - Voegelin sees a common trait, which he calls *egophanic revolt*. "The term egophanic revolt [...] implies a distinction between this experience of the exuberant ego and the theophanic constitution of humanity" (Voegelin, 2007, p. 107).

Within the structure of Platonic *metaxy*, humanity places itself halfway between the supersensible and the sensible (or between the transcendent and the immanent); on the other hand, the egophanic revolt implies the rupture with transcendence. In the symbolism of ideologies considered by Voegelin as Gnostic, for example, the Enlightenment's Statue of Liberty appears to update the Promethean myth of stealing fire from the gods, while the sickle in Marxist iconography often symbolizes not only death but also a rupture between higher and lower realms. Not without reason, Ludwig Feuerbach - perhaps the philosopher of greatest influence on Marx - defended the idea that belief in God *alienated* humanity from its own value, thus claiming divinity for the human being itself (Lubac, 2016, p. 60-61).<sup>10</sup>

In a shattered *cosmion*, derailments take over the world. Without a transcendent foundation to unify the *communitas*, the axiological and teleological roots of civilization are lost. Instead, diverse centers - ideological or personal - present their own values and their own ends. If in *theophany* all human yearnings turn toward transcendence, in *egophany* yearnings for personal or group self-gratification predominate. Some consensuses may persist due to fortuitous social, political, or micro-religious circumstances, but there comes to be a constant tendency toward dissolution and conflict. Similarly, certain agreement about moral and immoral acts may survive for shorter or longer periods, but there will be a constant tendency toward moral relativism - a logical consequence of the loss of an axiological and teleological center, as well as the outbreak of a multiplicity of potentially conflicting egophanic yearnings.

10 José Pedro Galvão de Sousa, in the *Presentation* to the Brazilian edition of *The new science of politics*, wrote: "Marxism is also immanentism, and indeed Marx, uniting Hegel's dialectic with Feuerbach's materialism, transposes to Matter what Hegel affirmed of the Idea" (Galvão de Sousa, 1982, p. 8).



If there is no *center*, the idea of a *margin* loses its meaning. Acts that are marginal within a traditional context cease to be so in a predominantly Gnostic context. If a correspondence between the transcendent world and immanent order is not conceived, any immanent order can be relativized. As mentioned in our brief history of criminological paradigms, the *social reaction paradigm* posits that there exists no ontological foundation of crime, nor is there concern with analyzing the motivations behind criminal acts. Instead, everything in that paradigm turns to the social, economic, and legal systems, political choices, and the labeling carried out by those in power. It is a paradigm only possible in a world already profoundly derailed.

This creates the scenario, finally, where, philosophically, there is no longer any profound reason for the ontological distinction between an *orderly* act and a *disorderly* act. The inevitable tension “between order and disorder, truth and untruth, sense and senselessness of existence” (Voegelin, 1990, p. 119) resolves itself in the inclination toward the latter term of each of these pairs of opposites. Criminality can be contained by specific external conjunctures (prosperous economy, social equality, strong repression etc.), but not by a *cosmion* capable of preventing it profoundly. In truth, there gradually ceases to be even a philosophical reason to conceptualize criminality as such and to linguistically distinguish a “crime” from any other act, since, if one speaks of “crime” or “criminality,” such linguistic signs come to justify themselves only as legal creations that are to some degree (or even absolutely) arbitrary. As Vera Malaguti Batista, a prominent Brazilian critical criminologist, succinctly and directly stated, “Criminality is not ontological” (Batista, 2011, p. 14).

## 5. A Brazilian Illustration

As seen before, the Gnostic worldview is based on a rupture between the orders of transcendence (realm of universals, of the eternal and of fixity) and of immanence (realm of the mutable, of entropy and fluidity). From the same Gnostic trunk emerge both ideologies according to which immaterial existence is an irremediable evil (here, we have examples of spiritual movements such as Manichaeism and Catharism), and ideologies according to which the disorder of the world can be redeemed by human efforts, especially in the political field (this is the case, as stated before, of movements as disparate as Liberalism and Communism, with Voegelin emphasizing that Communism can be understood as the perfection and “most radical expression” of the immanent salvation



of man and society intended by Liberalism<sup>11</sup>). As mentioned earlier, Galvão de Sousa distinguishes between *intellectual gnosis* (the first case) and *volitive gnosis* (the second case). In both instances, there is no immanent order to defend or preserve that participates in transcendence. In the Gnostic worldview, natural order is intrinsically criticizable and relativizable, which makes Gnosticism especially close to moral relativism.

Although Voegelin maintains his predominant focus on the relationships between Gnosticism and ideologies desirous of radical transformations in the world, there is another quite relevant Gnostic trait that, in a criminological approach, needs to be highlighted, even though it appears only laterally in Voegelinian work: this is the ambivalence, or even equivalence, between *good* and *evil* in the web of earthly existence. In stark opposition to Augustine's conception according to which *evil* is mere *privation of good* (the doctrine of *privatio boni*), Gnostic systems characterize mundane existence not only by the mixture of good and evil, but by a relationship of *complementarity* between good and evil: in these systems, neither good nor evil is considered hierarchically superior to the other (Agostinho, 1984, p. 130). Ultimately, given the equivalence between such terms, there is little or no philosophical foundation in the eventual predilection for one or the other.

From the symbolic point of view, it is very interesting, when looking at Brazilian reality, that one of our main criminal factions has adopted, since its origin, the Taoist *yin-yang* as one of its emblems: the well-known image of two figures, commonly identified as fish or carp - another emblem of the faction - one black and one white, intertwined, as if dancing. In the faction's view, the symbol, evidently detached from its traditional religious context, refers to "a way of balancing good and evil with wisdom."<sup>12</sup> Again, a statement that throws wide open a relativistic worldview - a very new unfolding of a very ancient idea that traces back, according to Voegelin, at least to the Ahura-Mazda/Ahriman duality of Zoroastrianism, and which would find in Gnosticism fertile ground to prosper (Voegelin, 2001, p. 86).<sup>13</sup>

11 As we read in this important passage: "Moreover, one should not deny the immanent consistency and honesty of this transition from liberalism to communism; if liberalism is understood as the immanent salvation of man and society, communism certainly is its most radical expression; it is an evolution that was already anticipated by John Stuart Mill's faith in the ultimate advent of communism for mankind" (Voegelin, 2000c, p. 230-231).

12 Fação..., 2023.

13 It reads: "Ahuramazda, the lord of wisdom, was the good god of light, truth, and peace; while in his struggle he was opposed by the evil powers of darkness, lie, and discord, concentrated in Ahriman." Note that such a worldview, in which two equally powerful gods, one good and one evil, dispute power, is directly contrasting to the Christian worldview, in which, as seen above, evil is merely absence. Indeed: if there are equally powerful gods, one good and one evil, it is logically presupposed that, above them, there must be an original God, who gives rise to the

Although a detailed exploration of this topic is beyond the scope of this paper, it can be established that, in the Taoist context, there is a marked difference between *complementary* poles – such as feminine and masculine, passivity and activity, earth and Heaven, quantity and quality etc. – and merely *opposed* poles, combative among themselves – such as truth and untruth, harmony and disharmony, order and disorder or, of course, good and evil. However, when Taoist symbolism is appropriated by a worldview with Gnostic foundations, hermeneutical subtleties are set aside, advancing to defend the relativistic postulate of equivalence between good and evil. In the faction's discourse, there seems to be no doubt that, between the lines, there lies a yearning for a balance between order and chaos, peaceful acts and criminal acts, preservation of life and attacks against life etc.

The faction's discourse reflects broader Brazilian contexts, albeit more subtly. There is widespread discussion about endemic Brazilian corruption, which permeates society at various levels. Additionally, Brazilian culture exhibits a paradoxical blend of receptivity and amiability with a strong tendency toward 'malandragem' – a term roughly translating to 'cunning behavior.' This manifests in easy gains and minor illicit acts that are often met with complacency and humor, as depicted in poetic samba lyrics and charming fictional characters.

Of course, we are facing a vast spectrum that ranges from sympathetic literary characters (think of João Grilo from *O auto da compadecida*, a well-known piece of Brazilian literature which also became a popular film) to torture and cold-blooded murders by faction members. However, this entire vast spectrum can be seen as springing from the same Gnostic source – for this mixture, to a greater or lesser extent, between good and evil, order and disorder etc., is proper to Gnosticism. Note that this is not to say that the existence of doses of good and evil in the world is by itself indicative of a Gnostic worldview: good and evil, after all, are part of concrete experience. A distinctive mark of Gnosticism as a worldview is, indeed, the concomitant encouragement of order and disorder, good and evil, as both being original constituent realities of existence – something profoundly contrasting with the Christian worldview (and, we

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good-evil dyad. It is precisely in this sense that, for example, we find in Gnostic texts references to *Abraxas*, an entity – writes C. G. Jung – “even more indefinable than God and the Devil”: “Abraxas generates truth and falsehood, Good and Evil, light and darkness, in the same word and in the same act. Therefore Abraxas is terrible. It is magnificent as the lion at the moment it attacks its victim. Beautiful as a spring day... It is the monster of the depths, a thousand-tentacled polyp, an entangled knot of winged serpents, frenzy... It is the saint and his betrayer. It is the brightest light of day and the blackest night of madness” (Jung, 2006, p. 453-454).



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could say, with any traditional worldview), marked by an arduous and constant *struggle against evil*, which is nothing but a struggle of *being* against *non-being*, even if not always successful.

Moreover, many ideologies with Gnostic foundations – particularly Liberalism and Communism, along with their various adaptations – also find fertile ground to prosper in Brazil. The formal adherence of many to a myriad of Christian denominations, although it is a relevant fact and to some extent capable of maintaining relative social order, seems far from allowing the constitution of a *cosmion* in the Voegelinian sense. As occurs in the contemporary Western world, in the absence of a true and profound amalgam of transcendent order capable of keeping the social web teleologically and morally united through the constitution of a *communitas*, the bonds of fraternity and solidarity will necessarily be fragile and conjunctural. Various egophanic centers – as countless as the mass of people with self-centered interests or ideologies guided by the most diverse values and ends – call the shots in a society marked by an inevitably criminogenic and brutal fragmentation.<sup>14</sup>

But if, on one hand, the preponderance of a profoundly relativistic and Gnostic worldview is a mark of a world in dissolution, so too is the most common response, coming especially from conservative groups. For these frequently resort to an extremely strong punitive appeal with dictatorial airs, echoing slogans as well-known as they are odious, like the infamous “a good criminal is a dead criminal.” In this scenario,

14 The Brazilian numbers are, indeed, concerning. In the recent year of 2020, global data was collected on violent deaths resulting from *violent crimes*. Brazil, with a rate of 23.7 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants, although showing improvement since 2017 (year in which it recorded the terrible number of 36.9 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants), still performed worse than the vast majority of African and Latin American countries – not to mention, of course, European and North American countries. In absolute numbers, Brazil continues to lead the *ranking*. Among the least violent countries, several have a wealthy population and small social inequality: Switzerland, Japan, Netherlands, Austria, Denmark, etc. Evidently, material prosperity and social equality are factors that lead to reduced criminality. Under this perspective – a true commonplace that, nevertheless, expresses an easily verifiable truth – it’s possible to conclude that Brazilian poverty and inequality favor the proliferation of violent crimes. At this point, sociological criminological approaches – closely related to the *social reaction paradigm*, especially in the line of *critique* or *radical critique* – have undeniable reason and indisputable value. But, in the mentioned research, some data draw attention. We verify that, in some regions of the world, countries at least as poor as Brazil present *substantially* lower rates of violent deaths. This is the case, for example, of Thailand (2.2/100,000), the Philippines (6.6/100,000), and India (3.6/100,000). The Indian case deserves special attention: a country of continental proportions like Brazil – which makes the comparison more precise – its violent death rate corresponds to only about 15% of the Brazilian rate, despite being a considerably more impoverished country than ours. It doesn’t seem absurd to suggest the hypothesis that, compared to Brazil, India and other Southeast Asian countries still maintain a more cohesive *cosmions* still survive (we can think, for example, of the sacred respect for cows in Indian public space, a fact that, picturesque to our eyes, reveals a society in which symbolics referenced to transcendence is wide open). The data mentioned here can be consulted through the *Small Arms Survey*. Available at: <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/database/global-violent-deaths-gvd>. Accessed: Feb 21, 2023.

the disregard for the prison issue can also be seen as a consequence of a brutal impulse without any compassion in the face of growing criminality. However, conservatism and reactionism are two sides of the same coin. Resorting to brutal and cold punitivism also signifies a world in dissolution, as it ignores – especially within a Christian context – the call for mercy that emanates from its own tradition. This is clearly conveyed in evangelical passages that emphasize forgiveness over judgment and punishment. The reactionary – often allegedly Christian – very frequently becomes a mere dead echo of the original Christian experience.

Voegelin, indeed, refused to be labeled as a *conservative* or *reactionary* because he saw there just two more ideologies or two others *isms*: conservatism and reactionism. For Voegelin, this fundamentally meant that the reactionary or conservative tendency was to forget – as much as progressive ideologies – the experience of openness to transcendence that lay at the origin of any true tradition. Thus, reactionaries and conservatives tend, in his view, to cling to cold dogmatisms, emptied of the original spirit that was found at the source of tradition.

The conservative, says Federici (2011, p. 156), “will affirm the truth of archaic wisdom that has been reified in dogma or tradition as a solution to disorder [...]. Teaching and institutionalizing reified dogmas become the social project of conservatism.” In the criminal justice scenario of the West in general, and of Brazil in particular, the reactionary closure to a cold dogmatism – which in no way recalls the mystical and contemplative dimension of the original Christian experience – can be seen, indeed, in punitive yearnings that, based on simplistic moralisms, completely forget the most basic Christian lessons about mercy and love, as well as forget that the history of Christ himself is, to an important extent, the history of a defendant persecuted by hard, dogmatic, and brutal institutions.

## 6. A renewed criminological perspective: the *paradigm of order through participation*

As mentioned in the first pages, there are three criminological paradigms of enormous importance in the history of Criminology: that of *act-transition*, that of *social reaction*, and that of *social interrelations*.

Drawing from Eric Voegelin's ideas, however, it is possible to face criminological themes from a perspective which, evidently, goes beyond the three historical paradigms –



a perspective which, although it *does not deny* the historical paradigms, reveals itself, in fact, as a truly *distinct* look at the complex theme of criminality. It is a perspective which, on one hand, seeks *order*; and, on the other, seeks the foundation of such order in the supersensible or transcendent plane. It does not advocate for a self-sufficient order based purely on immanence but rather supports an immanent order that participates in or reflects a transcendent one. We can therefore call it the *paradigm of order through participation in being*, or simply *paradigm of order through participation*.

We can establish that this criminological perspective with Voegelinian foundations is fundamentally characterized by: (i) the search for a stable order or a *cosmion* capable of deeply amalgamating society through participation in transcendence; (ii) the preservation or revival of order constituted from a transcendent revelation; (iii) the preservation or relocation of human beings and human society in their position in the *in-between* (Platonic *metaxy*), that is, in their position *between* transcendence and immanence; and (iv) the postulate that criminality, especially if exponential, is primarily a reflection of disorder or rupture between immanence and transcendence. More concretely, considering Western society in general and Brazilian society in particular, this paradigm: (i) centers primarily on the revelation and original noetic experience of classical philosophy and Christianity<sup>15</sup>; (ii) demands the preservation or revival of order based on revelation and on classical and Christian experience; (iii) aims to establish a society ordered through participation with reference to transcendence; and (iv) views order through participation as the main factor in crime prevention.

And if we agree to seek applications of Voegelinian thought to the specific field of the penal system - even though it is a simple exercise, as Voegelin did not occupy himself with this - we can state about this *paradigm of order through participation*:

- (i) regarding the *ontology of the criminal act*: This paradigm differs from both the act-transition paradigm and the social reaction paradigm. In the social reaction paradigm, there is no ontological foundation of crime; it tends to

15 It should be clear that, in the wake of Voegelin's thought, it is not exactly about defending an order based on classical philosophy and Christianity because these are intrinsically superior to other traditions, founded on diverse forms of revelation or contact between immanence and transcendence. What Voegelin positively does, however, is diagnose the historical fact that, in the West in general - and naturally we extend the reasoning to Brazilian reality - the preponderant traditional roots trace back to classical philosophy and, of course, even more to Christianity: as Voegelin himself wrote (2000a, p. 90), "Western society received its historical form through Christianity." This does not exclude the possibility of constituting *cosmions* that revolve around a particular shamanic revelation, or the Mohammedan revelation, or even based on traditions of African matrix.



view crime as a result of simple labeling by control instances. Conversely, the act-transition paradigm, while assuming that crimes are ontologically evil acts, provides little foundation for such assertion. In the paradigm of order through participation, however, one must seek the ontological foundation of any act considered criminal considering transcendence. Every typified crime must correspond to an ontologically evil act (although not every evil act should be criminalized). The definition of what constitutes an evil act must be based on transcendence, as revealed, which makes this paradigm decidedly contrary to moral relativism, opposing, in this point, the social reaction paradigm. In Voegelin's view, moral relativism has a Gnostic foundation and corresponds to the destruction of order and truth inscribed in the human soul (Voegelin, 2000c, p. 221-223).

- (ii) concerning *responses to the criminal behavior*: paradigm of order through participation differs from the social reaction paradigm (often tending toward penal abolitionism) and from the act-transition paradigm (with a strong punitive bias, grounded in repression or prevention, and sometimes tending toward medical-psychiatric approaches). In the paradigm of order through participation, punitive affliction, although possible, should be viewed as an exceptional response, giving preference to effectively reintegrative and restorative approaches. According to Voegelin, society functions as a force field where order and disorder oppose each other. Therefore, the response to a criminal act should aim to restore the order disturbed by the criminal act – not only social order but fundamentally order in the soul itself. This restoration occurs through participation in the order of being. *Restorative justice* is a prime example of this approach,<sup>16</sup> along with other paths linked to meditative or contemplative religious practices, psychotherapeutic processes, community work, dialogical encounters, or art – in sum, paths whose end is the reordering of souls. Afflictive punishments, while they may have their place, should be viewed primarily as symptomatic of a world in dissolution that,

16 In *restorative circles*, for example, victim, offender, and community gather to dialogue about the crime and its consequences, seeking a form of reparation that restores not only material damage, but also the social fabric and order itself. This process can reflect the Voegelinian idea of participation in transcendent order, as it seeks to reintegrate the offender into the community and restore social harmony, not through punishment, but through a shared recognition of the moral order that was violated and needs to be reestablished.

incapable of maintaining true order, forcibly imposes artificial simulacra of order – though such recourse may be necessary in certain circumstances.<sup>17</sup> At this point, it should be noted that the paradigm of order through participation aligns with the social interrelations paradigm, particularly in relation to Alvin de Sá's conceptions of *social reintegration*. In the author's words, when the criminal "experiences that their paradoxical experiences are understood as integral parts of the same whole..., they also perceive themselves as part of that whole, within a profoundly creative process," in which all people equally participate and benefit. "This is social reintegration. Reintegration among people. Reintegration within each person (Sá, 2011, p. 325); and finally,

(iii) essentially, this is a paradigm that – distancing itself from the three previously discussed paradigms – views the constitution of a cosmion as the main factor in crime prevention. Above all, true crime prevention is not achieved through the systematic construction of codes, doctrines, and jurisprudence in one direction or another, nor even through the improvement of control mechanisms. Rather, it is achieved through profound *anamnesis* and therefore through the reconnection between immanent civilization and transcendent order, by which the social body begins to gravitate around a central consensus grounded in a supra-sensible foundation and rooted in the primary experience of transcendence regarding the good, virtue, and true order.<sup>18</sup>

## 7. Paradigm of order through participation: final considerations

17 And if non-primarily punitive responses currently seem utopian or excessively naïve to us (and perhaps they truly are in our times), this is likely due to the stage of dissolution in which we find ourselves as a society.

18 It must be emphasized that the paradigm of order through participation does not carry any theocratic suggestion, as a superficial reading might imply. On the contrary: Voegelin, in his numerous writings, refers to a deeper concept of participation in transcendence – a *participation mystique* –, which can be experienced in various ways, not necessarily religious in the institutional sense: Plato and Aristotle are often cited as examples of individuals who effectively positioned themselves as bridges between immanence and transcendence, through a philosophical approach. Voegelin acknowledges the plurality of human experiences without privileging any specific religious tradition – though the prominence of Christianity in the West, as a historical fact, cannot be denied. The participation in question refers to a conscious engagement with existential realities that go beyond the purely immanent, and the connection to the supra-sensible can occur, far beyond institutional religion (which sometimes may even hinder such connection), through philosophy, art, meaningful communal experiences, meditations and contemplations outside religious contexts, profound reflections on the human condition, or even through the simply imponderable and unforeseen (a serious accident, for example, may serve as an unexpected bridge to transcendence).





Certainly, much remains to be explored concerning the multiple potential practical implications of Voegelin's perspective in Criminology and issues related to the penal system - in other words, there is still much to be explored about this paradigm of order through participation, which, however, goes beyond the scope of this article. This text's main goal is to present an introduction to a possible new criminological perspective and, perhaps, an invitation for future developments and deeper explorations. Our aim is to present, in broad terms, the possibility of utilizing Voegelin's work for new - more concrete and specific - reflections in these areas.

Future research, using Voegelin's work and the paradigm of order through participation as theoretical and methodological frameworks, could, for instance (and these are, of course, merely non-exhaustive suggestions): a) empirically explore the relationship between the sense of connection with a transcendent order (whether based on Christian foundations or not) and crime rates in different communities, either today or in other historical contexts; b) in the field of comparative religions, theoretically investigate the agreement between certain moral postulates based on transcendent revelations, seeking potential universal ontological substrates of crime; c) empirically assess which responses to crime most effectively promote inner order and connection with the transcendent order, both in individuals and communities; d) contrast artificial orders imposed by autocratic regimes (often based on religious dogmas) with orders emerging from authentic participation in transcendence; or e) examine the relationships between the paradigm of order through participation and other criminological paradigms, identifying points of convergence and divergence.

In general, it can be stated that some Voegelinian concepts - particularly those revolving around the necessity of the symbolic constitution of a *cosmion* participating in transcendence for the establishment of true order - prove especially useful for a better understanding of the complex issue of crime and for reflections on the best responses to this problem. As Voegelin states:

The life of people in political community cannot be defined as a profane realm, in which we are only concerned with legal questions and the organization of power. A community is also a realm of religious order, and the knowledge of a political condition will be incomplete with respect to a decisive point, firstly, if it does not take into account the religious forces inherent in a society and the symbols through which these forces are expressed or, secondly, if it does include the religious forces but does not recognize them as such and translates them into



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areligious categories. Humans live in political Society with all traits of their being, from the physical to spiritual and religious traits (Voegelin, 2000e, p. 70).

We can assert that Eric Voegelin's main potential contribution to studies in fields related to Criminology lies in his emphasis on the fact that, in the concrete world, true order can only exist within a *cosmion* that symbolically participates in and reflects the order of being otherwise, there can only be *disorder* or *false emulations of order*, often rigid and, in the extreme, totalitarian. It is not merely about "[...] a small world of order [and] a shield against disorder and decay" (Voegelin, 2001, p. 19), the *cosmion* presents itself, in this criminological perspective, a central foundation of crime prevention.<sup>19</sup> And, in an ordered *cosmion*, the penal system as a whole will also become ordered: as stated in the third volume of *Order and history*, "[...] legislative matters will take care of themselves if only the souls of the legislating rulers are in good order" (Voegelin, 2000b, p. 141).

For Voegelin, [summarizes Federici] history is made when concrete human beings, who are engaged in a political community, participate in the dramatic struggle for order. The existential resistance to disorder in that community and the corresponding discovery of order in the soul is the very essence of historical existence (Federici, 2011, p. 108).

It is undeniable that the Voegelinian perspective faces significant challenges in an increasingly secular Western context - challenges that Voegelin himself already confronted in his time. The difficulty of *anamnesis* is indeed immense, and Voegelin himself admitted that there may be societies so severed from transcendence that, within them, the restoration of true order is no longer possible (Voegelin, 2000b, p. 93). Whether this is the case for contemporary Western society is not for us to determine. Regardless, Voegelin's vision remains a beacon of hope and a valuable counterpoint to the strictly materialistic approaches of current science.

In the realm of criminal issues, Voegelin's work suggests that true order - and consequently crime prevention - cannot be separated from a deeper understanding of the human condition, rooted in a reality that transcends the merely immanent. Social

<sup>19</sup> The previously presented figures on violent crimes committed in countries like India and Brazil are quite enlightening in this regard.



order, and thus crime prevention, must be grounded in participation in the truth about the order of being. It is fundamentally along these lines that the proposed paradigm of order through participation can be established in the criminological field.

This approach not only offers a new lens for understanding issues related to criminality, but also invites deeper reflections on the role of transcendence in the construction of truly ordered societies, in the sense that Voegelin gives to the term. This article aims to serve as a starting point.

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