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Eric Voegelin's Vienna: The Crisis of Democracy in the Austrian First Republic

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Abstract

This paper discusses Eric Voegelin's writings on Austrian politics during the 1930s under the authoritarian state (called Austrofascism) focusing on his theory of democracy and his claim that the authoritarian state was "the best possible defense of democracy". His theory of democracy has two important characteristics: to emphasize the existence of a demos as the precondition of democracy and to set limits to democracy.

Firstly, for Voegelin, the most serious problem in Austrian politics was the nonexistence of a demos from the time of the Habsburg Empire. He had a positive estimation of the Austrofascist regime as the founder of the Austrian demos. Secondly, Voegelin set limits to democracy and justified the exclusion of the National Socialist Party (the Nazis) and the Social Democratic Party from the Austrian parliament. He believed that the radical ideologists who imposed their unitary worldview could not be seen as democrats.

However, his argument has some problems. Firstly, in relation to his contemporary political situations, the regime which he supported had a fascist or authoritarian character like the Nazis. Secondly, he emphasized a preexisting order or limits in his theory of democracy and marginalized the democratic decision of the people. Although Voegelin or the leaders of the Austrofascist regime opposed the Nazis, we cannot say that they were the defender of liberal democracy in the Austrian politics.

I. Introduction

Eric Voegelin (1901-1985), the author of "*Order and History*" or "*The New Science of Politics*", is typically regarded as one of the representative political philosophers of modern America. Indeed, Voegelin is seen mainly as an "American" political philosopher and this is exemplified in the fact that his collected works are published in English from the University of Missouri Press¹.

However, when we turn our eyes to the first half of his life, we see a clearly different

portrait of Voegelin. Voegelin studied in the University of Vienna under Hans Kelsen (1881-1973) and Othmar Spann (1878-1950) and after receiving his doctorate, he taught in the University of Vienna. He worked mainly in Austria and Vienna before his emigration to the United States. For example, we cannot appreciate his works in the 1930s represented by “*Der autoritäre Staat*” (The Authoritarian State)² without an understanding of contemporary Austrian political history. It is not an exaggeration to say that “*Der autoritäre Staat*” was written to defend the Austrofascist regime of Engelbert Dollfuss (1892-1934) and Kurt von Schuschnigg (1897-1977) who abolished parliamentary democracy and established an authoritarian government in its place. Because Voegelin had a strong hatred for the National Socialist Party (the Nazis) which attempted to annex Austria into Germany, he supported the Dollfuss=Schuschnigg regime which insisted on the independence of Austria. Therefore, when the Nazis succeeded in annexing Austria in March 1938, Voegelin had to exile himself to the United States³. “Erich” Voegelin became “Eric” Voegelin. This paper thus concentrates on the early half of Voegelin’s life and tries to read his works in the context of contemporary Austrian political history⁴. In doing so, this paper tries to offer some insights into both the study of Voegelin and Austrian political thought.

Firstly, in relation to Voegelin studies, the present study is significant in that it reinterprets Voegelin, who has usually been seen as a philosopher detached from practical politics⁵, from the perspective of Austrian politics. Voegelin regarded his political attitude during the 1930s positively as a defense of democracy even in his autobiography⁶. Nonetheless we may find inherent problems in Voegelin’s political theory about democracy through a consideration of his writings during the 1930s. Secondly, the present study makes a contribution to Austrian political thought. Voegelin’s writings during the 1930s constitute a rare attempt to understand the meaning of an independent Austria in political theory⁷. We may therefore identify some of the characteristics and constructive problems of Austrian politics by considering Voegelin’s attempt.

The constitution of this paper will be as follows. In section II, I will explain the characteristics of Voegelin’s theory of Austrian politics concentrating on his theory of democracy. In section III, I will point out the problems of Voegelin’s theory. I will criticize his political judgment during the 1930s noting the oppressive character of the Austrofascist regime he supported. Voegelin used the political theory of Carl Schmitt (1888-1985) as the theoretical ground to defend this regime. In order to defend Austrian independence against National Socialism (Nazism), Voegelin used ingenious means, the theory of the laurel jurist of the Third Reich. Therefore we may point out some contradictions in his theory.

II. Voegelin’s Austrian Political Theory

1. Austria, a State without a Demos

There are two important aspects to Voegelin’s theory of democracy. Firstly, Voegelin emphasizes the importance of the demos (i.e. nation, political people) as the precondition of

democracy. Secondly, Voegelin sets limits to democracy and insists that democratic rights should never be given to anti-democratic parties. We will examine these two points from the perspective of Austrian political history. In section II-1, I will discuss the problem of the demos and in section II-2 the limits to democracy.

Voegelin defined a demos as “a politically united people imbued with the will to existence”⁸, “a social group possessed by the will to common and independent political existence”⁹ and as “a people sufficiently unified and politicized to react as a unit under the guidance of a political elite”¹⁰. According to Voegelin, a demos might be able “to establish the state as a democracy”¹¹. He set the criteria of the demos in the superiority of national interest to party interest and the readiness to fight against foreign aggression. Based on these criteria, Voegelin argued, Austria has never had her demos¹² and so “Austria is nationally uniform state without being national state”¹³ (Voegelin also said that “The Austrians are not a nation and the Austrian Republic is not a national state”¹⁴). Next, I will explain what he means by this, referring to the founding process of the Austrian First Republic¹⁵.

The Habsburg Empire which consisted of over twelve nations had been confronted by the nationalism of each nation in the late 19th century. The superiority of national consciousness such as German, Czech or Magyar to Austrian consciousness drove each nation towards independence. After World War I, the Empire dissolved into several new nation-states. Although each nation could have the demos that had a political will towards independence, the Austrian Republic was not able to consolidate such a demos. For Voegelin, the reason for this failure was due to the strong inclination by the Austrian people to join into Germany and also confrontation of political parties in Austria.

Firstly, the strong inclination of the Austrian people to join into Germany was caused by the shock of the defeat in World War I and the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire. Most inhabitants of the Austrian Republic, which was the remnant of the old Empire after the independence of various nations, had no will to independence. They thought that they could not survive economically without the industrial area of Bohemia and the agricultural area of Hungary. Voegelin expressed this mentality as the “will to nonexistence”¹⁶. The inhabitants of the Austrian Republic hoped to join into Germany, and in the National Council a resolution about annexation was even adopted¹⁷. However, the Entente that was against the rehabilitation of a strong united Germany opposed the annexation, which was banned in the Treaty of Versailles and the Treaty of Saint-Germain. Therefore it can be said that Austria was forced to be independent as well as not having an active will to be independent.

Secondly, the antagonism between political parties was serious. There were three main parties in the Austrian Republic: The Christian Social Party (CSP) which was based on conservatism and belief in a political doctrine that referred back to Catholic Christianity; The Social Democratic Party (SDP) which was based on (Austro-) Marxism; The German National Party which was based on German nationalism. During the era of the First Republic, these parties had opposed each other. For example, while the CSP did not necessarily hope to be annexed into Germany, the SDP and the German National Party hoped for this.

The Social Democrats even included an article about annexation in the party program¹⁸. While the CSP and the German National Party shared anti-Marxism in common, the Social Democrats and German Nationalists shared anti-clericalism in common.

Of these three parties, the CSP and the SDP were the stronger and divided the public opinion. In all five elections that had been called during the First Republic, the two parties had always shared 80% of the seats in parliament. However both parties did not positively show support for the Republic. For the Christian Socialists, the Republic was only the product of a compromise with the Social Democrats under the confusion of defeat and they sought to abolish the parliamentary democracy and establish a corporative state. On the other hand, for the Social Democrats, the Republic was only a compromise with the bourgeoisie and the milestone for the proletarian dictatorship. Even in the Linz Program which was revised in 1926, the SDP reserved the possibility of civil war or dictatorship as a last means¹⁹.

Although the majority of the inhabitants in the Austrian Republic were German and so it looked as if it was a “nationally uniform state” distinguished from the multi-national empire, as we have seen, they had the “will to nonexistence” and each party had a different blueprint of the state. Therefore it was impossible to create a unified national will. For Voegelin, such a condition represented the lack of a “demos”. Just as the Habsburg Empire was dissolved because of the superiority of nationalism to state consciousness, the Austrian Republic was about to dissolve because of the superiority of party will to state consciousness. In Voegelin’s eyes, Engelbert Dollfuss appeared as a creator of the Austrian “demos”. However, Dollfuss was the leader of the authoritarian regime in Austria called Austrofascism. He closed the National Council, banned the SDP, the Communist Party and the Austrian Nazis and established the “May Constitution” characterized by the principle of a corporative state. Why did Voegelin see him as the creator of the Austrian demos?

Voegelin regarded the establishment of the Nazi regime in Germany as the decisive event for creating the Austrian demos. Because the National Socialists who denied the existence of Austria took control of Germany, “A decisive political will to exist” occurred²⁰. Except for the Austrian Nazis, no one wanted to shake hands with Germany under the Nazis. Dollfuss refused the visit of Hans Frank, who was the Minister of Justice in Bavaria and a member of the Nazis, into Austria and banned the activity of the Nazis in June 1933 that started an act of terrorism in Austria. Dollfuss appeared to be the embodiment of the decisive political will to exist. Voegelin thought, under the leadership of Dollfuss, “the will to nonexistence” changed into “the Austrian mission” and the forced independence changed into the independence for “the realization of certain political ideals”²¹.

In this case, what are the principles of the “Austrian mission” or “certain political ideals” on which the Austrian demos is based? Naturally they were not race idea as in Nazism or class idea as in Marxism. Voegelin described them as “Catholic ideas of personality, society, and humanity” or “the Austrian tradition of peaceful and tolerant administration”²². He also said in his autobiography that the Austrian tradition was “eminently democratic and

habit-forming”²³. He regarded the defense of these ideas against the Nazis as the principle of Austrian national unity. When Kurt von Schuschnigg succeeded Dollfuss after his assassination by the Nazis in July 1934, Voegelin thought that these ideas were also succeeded by Schuschnigg. In the text written in 1937, Voegelin wrote “certainly it (i. e. Austrian nation) is now in the making”²⁴. At least in Voegelin's eyes, the Dollfuss=Schuschnigg regime defended Austrian independence against Nazi-Germany and also gave the Austrian nation particular meaning of existence.

Voegelin's standpoint was not so strange among the non-Marxist, anti-Nazi intellectuals²⁵. For example, Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi (1894-1972), who was the founder of the Pan-Europe movement and is known today as the (indirect) pioneer of the Europe Union, evaluated Dollfuss as a Pan-European juxtaposing him to Aristide Briand (1862-1932) and Thomas Garrigue Masaryk (1850-1937) in his book titled “*Europa ohne Elend*” (Europe without misery)²⁶. He argued that Dollfuss not only defended the independence of Austria but also rehabilitated confidence and dignity of the state and insisted that the Austrian nation could become a nation for the first time under Dollfuss. He insisted, namely, that the people of Austria, born hopelessly as the remnants of the old Empire, were awakened to the “Austrian mission”. Coudenhove-Kalergi summarized the Austrian mission as follows.

[Dollfuss's] patriotism produced the new generation of the Austrian. They no longer feel themselves as a part of Germany, but feel themselves as the bearer of a special Austrian mission, as the pioneer of the true German culture and as the Noah's ark of German courtesy in the surging tragic flood.²⁷

In addition to this, Coudenhove-Kalergi praised Dollfuss as if he was a saint, when he describes Dollfuss that he was “the defender of Austrian independence and the martyr of the Western culture” who was killed by the Nazis in order to defend “the great inheritance of the Christian cultural community in the West”²⁸. So it can be said that the Austrian mission for Coudenhove-Kalergi, as for Voegelin, was to defend the true German culture and the Christian culture against the barbaric regime of the Nazis. For both of them, the Dollfuss=Schuschnigg regime was the founder of the Austrian demos or the Austrian nation.

2. The Authoritarian State as the Defender of Democracy

In section II-1, we examined Voegelin's theory of democracy and his argument about Austrian politics focusing on the concept of a “demos”. Next, I focus on the second characteristics of his theory of democracy: to set the limits to democracy. The importance of this argument lies in the fact that Voegelin justifies his support for the Dollfuss=Schuschnigg regime as the defense of democracy. In his autobiography, he also said that the aim of his book “*Der autoritäre Staat*” was “to understand that an authoritarian state that would keep radical ideologists in check was the best possible defense of democracy”²⁹. In short, we can

find out that Voegelin supported the Dollfuss=Schuschnigg regime not only to establish a demos in Austria, but also to defend the demos which had been created under the authoritarian state from the enemy. From this idea, Voegelin justified the exclusion of the radical ideologists, i. e. the National Socialists on the right side and the Austromarxists on the left side, from the parliament and the ban of their actions.

The direct reason why Voegelin had such ideas was in the fact that Hitler and the Nazis acquired the power in Germany according to the rule of democracy. That is to say, they came into power through a victory in the general election³⁰. Justifying their acts by democracy, Nazis could take measures that “in substance have little to do with democracy”³¹. The prime example of such measures was the suppression of Jews and people who had different ideas from the Nazis, and Voegelin also was forced to flee from Austria in 1938. Voegelin described the acts of the Nazis as “the game of destroying democracy by adhering to its letter and dissolving its substance”³². The formal democracy which was based on the vote of people could not defend democracy from the enemy of democracy. Therefore Voegelin supported the Dollfuss=Schuschnigg regime that opposed the Nazis by the power as the defender of democracy³³.

On the other hand, the western countries which adopted an appeasement policy towards the Nazis at least until 1939 left Hitler as it was and permitted tacitly the annexation of Austria and a part of Czechoslovakia into Germany. Looking back at the event, Voegelin criticized the western democracies with intense words as follows.

those rotten swine who called themselves democrats—meaning the Western democracies—certainly deserved to be conquered and destroyed if they were capable of such criminal idiocy³⁴.

The western democracies were thus only formally democratic and confirmed the decision of German people to choose the Nazis, never taking effective countermeasure against the Nazi aggression of Austria. In Voegelin's view, while the Dollfuss=Schuschnigg regime deserved to be defended because it opposed by force the barbaric regime of the Nazis, the western democracies deserved to be blamed because they did not effectively oppose the Nazis.

As we have seen, the consistent feature of Voegelin's theory of democracy is that he criticized the formal definition of democracy such as government by the people or popular vote, and focused on the substantive aspect, that is the condition to function democracy³⁵. For Voegelin, the problem of democracy is not the maintenance of its formal procedure but the consciousness of the political elite and the people who take part in it. In his essay “Extended Strategy” written in 1940, Voegelin argued that “the democratic quality of a government” hinges firstly on the type of the elite who shapes the issue, secondly on the issues themselves, and thirdly on the state of mind in which voters go to the polls³⁶. For Voegelin, the conditions under which democracy can function is when the political elites shape political issues that do not stir up emotions of people too much so that they can vote according

to their rational judgments. From this point of view, in a country where the political campaign of the Nazis is allowed and where voters are agitated by them, democracy is “gone”³⁷. So Voegelin permitted the exclusion of “radical ideologists” who took irrational, extreme political actions and force upon others their unitary ideology.

Such Voegelin's view of democracy is contrastive to that of Hans Kelsen's who was his supervisor at the University of Vienna. On Kelsen's account of democracy in which he attempts to purify democracy as “government by the people”, the legitimacy of a government is based only on the votes of the people. Even the democratic decision that chooses Hitler as the prime minister or that establishes the dictatorship of proletariat can be permitted logically, as long as it is the result of popular vote. If someone sets the limits to democracy which should be “government by the people”, it is contrary to the principle of democracy because it admits that someone who sets the limits could judge better than the people. In Kelsen's view of democracy which is based on relativism, such truth of judgment cannot be permitted. Kelsen's idea here was made explicit in his article written in 1932.

Democracy which is insisted against the will of majority with the force stops being democracy. The government by the people cannot be against people. Those who are for democracy should not be involved in the disastrous contradiction and should not search for dictatorship in order to save democracy. Man must be loyal to his flag, even when the ship sinks. And sinking into the deeps with the hope that the ideal of liberty is indestructible and the deeper the ship sinks, the more passionate it will revive.³⁸

Kelsen admitted that fascism was born from “the womb of democracy”. He was dismissed from his post as professor in the University of Cologne by the Nazis because of his lineage. However, even then, Kelsen opposed the idea of replacing “government by the people” with “government for the people”. He set the will of the people upon the will of (self-professed) superior. Kelsen had cited many times the example of Jesus, Pilate and the people of Jerusalem³⁹. Pilate was confronted with a difficult problem to judge whether Jesus or Barabbas should be released and entrusted the judgment to the people of Jerusalem. Kelsen also had not adopted the truth of Jesus, but adopted the democratic judgment of the people of Jerusalem which sought the death of Jesus.

This difference between Voegelin and Kelsen is interesting, not only because it is a confrontation between a supervisor and his student but also because it sheds light on an important problem in political theory. It contains, namely, the paradox of liberal democracy: an anti-democratic decision or an anti-liberal decision can be made democratically. When an anti-democratic party tries to destroy the values of liberal democracy such as parliamentarianism, party system or the division of powers through democratic way, those who support liberal democracy have to fight against such a party. Though liberal democracy ordi-

narly seeks to restrain state power and demands negative freedom, in this case, liberal democracy must secure freedom positively. In this point Voegelin's criticism of the western formal democracies which kept silent against the Nazis was right to the point. The crisis of democracy which Voegelin experienced in the 1930s was that the people who had democratic rights were incapable of making rational judgments and supported radical ideologists such as the Nazis.

However, the problem of here is in the fact that Eric Voegelin, who opposed formal democracy which gave space to tolerate the Nazis and who tried to secure substantive democracy, defended the authoritarian regime of Dollfuss and Schuschnigg under the slogan, "the defense of democracy". It implies that for Voegelin democracy is not necessarily associated with liberal democracy which contains parliamentary democracy or party system. In the next section, firstly in section III-1, I will point out the fascist character⁴⁰ of the Dollfuss=Schuschnigg regime and present Voegelin's argument to defend them. Through III-1, I will make clear the contradiction of Voegelin's attempt in which he tries to defend the authoritarian regime as the defender of democracy. In section III-2, I focus on the inherent problems of Voegelin's theory of democracy. Voegelin develops his argument about democracy according to the political theory of Carl Schmitt and it is contrastive to that of Hans Kelsen. I will show the contradictions which were produced from the fact that Voegelin tried to defend the Austrofascist regime by the theory of Carl Schmitt.

III. The Problems in Voegelin's Austrian Political Theory

1. The Fascist Character of the Authoritarian Regime

In this section, I will criticize the Dollfuss=Schuschnigg regime which Voegelin supported as the defender of democracy from three points of view: its policies, its relationship with fascist groups and the contents of the "Austrian mission".

The first problem is the fascist character of the Dollfuss=Schuschnigg regime's policies, that is closing parliament and changing the Constitution. By closing parliament, Dollfuss aimed not only at excluding the Austrian Nazis but also the SDP which was the largest party in Austria. As we have seen, as well as the Nazis, Voegelin included the SDP into the category of "radical ideologists" which he criticized harshly. He regarded the SDP in the same light as the Nazis, labeling them as "anti-democratic parties" that used political rights in order to destroy democracy⁴¹. However, the SDP occupied almost half of the seats in parliament. Thus excluding them meant excluding almost half of the will of the Austrian people. Can we call this the Austrian demos? Moreover some scholars points out that the main aim of Dollfuss was the exclusion of the SDP rather than the Nazis⁴².

Closing the parliament was one thing. Dollfuss also changed the Constitution fundamentally. In 1934, Dollfuss established the "May Constitution" through the procedure of amendment in parliament without the SDP. However, it had a fundamentally different character from the Constitution of the Austrian First Republic. It abolished general elections,

denied the party system and allowed legislation by the will of the government without parliament, which are obvious features of fascist regime. So it is impossible to defend this process which was against regulations about the amendment of the Constitution of the Austrian First Republic formally and legally, not least because it was made in parliament without the Social Democrats. Nevertheless, Voegelin argued that such criticism was only “metaphysic and positivistic”⁴³. According to Voegelin, the acts of legislation of Dollfuss regime from March 1933 to May 1934 were the acts of “constituent power” and it was “the revolutionary process”⁴⁴. It was only a minor defect that these revolutionary acts were against formal regulations in the Constitution of the old Republic⁴⁵. For Voegelin who defended the May Constitution according to “decisionism” (Dezisionismus)⁴⁶, it was meaningless to talk about legality or legal continuity from the standpoint of the Constitution of the Austrian First Republic.

The reason why Voegelin asserted that the authoritarian state was “the only one that assures the continuing existence of the state”⁴⁷, and so was the defender of democracy, was because it tried to create the demos, the precondition of democracy, and also because it defended the demos from the radical ideologists such as the Nazis. This idea had been consistent in Voegelin. He also argued after World War II that it would be better to govern the people authoritatively who are not prepared to function in democracy⁴⁸. But it is obvious that the aim of Dollfuss's policy was not to rehabilitate the parliamentary democracy in the Austrian First Republic, but to establish a completely new regime, the corporative state⁴⁹.

The next problem is the relationship between the Dollfuss regime and domestic and foreign fascist powers. Dollfuss came to depend on fascist powers in order to maintain the weak regime which was established with the exclusion of the half of the parliament. Domestically Dollfuss cooperated with the “Heimwehr” (Home Guard) which was paramilitary group and insisted on the abolishment of parliamentary democracy, and internationally he entered into an alliance with Mussolini's fascist Italy which was in opposition to Hitler in those days. Voegelin also defended these policies. He held the Heimwehr in high esteem as “the beginning of an Austrian national consciousness”, associating it with the establishment of the Austrian demos⁵⁰. He also justified the alliance with Mussolini on the ground that it was a countermeasure against “the worse evil of Hitler”⁵¹.

The last problem is the contents of the principle of Austrian demos, “the Austrian mission” that Voegelin supported. As I noted above, Voegelin and Coudenhove-Kalergi insisted that Austrian demos or Austrian nation with Austrian mission was first established by Dollfuss. Austrian mission meant to defend the Christian-western civilization including the Austrian tradition and true German culture against the Nazis. However, as we have seen, even if Dollfuss defended the independence of Austria or the Christian-western civilization, he did not defend liberal democracy.

Dollfuss's idea of the Austrian mission was aristocratic and conservative, so it contained a “scant regard for political freedom and democracy”⁵². We should emphasize this aspect critically, even if the Austrian mission could be the principle of resistance against the

Nazis. As a matter of fact, resistance against the Nazis is not equal to a defense of liberal democracy. It was unimaginable to restart parliamentary democracy in Austria under the leadership of Dollfuss, because the authoritarian regime that was not based on parliamentary democracy was firmly established. Although Voegelin was aware of these problems, he nevertheless defended the Dollfuss=Schuschnigg regime as the defender of democracy. Therefore we can say his theory of democracy has inherent problems. I will discuss these in the section III-2.

2. The Inherent Problems in Voegelin's Theory of Democracy

As we discussed in section II, Voegelin's Austrian political theory has two main characteristics. Both of them contain problems that are immanent in Voegelin's theory on democracy.

Firstly, let us consider his stress on "demos" as the precondition of democracy. To repeat, Voegelin believed that the fundamental problem of Austrian politics was the nonexistence of a demos. In this assertion, we can detect the influence of the German public law scholar Carl Schmitt on Voegelin⁵³. Voegelin was familiar with Schmitt's political theory, as he wrote a book review of Schmitt's "*Verfassungslehre*" (The Theory of Constitution) in the "*Zeitschrift für öffentliches Recht*" (The Journal of Public Law)⁵⁴. It is indeed in this work Schmitt defines demos ("Nation" in Schmitt's word) in the way Voegelin models this idea.

According to Schmitt, "the word 'nation' indicates the people who have developed a political consciousness and are capable of action", and such people can "constitute themselves" in order to "decide their particular art and form of existence"⁵⁵. Elsewhere in this work, Schmitt also defines nation as "the people who are capable of political action with the consciousness of their political distinctiveness and with the will to political existence"⁵⁶.

We can also see similarities between Voegelin and Schmitt in their criticism of party politics and proportional representation. In the Weimar Republic as well as in the Austrian First Republic, the system of proportional representation was adopted for general elections. Voegelin insisted that the proportional representation system is incompatible with democracy, because this system presupposes a party system, and not a "demos"⁵⁷. Though representation should be the representation of the people as a whole, according to Voegelin, the representative elected through proportional representation system is only a representation of a party. For Voegelin, the parliament of Austria had never been the representation of the whole people⁵⁸. Likewise Schmitt developed a similar argument and asserted that "this system (i.e. proportional representation) is danger for homogeneity" because it divides the will of people according to the interest of party⁵⁹. Thus both Voegelin and Schmitt criticized proportional representation for dividing the will of the people.

This idea conflicts with Kelsen's argument: "Democracy is necessarily and inevitably the party-state"⁶⁰. Kelsen defended the proportional representation system, because it enables various values to appear in parliament as much as possible⁶¹. He thought that a unified will of people can be made only as a "resultant" through the discussion about various interests among each party in parliament. He criticized those who talk about preexisting higher

values distinguished from private interests blaming such ideas as “metaphysic or better meta-political illusion”⁶².

The problems of Voegelin's theory of democracy influenced by Schmitt become clear through the comparison with Kelsen's theory of democracy. If it is possible to presuppose the existence of a demos or nation with a unified will as in Voegelin and Schmitt, party, polls or parliament becomes unnecessary. Voegelin could call the Dollfuss=Schuschnigg regime as the defender of democracy, because in his theory, democracy is not necessarily associated with parliamentary democracy.

Concerning Voegelin's view of Austrian politics, there is a contradiction in the way he defended the “Austrian mission” by using Schmitt's theory. As we have seen, for Voegelin, the Austrian demos means the people who are awakened to the “Austrian mission” and have courage to defend the independence of Austria. The Austrian mission is to protect the “Catholic ideas of personality, society, and humanity” or “the Austrian tradition of peaceful and tolerant administration” against Nazi-Germany. It can be said that this idea derives from the tradition of the Habsburg Empire: multi-nationalism, multi-culturalism and Catholicism. However, it is incompatible with Schmitt's argument which requires the intensity of political unity. For the Austrian idea, as Voegelin wrote, derives from the tradition of pluralistic Reich which is to be distinguished from a unitary modern nation-state. Nationalism, which tried to dissolve the pluralistic Reich into unitary nation-states, ultimately destroyed the Habsburg Empire. Therefore it is a contradictory attempt to use the heritage of the Habsburg Empire, which lacked political unity, in order to increase the intensity of political unity.

Though Voegelin supported the Dollfuss=Schuschnigg regime to defend the Austrian idea from the unitary rule of the Nazis, the Austrian demos, which was created under this regime excluding many people like the Social Democrats, was distant from “the Austrian tradition of peaceful and tolerant administration”. Voegelin criticized the unitary worldview of the radical ideologists; however, ironically, the authoritarian state which he defended was nothing short of a unitary worldview. The authoritarian state had come out of the Austrian mission or the Austrian idea by opposing the unitary worldview of the Nazis with their own unitary worldview⁶³.

We come to the second characteristics of Voegelin's political theory: the limits to democracy. In Voegelin's argument, a democratic decision to choose a barbaric regime like the Nazis should not be regarded as a “democratic” decision and should be contained by force. There is a preexisting limit between what is permissible and what is not in his theory of democracy. This idea is different from Kelsen's theory of democracy which is simply defined as “government by the people” and Schmitt's theory of democracy which assumes the “constituent power” that can decide its own form of existence of a political unity without a norm. In Schmitt's theory, the decision takes the precedence and so logically it can legitimate even the rule of the Nazis. Therefore there is a limit to criticizing the Nazis resorting to Schmitt's theory.

We can find out characteristics of the Voegelin's theory of democracy in his presupposition of order before the decision of people. In his essay "Extended Strategy", Voegelin wrote that "the essential problem of a working democracy is not the vote of the people but the type of the governing elite and its relation to the mass of the people"⁶⁴. He thought that the existence of elites who shape the issues and voters who judge them rationally is important for democracy. The central theme of his theory of democracy was always to seek the condition of functioning democracy, therefore he argued for the existence of the demos which is the "precondition" of democracy and the exclusion of radical ideologists which is the "limits" to democracy.

However, Voegelin's theory of democracy which does not stress "government *by* the people" necessarily contains the possibility to be replaced by "government *for* the people" without the decision of the people, because it presupposes the elites whose decision is superior to that of the people⁶⁵. We can read such characteristics in the fact that Voegelin expected the "authoritarian state" to prepare the condition for democracy and he talked about democracy emphasizing the importance of shaping issues by the elite. Setting the limits to democracy does not come from democracy itself. For Voegelin, democracy is not the "government by the people" at least in Kelsen's sense. This can explain why he could support the Dollfuss=Schuschnigg regime which minimized the aspect of "government by the people" in democracy as the defender of democracy.

IV. Conclusion

As we have seen, the characteristic of Voegelin's arguments of Austrian politics was that he estimated the process of creating the Austrian demos under the Dollfuss=Schuschnigg regime and he supported this regime as the defender of democracy against Nazism and (Austro-) Marxism. This argument was based on his theory of democracy: emphasizing the existence of demos as the precondition of democracy and setting the limits to democracy. In his theory which regards the "precondition" and the "limit" or the "beginning" and the "end" as the most important, the argument about the institution or procedure between them is not central. Therefore in this paper I have pointed out the lack of party politics, parliamentarianism or the aspect of "government by the people" in his theory of democracy and pointed out an affinity between his theory and the authoritarian state. We cannot call him an advocate of *liberal* democracy, even if he resisted radical ideologists like the Nazis in terms of defending democracy.

Also it can be said that the characteristics and constructive problems of the Austrian state become clear from discussing about Voegelin's theory of Austrian politics. It is obvious that the Habsburg Empire had dissolved into several nation-states and the Republic annexed into the Nazi-Germany because both could not create a demos which was an active supporter for the state's will. Voegelin described clearly the inherent problems of Austrian politics. However, the "Austrian mission" could not be purified to the principle of political

unit. The Austrian mission that is based on the tradition of the Habsburg Empire like multi-nationalism, multi-culturalism or Catholicism is heterogeneous to the principle of the nation-state that emphasizes the difference between “we” and “they”.

Notes

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¹ Eric Voegelin, *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Volume 1-34, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989- (Hereafter abbreviated as *CW*).

² Erich Voegelin, *Der autoritäre Staat. Ein Versuch über das österreichische Staatsproblem*, Wien: Springer, 1936=1997 (*CW*, vol. 4, translated by Ruth Hein).

³ “As the secretary of the Austrian Committee for International Studies, Voegelin had represented the governmental position of Austrian nationhood and independence; he had also done so as a scholar, journalist, and public lecturer”. Jürgen Gebhardt, “Eric Voegelin, The Early Years”, in: *CW*, vol. 29, p. 37.

⁴ About Voegelin's early years and “*Der autoritäre Staat*”, see Erika Weinzierl, “Historical Commentary on the Period”, translated by Fred Lawrence, in: *CW*, vol. 4, pp. 10-38; Gebhardt, “Eric Voegelin, The Early Years”, in: *CW*, vol. 29, pp. 1-64; Jürgen Gebhardt, “On the Critical Understanding of Politics: Voegelin on Austria, Hitler and the Germans”, in: *The Review of Politics*, vol. 65, issues 2, 2003, pp. 263-277; Karl-Peter Schwarz, “‘Das Wissen vom Menschen ist aus den Fugen geraten’, Eric Voegelins Wiener Jahre: Die Ätiologie des gesellschaftlichen Verfalls”, in: Ulrich E. Zellenberg (Hg.), *Konservative Profile*, Graz: Leopold Stocker, 2003, pp. 321-339; Michael Ley und Gilbert Weiss, *Voegelin in Wien. Frühe Schriften 1920-1938*, Wien: Passagen, 2007.

In Japanese, HOSOI Tamotsu, *Osutoria seijikiki no kozo* (The Structure of Political Crisis in Austria), Tokyo: Hosei University Press, 2001, pp. 243-249. In Japan, there are few studies about Voegelin's early years and “*Der autoritäre Staat*”. About Japanese studies of Voegelin, see TERAJIMA Toshio, “Die Voegelin-Forschung in Japan”, in: *Kansai University Review of Law and Politics*, no. 29, March 2008, pp. 29-39.

⁵ “Insofar as the scientific community takes notice of Eric Voegelin, he is reputed a philosopher, if not a theologian, aloof from the harsh world of politics”. Gebhardt, “On the Critical Understanding of Politics”, p. 263.

⁶ Eric Voegelin, *Autobiographical Reflections* (1989), in: *CW*, vol. 34, p. 69.

⁷ Voegelin wrote like following. “Our investigation seeks to present the overall complex of the problems of the Austrian state”, in: *Der autoritäre Staat*, p. 6 (*CW*, vol. 4, p. 52).

⁸ Voegelin, *Der autoritäre Staat*, p. 177 (*CW*, vol. 4, p. 243).

⁹ Eric Voegelin, "Changes in the Ideas of Government and Constitution in Austria since 1918" (1937), in: *CW*, vol. 9, p. 100.

¹⁰ Eric Voegelin, "Extended Strategy: A New Technique of Dynamic Relations" (1940), in: *CW*, vol. 10, p. 22.

¹¹ Voegelin, *Der autoritäre Staat*, p. 93 (*CW*, vol. 4, p. 151).

¹² In "*Der autoritäre Staat*", he repeatedly pointed out the nonexistence of demos in Austria. Voegelin, *Der autoritäre Staat*, pp. 89, 93, 98, 177 (*CW*, vol. 4, pp. 147, 151, 157, 243).

¹³ Voegelin, *Der autoritäre Staat*, p. 92 (*CW*, vol. 4, p. 150); Voegelin, "Changes in the Ideas of Government and Constitution in Austria since 1918", in: *CW*, vol. 9, p. 99.

¹⁴ Erich Voegelin, "Die österreichische Verfassungsreform von 1929", in: *Zeitschrift für Politik*, Bd. XIX, Heft 9, 1930, p. 585 (*CW*, vol. 8, translated by M. J. Hanak and Jodi Cockerill, p. 148).

¹⁵ About the political history of the Austrian First Republic, see Hellmut Andics, *Der Staat, den keiner wollte: Österreich von der Gründung der Republik bis zur Moskauer Deklaration*, Wien: Wilhelm Goldmann, 1968=1980; Alfred Diamant, *Austrian Catholics and the First Republic: Democracy, Capitalism, and the Social Order, 1918-1934*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960.

¹⁶ Voegelin, "Changes in the Ideas of Government and Constitution in Austria since 1918", in: *CW*, vol. 9, p. 101.

¹⁷ Voegelin, *Der autoritäre Staat*, pp. 92-93 (*CW*, vol. 4, pp. 150-151).

¹⁸ The article VI-4 of Linz Program declared that "Die Sozialdemokratie betrachtet den Anschluß Deutschösterreichs an das Deutsche Reich als notwendigen Abschluß der nationalen Revolutionen von 1918. Sie erstrebt mit friedlichen Mitteln den Anschluß an die Deutsche Republik (The Social Democratic Party regards the annexation of German-Austria into Germany as a necessary consequence of the national revolution in 1918. The party strives for annexation into Germany in a peaceful way)" (My translation). For the full text of this program, see <http://www.marxists.org/deutsch/geschichte/oesterreich/spoe/1926/linzerprog.htm>

¹⁹ For example, the article III-2 of this program declared that "Wenn es aber trotz allen diesen Anstrengungen der sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterpartei einer Gegenrevolution der Bourgeoisie gelänge, die Demokratie zu sprengen, dann könnte die Arbeiterklasse die Staatsmacht nur noch im Bürgerkrieg erobern (When the counter-revolution of the bourgeoisie succeeds in destroying democracy in spite of the effort of the Social Democratic Party, the working class will be able to seize state power only through civil war)". Also the article III-3 declared that "Wenn sich aber die Bourgeoisie gegen die gesellschaftliche Umwälzung, die die Aufgabe der Staatsmacht der Arbeiterklasse sein wird, durch planmäßige Unterbindung des Wirtschaftslebens, durch gewaltsame Auflehnung, durch Verschwörung mit ausländischen gegenrevolutionären Mächten widersetzen sollte, dann wäre die Arbeiterklasse gezwungen, den Widerstand der Bourgeoisie mit den Mitteln der Diktatur zu brechen (When the bourgeoisie oppose the social revolution which is the task of the state power of working class through intentional obstruction of the economy, through violent revolt or through conspiracy with foreign power of counter revolution, the working class will overcome the opposition of bourgeoisie through dictatorial means)". (My translation).

²⁰ Voegelin, "Changes in the Ideas of Government and Constitution in Austria since 1918", in:

CW, vol. 9, p. 106.

²¹ *Ibid.*, in: *CW*, vol. 9, p. 107.

²² *Ibid.*, in: *CW*, vol. 9, p. 107.

²³ Voegelin, *Autobiographical Reflections*, in: *CW*, vol. 34, p. 68.

²⁴ Voegelin, "Changes in the Ideas of Government and Constitution in Austria since 1918", in: *CW*, vol. 9, p. 110.

²⁵ In addition to Coudenhove-Kalergi, for example, Karl Kraus (1874-1936), who was the publisher of the journal "*Die Fackel*" (The Torch) and known as the author of "*Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*" (The Last Days of Mankind), criticized harshly Hitler and Nazism and, at the same time, supported Dollfuss regime. Voegelin was a reader of Kraus's writing and reflected that his political attitude in the 1930s was "identified with the position taken by Karl Kraus", in: *Autobiographical Reflections*, p. 69. About Karl Kraus and Austrian politics during the 1930s, see Alfred Pfabigan, *Karl Kraus und der Sozialismus*, Wien: Europa, 1976, pp. 337-359.

²⁶ Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Europa ohne Elend*, Paris & Wien: Paneuropa, 1936, pp. 69-73.

²⁷ "Sein Patriotismus hat eine neue Generation von Österreichern geschaffen, die sich nicht mehr als abgetrenntes Glied des Deutschen Reiches fühlen, sondern als Träger einer eigenen, einer österreichischen Sendung, als Vorkämpfer wahrer deutscher Kultur in Europa, als Arche Noah deutscher Gesittung in der tragischen Sintflut, die sie umbrandet", in: *Ibid.*, p. 71 (My translation).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

²⁹ Voegelin, *Autobiographical Reflections*, in: *CW*, vol. 34, p. 69.

³⁰ Hitler and the Nazis could not get the absolute majority in the general election but Hitler became the prime minister through the nomination by the president Hindenburg in 30 January 1933. Although Hitler's administration was able to secure the majority in the parliament after the election in March 1933 in which Hitler oppressed the opposition parties, even then, the Nazis could not get the absolute majority singly (only 43% of the seats). In order to get absolute majority, Hitler formed a coalition with the German National People's Party and passed the Enabling Act with the support of the Centre Party in 24 March 1933.

³¹ Voegelin, "Extended Strategy", in: *CW*, vol. 10, p. 19.

³² *Ibid.*, in: *CW*, vol. 10, p. 21.

³³ In his book "*The New Science of Politics*" published in 1952, Voegelin defined "radical ideologists" such as the Nazis in the concept of "Gnosticism". He insisted that when the Gnostic movement "has grown to the danger point of capturing existential representation by the famous 'legality' of popular elections, a democratic government is not supposed to bow to the 'will of people' but to put down the danger by force and, if necessary, to break the letter of the constitution in order to save its spirit". Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics* (1952), in: *CW*, vol. 5, p. 205.

³⁴ Voegelin, *Autobiographical Reflections*, in: *CW*, vol. 34, p. 70.

³⁵ Voegelin also defined democracy in the same way, when he gave a series of lectures at the University of München titled "Hitler und die Deutschen" (Hitler and the Germans) in 1964. In one of these lectures, he criticized a "textbook definition of democracy" and insisted that we

needed definitions of democracy as “empirical observations of intelligent human beings” quoting the arguments of George Santayana, Winston Churchill and Mark Twain as follows.

Santayana: “Democracy is the unrealizable dream of society of patrician plebeians. If men were all patricians, which however they are not, then a democracy could work. But since the majority is made up of plebeians, the greatest objections can be raised against the practicability of a democracy”.

Churchill: “democracy as the worst form of government with the exception of all the others”.

Twain: “democracy rests on three factors: ‘freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, and the prudence never to practice either of them’”.

After these quotes, he said that “Every society that works, a society of patricians, is based on courtesy, on compromises, on concession to the other people. Whoever has a fixed idea and wants this to be carried into effect, that is to say, whoever interprets freedom of speech and freedom of conscience to the effect that the society should behave in the way that he considers right, is not qualified to be citizen of a democracy”, in: Eric Voegelin, *Hitler und die Deutschen*, München: Wilhelm Fink, 2006, pp. 82-84 (*CW*, vol. 31, translated by Detlev Clemens and Brendan Purcell, pp. 83-85).

³⁶ Voegelin, “Extended Strategy”, in: *CW*, vol. 10, pp. 20-21.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, in: *CW*, vol. 10, p. 20.

³⁸ “Eine Demokratie, die sich gegen den Willen der Mehrheit zu behaupten, gar mit Gewalt sich zu behaupten versucht, hat aufgehört, Demokratie zu sein. Eine Volksherrschaft kann nicht gegen das Volk bestehen bleiben. Und soll es auch gar nicht versuchen, das heisst, wer für die Demokratie ist, darf sich nicht in den verhängnisvollen Widerspruch verstricken lassen und zur Diktatur greifen, um die Demokratie zu retten. Man muss seiner Fahne treu bleiben, auch wenn das Schiff sinkt; und kann in die Tiefe nur die Hoffnung mitnehmen, dass das Ideal der Freiheit unzerstörbar ist und dass es, je tiefer es gesunken, um so leidenschaftlicher wieder aufleben wird”. Hans Kelsen, “Verteidigung der Demokratie”, in: Norbert Leser (Hg.), *Demokratie und Sozialismus. Ausgewählte Aufsätze*, Wien: Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1932=1967, p. 68 (My translation).

³⁹ For example, Hans Kelsen, *Vom Wesen und Wert der Demokratie*, 2. Neudruck der 2. Auflage, Aalen: Scientia, 1929=1981, pp. 103-104; Hans Kelsen, “Foundations of Democracy”, in: *Ethics*, vol. 66, No. 1, Part 2, Oct., 1955, p. 39.

⁴⁰ In this paper, I do not strictly distinguish “fascism” from “authoritarianism”. Whether the Dollfuss=Schuschnigg regime was fascist or not, or what the difference between fascism and authoritarianism is, are questions that are too broad to answer in this paper. When I criticize the Dollfuss=Schuschnigg regime or Voegelin’s support for it, I usually use the term “fascism”. This is because Voegelin uses the term “authoritarian” not negatively but positively.

⁴¹ Voegelin, “Changes in the Ideas of Government and Constitution in Austria since 1918”, in: *CW*, vol. 9, p. 102.

⁴² For example, Pfabigan, *Karl Kraus und der Sozialismus*, p. 345.

⁴³ Voegelin, *Der autoritäre Staat*, p. 179 (*CW*, vol. 4, p. 246).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 170, 177 (*CW*, vol. 4, pp. 235, 243).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 179 (*CW*, vol. 4, p. 245).

⁴⁶ Hosoi, *Osutoria seijikiki no kozo*, p. 243. With the term “decisionism”, Hosoi implied theoretical relationship between Carl Schmitt and Eric Voegelin.

⁴⁷ Voegelin, *Der autoritäre Staat*, pp. 86-87 (*CW*, vol. 4, p. 143).

⁴⁸ Voegelin, *Hitler und die Deutschen*, p. 230 (*CW*, vol. 31, pp. 221-222). In this page, he said that “the authoritarian leading authority” consists of the “persons who live in a classic-Christian idea of what justice is”. About the consistency of Voegelin’s argument between “*Der autoritäre Staat*” and “*Hitler und die Deutschen*” see, Gebhardt, *On the Critical Understanding of Politics*, p. 265.

⁴⁹ Ley und Weiss, *Voegelin in Wien*, p. 110.

⁵⁰ Voegelin, *Der autoritäre Staat*, p. 101 (*CW*, vol. 4, 159); Voegelin, “Die österreichische Verfassungsreform von 1929”, pp. 604, 615 (*CW*, vol. 8, pp. 167, 178).

⁵¹ Voegelin, *Autobiographical Reflections*, in: *CW*, vol. 34, p. 68. Karl-Peter Schwarz pointed out that such defense of fascist groups hindered Voegelin’s reception after World War II, see Schwarz, “Eric Voegelins Wiener Jahre”, p. 333.

⁵² George Clare, *Last Waltz in Vienna, 1981=2007*, London: Pan Books, p. 148. In this page, Clare also wrote as follows. “The new chancellor, a tiny man of five foot nothing promptly nicknamed ‘Millimetternich’ after Austria’s most famous statesman, strongly believed in his small country’s special mission in history, one it could only perform if it remained independent: defending the values of Western Christian civilization. Dollfuss certainly did not mean Western liberalism by this”.

⁵³ Voegelin, *Der autoritäre Staat*, p. 7 (*CW*, vol. 4, p. 53). About Schmitt’s influence on Voegelin’s political theory, see Weinzierl, “Historical Commentary on the Period”, pp. 29-30; Gebhardt, “On the Critical Understanding of Politics”, p. 266; Schwarz, “Eric Voegelins Wiener Jahre”, p. 330; Ley und Weiss, *Voegelin in Wien*, p. 116.

⁵⁴ Erich Voegelin, “Die Verfassungslehre von Carl Schmitt. Versuch einer konstruktiven Analyse ihrer staatstheoretischen Prinzipien”, in: *Zeitschrift für öffentliches Recht*. Band XI, Heft 1, 1931, pp. 89-109 (in: *CW*, vol. 13, translated by Jodi Cockerill and Barry Cooper, pp. 42-66).

⁵⁵ Carl Schmitt, *Verfassungslehre*. Sechste, unveränderte Auflage, Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1983, p. 50 (My translation).

⁵⁶ “das Volk als politisch-aktionsfähige Einheit mit dem Bewusstsein seiner politischen Besonderheit und dem Willen zur politischen Existenz”, in: *Ibid.*, p. 79 (My translation). Not only in “*Verfassungslehre*”, had Schmitt repeatedly emphasized the importance of intensity of homogeneity in a political unity, for example in “*Der Begriff des Politischen*” (The Concept of Political).

⁵⁷ Voegelin, *Der autoritäre Staat*, pp. 175-176 (*CW*, vol. 4, pp. 241-242).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 177 (*CW*, vol. 4, p. 243).

⁵⁹ Schmitt, *Verfassungslehre*, p. 240.

⁶⁰ Kelsen, *Vom Wesen und Wert der Demokratie*, p. 20.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 58-63.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁶³ Though, as an ideology, the authoritarian regime adopted pluralistic ideas like the corporative

state or federalism, in fact the policies of this regime was too centralistic. See Diamant, *Austrian Catholics and the First Republic*, p. 275.

⁶⁴ Voegelin, "Extended Strategy", in: *CW*, vol. 10, p. 20. For Voegelin, elites who integrate mass into the nation are important for democracy and the problem of Austrian politics from the Habsburg Empire to the First Republic is the nonexistence of such elites. About this points, see Erich Voegelin, "Verfassungsgebung für Österreich", in: *Wiener Zeitung*, 27. April 1934. pp. 1-2 (*CW*, vol. 9, translated by M. J. Hanak, pp. 23-27).

⁶⁵ For example, Kelsen criticized the definition of democracy as "government *for* the people", because "it substitutes as the criterion of the form of government defined as democracy a highly subjective value judgment—the interest of the people—for the objectively ascertainable fact of representation by elected organs" (Kelsen, "Foundations of Democracy", p. 6). In this article, Kelsen also criticized Voegelin's definition of democracy in "*New Science of Politics*" that Voegelin confused two different questions: what is democratic representation and whether democratic representation assures the existence, or satisfactory existence of the state (About Voegelin, see pp. 6-14).