

Eric Voegelin and Voegelin Scholarship

Editor's Note

The following special section on Eric Voegelin and Voegelin scholarship will appear on the eve of the 100th anniversary of his birth. Its appearance is, however, timely and appropriate for more substantial reasons than simply our collective recall of Voegelin's birth in 1901. Those who know the history of this journal can tell of Voegelin's close and mutually supportive, if not perfectly harmonious, relationship with the founding editor Waldemar Gurian. All subsequent editors of *The Review of Politics* knew Voegelin in person, and in varying degrees they were intellectually engaged by, at the least, one or another of the aspects of his unfolding project. Under the sponsorship of the late Gerhart Niemeyer, Voegelin came as a regular visitor to teach at the University of Notre Dame which shelters this journal and which came to grant Voegelin its honorary doctorate.

The personal contacts were but the surface and effect of the fact that Voegelin's interests and project markedly accorded with Gurian's initial and *The Review's* continuing commitment to a political science that is philosophical, historically informed and empirical in the richest classical sense of that term. It is not surprising then that Voegelin published important work here and engaged powerful minds of his contemporaries like Strauss and Arendt in the pages of this journal. In more recent years *The Review* has welcomed, into its competitive processes, submissions on Voegelin's work and published a fair number; it has sought to follow in book reviews and special essays other scholarship on Voegelin including the impressive and significant volumes appearing in *The Collected Works* project (University of Missouri Press) through the leadership and support of the Eric Voegelin Institute and Ellis Sandoz of Louisiana State University.

The special section that follows has a European focus, and it hopefully will provide a service to the English-speaking readers of this journal by directing attention to the very vital European scholarship on Voegelin. The section begins with Hans Maier's recounting of Voegelin's return to Germany and his "Munich

years," a time in which the seeds were set down for much of the current European scholarship about Voegelin and in the Voegelinian tradition. Very special thanks are due to Barry Cooper and Gilbert Weiss for the review essays of European scholarship, essays that represent a singular service. From the *Collected Works* project we have chosen here to highlight in three review essays the initial publication of Voegelin's *History of Political Ideas*, a work already long-discussed in the scholarly literature while only available in archival form. Finally I wish to thank Jodi Cockerill not only for her contributions to the special section but especially for her counsel, as an intern at *The Review*, in the formative discussions regarding the section.

There is more than one reference in what follows to Voegelin's own form of postmodernism. Beyond his critique of positivism and his attention to historicity, it seems to encompass such features of his thought as a reluctance to let philosophy be identified with epistemology, a philosophical openness to the transcendent and the theological, a focus on consciousness and a concerned respect for the unconscious. Those features make clear why the significance of Voegelin and of the thought and inquiries his work spurs could never be measured simply by elevated stature in the single discipline of conventional American political science. They also make clear why *The Review of Politics* will likely be following this developing story for some time to come.

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