

# Autobiographical Reflections

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ERIC VOEGELIN

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EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY  
ELLIS SANDOZ

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**AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL REFLECTIONS**  
**REVISED EDITION WITH GLOSSARY**

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**ERIC VOEGELIN**

**EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY**  
**ELLIS SANDOZ**

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# Introduction to the Revised Edition

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This revised edition of Eric Voegelin's *Autobiographical Reflections* consists of the original text slightly revised and expanded, together with the introduction from the 1989 edition and some additional annotation, a glossary of terms used in Voegelin's writings that lists, defines, and illustrates from the author's writings many of the key terms employed, and an expanded index of the volume that includes names, subjects, ideas, and writings. Together, they make the volume an indispensable help for any serious study of Eric Voegelin's oeuvre. A history of the publication of *Autobiographical Reflections* appears in the introduction from the 1989 edition, and with each appearance, there have been appropriate updates to information included.

Without attempting comprehensive annotation, I have sought to give useful pointers in this volume to some of the places in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin* where matters discussed conversationally here are given more technical and fuller attention by Voegelin. While the *Autobiographical Reflections* is a compelling account in its own right, the pointers help fill in detail—especially in publications completed after this text, which dates from 1973. A similar approach was taken in the final preparation of the glossary, compiled by Eugene Webb from several sources and supplemented by the editor. While making no pretense of being a complete vocabulary of Voegelin's technical terminology—himself an accomplished polyglot operating in more than a dozen languages—Voegelin's vocabulary is sometimes regarded as a stumbling block to comprehension. It is hoped that new readers especially will find that both of these documents improve intelligibility as they read this important work, a valuable introduction to Voegelin's thought, and move on to other writings contained in Voegelin's *Collected Works*, and that scholars already familiar with Voegelin's work will find new sources of insight into the bases of his views.

Readers who turn to the *Collected Works* will find within every volume a scholarly introduction by its editor or editors, providing insights into the materials brought to publication in it and commentaries on them.<sup>1</sup> Additionally there is a general introduction to the eight volumes comprising *History of Political Ideas* (CW, vols. 19–26), contained in its first volume. Taken together these various introductions might themselves constitute, if gathered, a substantial volume of technical analysis and commentary on the work of Eric Voegelin from the first of his publications in 1921 until the posthumous *In Search of Order*.<sup>2</sup>

Immediately evident in those publications is the magnificent scope and depth of the work of Voegelin as a great scholar. What seldom appears in all this, however, is much evidence of Voegelin as teacher—and he was a superb teacher—the principal exception being the few pages found herein in [chapter 21](#). We attempted to fill the hiatus a bit at the twentieth-anniversary international meeting of the Eric Voegelin Society in Chicago, devoting to the subject a well-received roundtable on the program of the 2004 American Political Science Association.<sup>3</sup> But since Voegelin earned his living as a teacher during a long career, and in all of his work quite intentionally sought to teach and persuade as well as to discover and inform, perhaps a few comments in this place on his pedagogy and personality as a teacher will be of interest.

To speak autobiographically, I first encountered Voegelin as an unsuspecting undergraduate at Louisiana State University when I enrolled in his principal course, the survey in political theory for juniors and seniors, and then stayed on to write a master's thesis under his direction. Fifteen years after that first class (and after nearly three years in the U.S. Marine Corps, plus two years studying



Heidelberg), I went on to complete the *Dr. oec. publ.* with him at Munich. I can say from the experience that both in Louisiana and in Germany, Dr. Voegelin was a formidable and compelling figure in the classroom, whether lecturing or in seminars. The lectures were arresting because of the force and clarity with which complex material was communicated extemporaneously from brief notes and outlines, never read. Every class meeting seemed to have its own special moments, and often there was a sense of adventure attendant upon an intellectual voyage into uncharted waters. There was nothing ordinary about Voegelin's classes, and because of this he attracted students and auditors from across campus and from the general public as well. The seminars for his M.A. students (there was no doctoral program then) were held in his home in the evening in Baton Rouge, amid clouds of cigar smoke, with the lady of the house (Lissy Voegelin) listening from the wings and elegantly serving tea and cakes when the breaks came. I remember one of these that was devoted to Book Lambda of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, which for a semester we worked through sentence by sentence during the first half of each meeting, Voegelin checking the translation against the Greek original to correct, refine, and elucidate the text. Student papers then were presented on a variety of other assigned subjects and discussed during the second half of each weekly session. A similar procedure was followed in Munich in the first seminar I took there, in closely reading Plato's *Protagoras* and discussing it line by line. In the process he discovered he had erred on an interpretive point in his own analysis as given in *The World of the Polis* and said he would have to revise it for the next reprinting of the book.<sup>4</sup> At the Ludwig-Maximilian-Universität in Munich the seminars were larger and more formal, and they typically were held in the Institute for Political Science that Voegelin came there to establish when he took up a professorship in 1958.

To summarize: Voegelin commanded the attention and respect of students, and he presented himself as someone who knew his business. He based on a solid conviction that classical Greek philosophy is the foundation of political science: The lecture materials were presented from the coherent starting point. Devotion to truth and a desire to communicate it to students illumined every lecture and discussion, with the exploration of questions constantly reflecting the tension toward the divine ground of reality as the decisive context for exploring the human condition and political issues. A sense of openness to the horizon of reality, and refusal to truncate reality or go along with reductionist constructs of any kind whatever, encouraged students to engage resourcefully in the examination of complicated materials as partners in the discussion—rather than as mere spectators absorbing indifferent information. This, in turn, encouraged students sympathetically to involve their own common sense, intellectual, and faith experiences in understanding demanding material. Personal reflective consciousness, implicitly somewhat on the pattern of the Socratic “Look and see if this is not the case”—i.e., by validating the analytical discourse through personal understanding and questioning.

To some degree, therefore, Voegelin and his classes were in effect doing *science* as he taught, whether in lecture or in seminar—and everybody knew this was what we were doing: The students and the class were participants in a persuasive inquiry, in something appreciated as a search for truth, and for truth that mattered. I think this palpable sense of participation in the worthy activity of inquiry was perhaps the chief source, along with his lively sense of humor, of Voegelin's popularity and attraction as a teacher and lecturer wherever he went.

Understood in this way, and as suggested earlier, it becomes clear that *teaching* lies quite close to the center of much of Voegelin's work, whether published or communicated in lectures far and wide. As he remarked in a talk to the Fletcher School at Tufts University in 1972: “The foundation of [the Political Science Institute in Munich] offered [me] the opportunity to establish political science, from

the outset, on the level of contemporary science. One could avoid the conventional ballast of descriptive institutionalism, historical positivism, as well as of the various leftist and rightist ideological opinions . . . [I]t was possible to build a curriculum that had at its center the courses and seminars in classical politics and Anglo-American politics with the stresses on Locke and the *Federalist Papers*.”<sup>5</sup>

Voegelin’s teaching method plainly communicated the meditative grounding of his thought. *God* was not a dirty word, and he often stressed to his secular-minded audiences (especially to the more ideological Munich students) that *science* is controlled by *experience and reason*—and you can’t go “back of revelation” and pretend it (i.e., apperceptive pneumatic experience) never happened. The experiential grounding of *faith* was more readily in place in America, especially in Louisiana, where he taught for sixteen years.<sup>6</sup> In effect, he was always telling the “saving tale of immortality” in a variety of ways—out of a conviction that the experience of transcendence is essential to man’s existence as human, as he repeatedly emphasizes in his published work. This was not argued “religiously” nor blandly assumed but buttressed scientifically on the basis of the critically ascertained facts of history as integral to the various subject matters under discussion. A professor is expected to profess something, and that something is dispassionately ascertained *truth*, as far as he knows it—Voegelin thought and from time to time said. This is the hallmark of “intellectual integrity” in Max Weber’s sense, the very core of scientific objectivity.

He effectively used chalkboard diagrams in lecture; and there was generally an engaging undertone of playful levity, which was Socratic in spirit: We are dealing with important matters, he would occasionally remark, but what we are doing with them here may not be very important. Yet his purposes obviously were serious within the limits of the occasions. Office hours were meticulously observed, but students were reluctant to stay longer than absolutely necessary to find out whatever they had come to ask about. There was a somewhat facetious sense that, in taking up this professor’s time with idle questions, they might be impeding the progress of civilization itself.

While gentle with undergraduates as a rule, and typically a fairly generous grader, Voegelin was a scourge to slothful ignoramuses wherever he encountered them. He commented: “I have always had to explain to the students at the beginning of my seminars all my life: There is no such thing as a right to be stupid; there is no such thing as a right to be illiterate; there is no such thing as a right to be incompetent.”<sup>7</sup> He was devastating in debate. And heaven help you in public discussions, if you were a faculty member and didn’t know what you were talking about.

The impression of Voegelin on a slightly earlier generation at LSU is given by William C. Havar, who attended his classes beginning as a sophomore and eventually became chairman of the Department of Government. He wrote:

As a teacher Voegelin never engages in pyrotechnics; his effect is based solely on the impressive breadth and depth of his learning and on the analytical powers of his mind. If one should stand just beyond the limits of the point at which his actual words could be understood, his lectures probably would sound monotonous because both the flow of the sentences and the lack of inflection make for an evenness that could be deadly in one whose ideas are less exciting than Voegelin’s. Having sat through his classes and seminars as an undergraduate, graduate student, and later as a junior colleague, I was always surprised when I heard colleagues in the profession speak disparagingly of his “arrogance” or his “rigidity.” I have always found him exceptionally considerate with students, patient with their problems of understanding, and in some ways a rather soft touch in the matter of grades. In supervising research he is an exacting critic, as one might expect; but he is also generous with both his time and his ideas. He has a pixyish sense of humor that comes through somewhat unexpectedly in the light of his German accent.<sup>8</sup>

For Voegelin’s teaching in Munich the chief document, happily, is his “introduction to political science” there published from the taped lectures as *Hitler and the Germans*.<sup>9</sup> Here is a verbatim

transcript of a series of lectures delivered by Voegelin in summer semester 1964, and it clearly is an introduction to political science like no other. It is not to my purposes here to venture either an analysis or a summary of these lectures, since the book is readily available to any interested reader. But one can concur with the editors' assertion that this was "without a doubt, the most spectacular course in the Arts Faculty of Munich University." The reason is easily ascertainable: "For most of his students, [it] became what one of them in retrospect described as 'the high point of their German education, for they had met no one else who had told them the truth more bluntly.'" <sup>10</sup> The chief reason for the effectiveness of these lectures is their meditative dimension, as the volume editors recount, and *meditative* in the specific sense of enacting a recollection (or *anamnesis*) of partly obliterated, partly rejected biographical and historical experiences that aimed at suppressing them.

The method of the lectures is anamnestic in the sense of overcoming an oblivion of "the origins, the beginnings, and the grounds of order in the present existence of man." In the lectures, that anamnestic effort takes various forms: the recall of philosophical or revelational insights, the confrontation of essential forgetfulness (witting or unwitting), and the lifting up of the mass of newly ascertained historical materials to theoretical relevance. And the very interaction between principles and the data of disorder also and correlatively deepens the anamnestic meditation itself. <sup>11</sup>

The editors rightly conclude that "Voegelin's status as a teacher of political philosophy may be seen as founded on his own life of bearing witness." <sup>12</sup>

ELLIS SANDOZ

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<sup>1</sup>. Hereinafter abbreviated as *CW*. Titles of all volumes of *CW* are given on the verso of the pretitle pages at the beginning of each volume of the edition, i.e., overleaf of the first printed page in each book, or sometimes on the second recto page.

<sup>2</sup>. Vol. 5 of *Order and History* (1987) and republished in *CW*, vol. 18 (2000).

<sup>3</sup>. "Eric Voegelin as Master Teacher," Eric Voegelin Society, Panel 5. Comments and papers are posted on the Web site of the Eric Voegelin Institute, <http://ericvoegelin.org>.

<sup>4</sup>. Vol. 2 of *Order and History* (1957), *CW*, vol. 15, chap. 2, §3.

<sup>5</sup>. William Petropulos and Gilbert Weiss, eds., *The Drama of Humanity and Other Miscellaneous Papers, 1939–1985* (2004), *CW*, vol. 33:348.

<sup>6</sup>. Cf. Barry Cooper, *Eric Voegelin and the Foundations of Modern Political Science* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), esp. chaps. 1 and 2; also Charles R. Embry, ed., *Robert B. Heilman and Eric Voegelin: A Friendship in Letters, 1944–1985* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), foreword by Champlin B. Heilman (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004).

<sup>7</sup>. *CW*, 33:419.

<sup>8</sup>. William C. Havard, "The Changing Pattern of Voegelin's Conceptions of History and Consciousness," *Southern Review* n.s. 6 (1971): 59; quoted from Ellis Sandoz, *The Voegelinian Revolution. A Biographical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Pubs., 2000), 75.

<sup>9</sup>. *CW*, vol. 31 (1999), trans. and ed. Detlev Clemens and Brendan Purcell; available in paperback.

<sup>10</sup>. *Ibid.*, 1–2, quoting Manfred Henningsen one of Voegelin's assistants at the time, subsequently a professor of political science at the University of Hawaii in Manoa.

<sup>11</sup>. *Ibid.*, 29, internal quotation from Voegelin, "Consciousness and Order," the foreword to *Anamnesis* (*CW*, vol. 6). Published and quoted from *Logos: Philosophical Issues in Christian Perspective* 4 (1983): 22.

<sup>12</sup>. *Ibid.*, 34; cf. Sandoz, *Voegelinian Revolution*, 47–70.

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# AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL REFLECTIONS

REVISED EDITION WITH GLOSSARY



ERIC VOEGELIN C. 1980

In consideratione creaturarum non est vana et peritura curiositas exercenda; sed gradus ad immortalitatem et semper manentia faciendus.

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In the study of creature one should not exercise a vain and perishing curiosity, but ascend toward what is immortal and everlasting.

SAINT AUGUSTINE, *De Vera Religione*

# Introduction

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Eric Voegelin's *Autobiographical Reflections* allows Voegelin himself to survey and interpret in brief compass the vast work of his lifetime down to 1973 when the *Reflections* were dictated and transcribed. They provide the best possible introduction to the person and thought of a man who was a remarkable scholar and arguably the greatest philosopher of our time. Here Voegelin explains Voegelin, in an autobiographical account calculated to elucidate his other writings and set them in the overall horizon of his thought. Authoritative, incisive, elegant, and profound as they are, the *Reflections* both disclose the motivations of Voegelin's remarkable scholarly work in various stages of development from the 1920s onward and reveal at least something of the affable, witty, courageous, tenacious, tough, deeply principled, and learned man behind the work familiar to those who knew him well. Publication of the *Autobiographical Reflections* of Eric Voegelin is a major intellectual event.

An elaborate introduction to a book this brief and accessible would be out of place. But a few words summarizing the facts of Voegelin's life and the origins of the *Reflections* as a document will perhaps be pertinent and helpful to the reader.

Erich Hermann Wilhelm Voegelin was born in Cologne, Germany, on January 3, 1901, and died in Stanford, California, on January 19, 1985. He was the son of Otto Stefan and Elisabeth Rueger Voegelin, and his father was a civil engineer. The Voegelins lived in Cologne and in Königswinter in the Rhineland until 1910, when they moved to Vienna. There Eric attended school and the University of Vienna, ultimately becoming an associate professor of political science in the Faculty of Law. He was promptly fired by the Nazis after the Anschluss in 1938 because of his opposition to Hitler (given expression especially in four books published between 1933 and 1938), and he narrowly escaped arrest by the Gestapo as he fled to Switzerland. Shortly thereafter, he emigrated with his wife (the former Luise Betty "Lissy" Onken [September 3, 1906–October 8, 1996], whom he married on July 30, 1933) to the United States. After a year tutoring in the government department at Harvard and commuting during the second semester to teach at Bennington College in Vermont, Voegelin taught summer school at Northwestern in Evanston, Illinois. The Voegelins then took a short vacation in Wisconsin before moving to the University of Alabama in the fall of 1939, where they remained for two and one-half years.

In January 1942, Voegelin joined the faculty of the Department of Government of Louisiana State University. He remained in Baton Rouge until January 1958 and was selected one of the first three Boyd Professors at LSU, writing and publishing during sixteen years in Louisiana the books in English that made his reputation: *The New Science of Politics* (1952), from the Walgreen Lectures of the previous year; and the first three volumes of *Order and History*: volume one, *Israel and Revelation*; volume two, *The World of the Polis*; and volume three, *Plato and Aristotle* (1956, 1957).<sup>1</sup> He and Lissy became American citizens in 1944 and retained their citizenship thereafter. Voegelin accepted an appointment in 1958, however, as professor of political science at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University in Munich, establishing the new Institute for Political Science there. During this period his principal publication was *Anamnesis* (1966),<sup>2</sup> which directly presented the philosophy and consciousness underlying the work in English. After a decade, the Voegelins returned permanently to the United States in 1969. For a five-year period ending in 1974, Voegelin held an appointment at Stanford University as Henry Salvatori Distinguished Scholar in the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace. It was during this time that the present *Autobiographical Reflections* were

produced. At the end of the period, the fourth volume of *Order and History* finally was published—after a seventeen-year hiatus—entitled *The Ecumenic Age* (1974).<sup>3</sup> After retirement, the Voegelin continued to live in Stanford, where Eric and Lissy are buried. They had no children.

In addition to the books mentioned, some one hundred articles and essays were published during Professor Voegelin's lifetime; and voluminous materials were left unpublished in manuscript, including much of a four-thousand-page study entitled "The History of Political Ideas": parts of this work were absorbed into *Order and History*, and eleven chapters were drawn together, edited by John H. Hallowell, and published under the title *From Enlightenment to Revolution* (1975).<sup>4</sup> The fifth volume of *Order and History* also was published posthumously, under the title *In Search of Order* (1987),<sup>5</sup> as the capstone of Voegelin's revolutionary philosophy of politics, history, and consciousness.

That and in what sense Voegelin's work may be understood to be revolutionary is argued in my *The Voegelinian Revolution: A Biographical Introduction*,<sup>6</sup> and the *raison d'être* of the *Autobiographical Reflections* lies in work done in preparing that study. For Voegelin in 1973 was far from concerned with writing an autobiography or a memoir—beyond what he already had done with the anamnestic experiments conducted in 1943 but only published in 1966 in *Anamnesis*. These fascinating sketches of recollections covered experiences from his boyhood that he found formative for his consciousness as a human being, beginning at fourteen months with his very first recollection and coming down about age ten. In 1972 and 1973, he was hard at work completing *The Ecumenic Age*, which came out a year later. My own work required greater detail about his biography than was readily available, so I began conducting tape-recorded interviews on subjects of importance to my study of his thought. These ranged over many subjects, and matters finally came to a head during the summer of 1973 when I was visiting Stanford for the purpose of gathering information and began trying to put together a chronological and thematic account of Voegelin's intellectual development. After several false starts, we hit on the procedure of holding a series of interviews, conducted on the basis of my queries, which would be responded to in an oral narrative dictated by Voegelin. To be sure the transcription could be made accurately, his secretary was present to take down everything in shorthand. All of this was done in the few days between June 26 and July 7 (we celebrated July 4, of course), in Voegelin's study at his residence on Sonoma Terrace—amid clouds of cigar smoke from the eighteen or so King Edward cigars he consumed each day, the fierce and frequent barking of the two pet Pekinese dogs that, despite Mrs. Voegelin's best efforts to keep them quiet, repulsed dangers on every side, the hum and clatter of the lawn mower, roar of the vacuum cleaner, and frequent jangle of the telephone. (These atmospherics have been purged from the text, but since I again listened to the twenty-seven hours of recordings in first preparing the manuscript for publication, they were vivid in my memory as I wrote and were most definitely part of the "experience" now just thirty-one years ago.) The transcription then was read and corrected by Voegelin and retyped in due course to form the revised document that subsequently named the *Autobiographical Memoir* of Eric Voegelin and quoted *in extenso* in my book. It was later retitled for separate publication in 1989.

What Eric Voegelin's autobiography might have looked like had he sat down purposely to write or solely on his own volition we cannot know. My inquiries elicited the responses we have here. The questions asked and answered were ones, apart from basic information of a factual kind, that seemed most pressing for a full and precise understanding of material I had studied by and with Voegelin since my undergraduate days in his theory survey at LSU in 1950. Whatever the complexities of the subject matter, Voegelin's great gift as a teacher was his capacity to expound it simply, lucidly, and tellingly in living speech. This talent I luckily turned to advantage in my interviews with him that



became, in effect, a private seminar running for two or three hours each morning for nearly fortnight. What began as a rather *pro forma* exercise that (I sensed) was conceived partly as a means of putting an end to persistent questioning and of getting rid of a questioner who was bidding to become a troublesome distraction from “the work,” took on unexpected life. Voegelin warmed to the subject. He then proceeded to conduct, under prodding and somewhat unwillingly at first, then resignation, and finally with a relish reserved for “the work” itself, what gradually turned into further anamnestic search of the reality of Eric Voegelin whose story rises in its best moments into the meditative discourse of high philosophy. Even cold on the page, the result is a triumph in which a reader can rejoice.

Finally, it now seems to me that the *Autobiographical Reflections* is the best place for anyone unacquainted with Voegelin’s writings to begin their study. The principal value of doing so is that it has the merit of exploring in simple straightforward language the multiple contexts in the biography of a concrete human being who happened to be inclined to reflectively understand the highly stratified reality of which all of us are inevitably participant as human beings. I would stress the *concreteness* of the life and thought of a particular human being with the name and identity of Eric Voegelin.

The vagueness of exploring abstract contexts and abstract questions about them in the usual hypothetical ways is thereby remedied by the fact that one is here dealing with the recollections of a man who could make sense out of his own personal and intellectual pilgrimage from prevalent positivism and lethal National Socialism into the open existence of philosophizing—with the help (among other sources) of the classics, Christian scholastics and mystics, and ancient prophets of Israel and New Testament Apostles. A salient part of Voegelin’s pilgrimage was his palpable search and progressive discovery—and its enormous range—of where to find help and succor amid the turmoil of institutional collapse, intellectual debauchery, and personal corruption. How he did is the substance of this little book.

Such a recounting happens also, I think, to be an optimal way of understanding the supposed “relevance” of the life of the mind and spirit to the maturation of the human personality. It carries its own authentication as a first-person-singular account that is factual, honest, intelligent, humorous, and intricate. And along the way one begins to recognize that the problems and assorted origins of the problems compose a mosaic of the “contexts” in which each of us, to greater or lesser degree, still largely find ourselves living and to a substantial degree ensnared.

So in effect you get something of the kind of result you get with reading Augustine’s *Confessions* or Plato’s *Apology*. Voegelin sought to philosophize in order to regain the compass of reality in a world dominated by second realities, not to mention virtual realities, as an urgent matter of life and death for himself and others—as he once remarked.<sup>7</sup> In this little book one glimpses something of the actual ways Voegelin did that—not merely as an intellectual puzzle to be solved or a sometimes dangerous game played, but through a life lived. That is why I especially like it. And it doesn’t hurt that he told me, sitting across the table from him as he spoke, one person to another.

Readers will perhaps be interested in Voegelin’s concise summation as given about a decade after the present text was dictated, entitled “Autobiographical Statement at Age Eighty-Two.”<sup>8</sup>

Additionally, a number of reviews of the original book were published.<sup>9</sup> All of these generally agreed that the “present book serves as an excellent introduction to [Voegelin’s] work, as it provides an historical and biographical context that not only sheds light on the author’s motivations but also identifies the sources and outlines development of many of his most central ideas regarding political history, the nature of consciousness, and the divine presence.”<sup>10</sup> Dissatisfaction, however, was

expressed “that Voegelin’s observations on thinkers with whom he disagrees are often exasperating and sometimes so silly as to make one shudder.”<sup>11</sup> Another more laudatory reviewer faulted the editor for not writing a longer introduction, not supplying more annotation, and not providing an index for the first edition.<sup>12</sup> These deficiencies have at least partly been remedied in the present edition, and an index was compiled for publication of the paperback version by LSU Press in 1996. Ian Crowther found much to commend but especially the tracing of the *experiences* that supply the key to understanding the modern “egophanic revolt.” He concluded that, while we may not have seen the last of the ideologues’ “second realities,” we may now at long last be able “with the help of Voegelin and his interpreters . . . [to] see through them.”<sup>13</sup> Thomas D’Evelyn wrote that the

impression left on the reader [by *Autobiographical Reflections*] is one of charm and supple understanding. In his attacks on the anti-intellectualism and anti-Americanism of leftist thinkers, Voegelin can sound like Allan Bloom. There is a big difference. The author of *The Closing of the American Mind* will be remembered most for the fierceness and brilliance of his attack. Voegelin will be remembered for his . . . recovery, of “the great discovery of the Classic philosophers”—that “man is not a ‘mortal,’ but a being engaged in a movement toward immortality.” . . . Contemplating his complete works, one sees not a huge, scaly, glittering triumphal arch, but a rainbow.<sup>14</sup>

Lastly, mention may be made of Paul G. Kuntz’s arresting review-essay that extracts four new “decalogues” from the book—Theological Commandments, Moral Commandments, Philosophical Commandments, and Scholarly Commandments, he calls them—and he concludes with a flourish by writing:

the volume, slight in size, conveys the impression of a giant of great normative power. The best way I have found to say this is to say that Voegelin was a Moses, and to present his tablets of the law. In an academic life characterized best as drifting as it is pulled this way and that by vociferous pressure groups, Voegelin is the one with the clearest grasp of why we should accept four kinds of imperatives.<sup>15</sup>

A word now about mechanics: After section 11 the incisions and headings are mine; all notes and insertions in brackets are by the editor; minor emendations in syntax are made silently, as in copy editing; words dropped from the text inadvertently but audible on the tape have been restored *whenever* they clarify meaning; any words italicized for emphasis are by the editor. Since the obvious provenance of this manuscript was that of a background working paper for a study written by someone else, Voegelin did not take the meticulous care in making emendations that he would have taken with a manuscript of his own that he would see through to final publication. With great caution, I have tried to fill this gap.

ELLIS SANDOZ

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1. Available from University of Missouri Press in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, vols. 14–16. *N.B.*: All volumes in the present edition are hereinafter cited merely as *CW*. *The New Science of Politics* is reprinted as part of *CW*, vol. 5.

2. English trans. 1978, available University of Missouri Press 1990; revised trans. *CW*, vol. 6.

3. *CW*, vol. 17.

4. Eight volumes comprising *The History of Political Ideas* were published posthumously in the *Collected Works* (*CW*, vols. 19–26).

5. Reprinted as *CW*, vol. 18.

6. LSU Press, 1981; 2nd ed., Transaction Publishers, 2000.

7. Stated in the preface to *Israel and Revelation* [1956], penultimate paragraph, *CW*, vol. 14.

8. In *CW*, 33:432–56.

9. For a listing see Geoffrey L. Price and Eberhard Freiherr von Lochner, eds., *Eric Voegelin: International Bibliography*.

1921–2000 (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2000), 200–201.

[10.](#) Jeff Mitscherling, in *History of European Ideas* 12, no. 5 (1990): 705.

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[11.](#) Ibid.

[12.](#) Maben Walter Poirier, in *Modern Age* 34, no. 3 (spring 1992): 262.

[13.](#) Ian Crowther, “The Order of Reality,” *Salisbury Review* 10 (March 1992): 43.

[14.](#) Thomas D’Evelyn, in “World-Class Historian Finds Order beyond Disorder,” *Christian Science Monitor* 81 (November 1989), 13.

[15.](#) Paul G. Kuntz, in *Intercollegiate Review* 26, no. 1 (Fall 1990): 50.

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# AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL REFLECTIONS

REVISED EDITION WITH GLOSSARY



ERIC VOEGELIN C. 1930



ERIC VOEGELIN, DATE UNKNOWN



LISSY VOEGELIN C. 1960



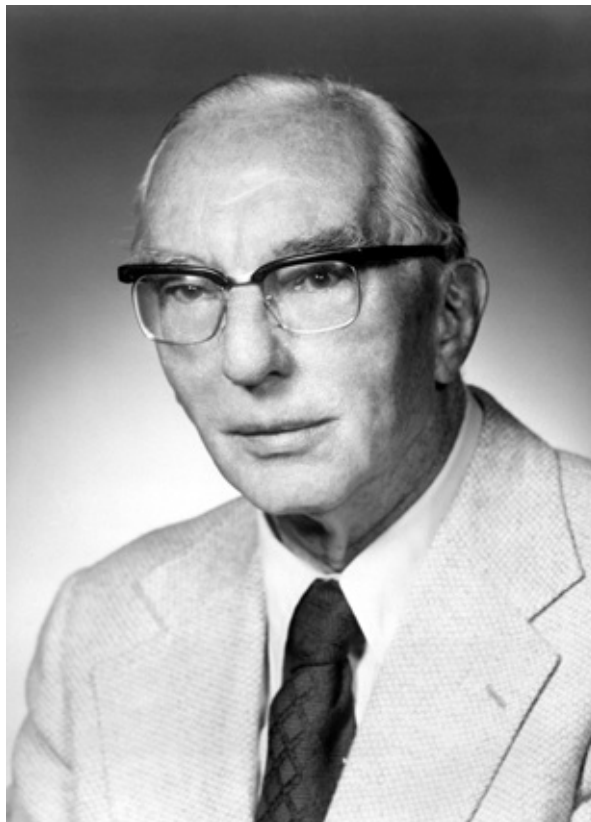
LISSY AND ERIC VOEGELIN AT STANFORD C. 1975



ERIC VOEGELIN AND ELLIS SANDOZ C. 1971



PORTRAIT OF ERIC VOEGELIN BY CONRAD ALFRED ALBRIZIO C. 1945  
PHOTOGRAPH BY WILLIAM MILLS



ERIC VOEGELIN C. 1970

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## University of Vienna

I attended the University of Vienna, in the Faculty of Law, from 1919 to the completion of my doctorate in 1922. The atmosphere of the university at the time was determined by the breakdown of the Austro-Hungarian empire at the end of the First World War. By its composition, the university was still the university of the capital of the empire and reflected in its scholarship and the personal attitude of the professors this cosmopolitan atmosphere. At the time when I was a student, and throughout the 1920s, or rather until the effects of National Socialism made themselves felt in the early thirties, Vienna still had an enormous intellectual horizon and was leading in science internationally in a number of fields. First, there was Hans Kelsen's Theory of Pure Law, represented by Kelsen himself and the growing number of younger men whom he had educated, especially Alfred von Verdross and Adolf Merkl. Second, there was the Austrian School of Marginal Utility. Eugen Böhm-Bawerk had already died, but Leopold von Wieser was still the grand old man who gave the principal course in economic theory. Among the younger economists there was Ludwig von Mises, famous because of his development of money theory. Joseph A. Schumpeter was in Graz at the time, but his work of course was studied. Among the further intellectual and spiritual components that would impress themselves on a young man at the time was the school of theoretical physics going back to Ernst Mach and represented at the time by Moritz Schlick. An important intellectual force in this circle was Ludwig Wittgenstein, less by his presence than by his work. There further must be mentioned the Austrian Institut für Geschichtsforschung, represented by Alfons Dopsch, who by the time had attained international fame through his work on the history of Carolingian economics.

Among the younger men, there was the rising force of Otto Brunner, who later became famous by his theories of medieval feudalism.<sup>1</sup> A further glory of the University of Vienna at the time was the history of art, represented by Max Dvořák and Josef Strzигowski. Dvořák had already died by the time I came to the university, but Strzигowski was active. I had courses with him in the history of Renaissance art; and what especially was attractive about him was his interest in Near Eastern art, which his two-volume work about Armenia is a great document. At the same time there was flourishing in Vienna the Institut für Urgeschichte.

More on the fringe so far as I am concerned were such famous institutions as the Institute for Byzantine Music under Egon Wellesz, with whom I later got acquainted. After the National Socialist takeover, Egon Wellesz went to Oxford. A further inevitable massive influence was represented by the psychologists. I took courses under Hermann Swoboda, who was very much addicted to the theory of rhythms of Ernst Kries; and he, in turn, was a close friend of Sigmund Freud. Into the psychology Swoboda entered as a background his early friendship with Otto Weininger. The works of Otto Weininger were read by everybody at the time. The most important influence in psychology, of course, was given through the presence of Freud. I did not belong to the circle of Freud and never met him, but I knew quite a few of the younger men who had been trained by him. The most important at the time whom I knew was Heinz Hartmann, who later came to New York; Robert Waelder, who later



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