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OCCASIONAL PAPERS

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Surrounding the Thought of Eric Voegelin



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Hrsg. von Peter J. Opitz

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Silence is Not Always Golden: Investigating the Silence

Surrounding the Thought of Eric Voegelin

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PATRICK JOHNSTON

SILENCE IS NOT ALWAYS GOLDEN: INVESTIGATING THE
SILENCE SURROUNDING THE THOUGHT OF ERIC VOEGELIN

Preface

Patrick Johnston's Master's Thesis at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa on Eric Voegelin's missing recognition is the first attempt to make sense of the obvious contradiction between the extraordinary productivity of the political philosopher and the silence surrounding his work. The nearly 35 volumes of his *Collected Works* demonstrate an uninterrupted stream of publications from the early 1920s in Vienna to his death in Stanford in 1985. The relative obscurity that accomplished this visible intellectual life in the German and English speaking worlds calls for some investigation. Johnston provides intriguing answers to his research questions, namely why Voegelin didn't land a job at one of the prestigious universities; why he avoided the public sphere; why professional political scientists avoided him; why his work became nevertheless used and abused in specific ways; and why the discipline of political science may not have been intellectually prepared for the range of his knowledge interests?

Johnston gained his undergraduate degree at Louisiana State University (LSU) in Baton Rouge where Voegelin taught from 1942 to 1957. At LSU, the teacher who introduced him to Voegelin was Ellis Sandoz who was the only American to receive his doctoral degree under Voegelin in Munich. Sandoz became the main editor of Voegelin's *Collected Works* and the organizer of the panels of the Voegelin Society at the annual American Political Science Association meetings. Johnston came to the University of Hawai'i to get his MA degree on a Voegelin theme with input from me as a member of the German Voegelin group. After having read most of the volumes in the *Collected Works*, he wanted to find out more about the hero worship among the Voegelians on both sides of the

Atlantic and the mysterious silence in the discipline. He corrects some of the views about Voegelin's often proclaimed wish to distance himself from the intellectual refugee circles at East coast institutions like, e.g. Bennington College, and therefore having moved first to Alabama and then LSU. He paints a rather depressing picture of the intellectual jealousy American political theorists showed toward the refugee scholar. Voegelin was rejected by many institutions as being too broadly interested and therefore difficult to be placed in an ordinary disciplinary structure. However, many potential colleagues felt threatened by Voegelin's overbearing intellectual presence and denounced him occasionally as being arrogant.

Johnston discusses thoroughly the lack of interest for Voegelin among the students of Leo Strauss and the admirers of Hannah Arendt. The three refugee scholars respected each other and exchanged views about some of their publications. The polite disregard of the Straussians for Voegelin's comparative civilizational approach and the total ignorance about all of his work by the American Arendtians receives appropriate coverage.

Patrick Johnston's thesis is one of the first comprehensive readings of Voegelin's work and the professional echo it did not receive by a young American author who recognizes the importance of the political philosopher without succumbing to the hero worship of earlier German and American Voegelinians.

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I

What I offer in these pages is not an “introduction to the reading of Voegelin” à la Alexandre Kojève with Hegel. Nor am I undertaking a strict study of the important concepts and ideas found in the works of Voegelin. In my opinion, these types of projects have failed to bring Voegelin a wider audience and I should therefore take a different tack. What I attempt to do is make a consideration of the non-exhaustive possible reasons for the silence concerning Voegelin’s work and give accompanying discussions of how the quiescence can be overcome.

Biographical work on Voegelin has already been completed by Voegelin himself by answering questions from his student Ellis Sandoz. Portions of these taped conversations were first transcribed and published in Sandoz’s *The Voegelinian Revolution*¹ and later published as *Autobiographical Reflections*.² Furthermore, a volume entitled *Voegelin Recollected* has recently appeared which reveals the human side of Voegelin which is often lost in lionizing accounts such as Sandoz’s various published writings (and those works from other writers which take their root in Sandoz’s Voegelin) on Voegelin.³ An interested reader in the life of Voegelin should place *Voegelin Recollected* next to Voegelin’s own correspondence⁴ followed by *Autobiographical Reflections* and then the *Voegelinian Revolution*. Another important source in this area is the chapter in *Anamnesis* which collects the anamnestic experiments Voegelin

¹ Ellis Sandoz, *The Voegelinian Revolution*. Baton Rouge/London 1981.

² Eric Voegelin, *Autobiographical Reflections*. Ed. by Ellis Sandoz. Baton Rouge/London 1989.

³ Barry Cooper/Jodi Bruhn, Eds., *Voegelin Recollected*. Columbia/London 2008.

⁴ Eric Voegelin, *Selected Correspondence, 1950 – 1984*. Ed. by Thomas Hollweck. Columbia/London 2007 (= *The Collected Works of E.V.*, Vol. 30). See also *Robert B. Heilman and Eric Voegelin. A Friendship in Letters, 1944 – 1984*. Ed. by Charles Embry. Columbia/London 2004; *Faith and Political Philosophy. The Correspondence Between Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, 1934 – 1964*. Eds. Peter Emberley/Barry Cooper. University Park, Penn. 1993; *Eine Freundschaft, die ein Leben ausgehalten. Briefwechsel, 1938 – 1959*. Eds. Gerhard Wagner/Gilbert Weiss. Konstanz 2004.

conducted in 1943 concerning philosophically formative experiences from his early childhood.⁵

Voegelin is not the equivalent of a long lost relic which has only recently resurfaced. Indeed, work about Voegelin first appeared during his lifetime and has continued to this day. The necessary caveat is that those who have put forth these efforts belong to a small club of sympathizers—Voegelin is practically an unknown figure when one includes the discipline of political science as a whole. The inability or unwillingness of American political science to rise above analyses of the mundane and to instead confront large and complex problems plays no small role in Voegelin's silence as I will discuss later. And, although Voegelin was an interdisciplinary scholar, he is likewise little known in other fields in which he was comfortable such as History, Philosophy, and Theology. I would be carried too far afield to try to account for the silencing of Voegelin in each of those fields just mentioned. I can only instead offer up the phenomenon of overspecialization in the humanities a part of a possible explanation.

Memorable books and essays about Voegelin have already been produced by the minute and dedicated circle I have alluded to. Some of the topics treated in no particular order include: Voegelin's theology, Voegelin's political theory, Voegelin as a philosopher of history, and Voegelin on race. I could not (and did not) fixate on one area since I wanted to get at some reasons behind the stillness which surrounds Voegelin's work. To avoid aimlessness I have chosen a few issues to explore that I will discuss in more detail below.

Why write on Voegelin? In a very elementary sense, I felt obligated to pay my respects to Voegelin who has been an influence on my own thinking. And, gratitude needed to be shown to those people whom Voegelin had trained and influenced who have in turn taught me. Another motivation was to give an honest response to those who might ask if the inattention to Voegelin is reasonable. Even during my earliest brush with Voegelin through his *New Science of Politics*, I realized that he was a thinker to be dealt with, but I also

⁵ Eric Voegelin, *Anamnesis*. Ed. David Walsh. Columbia/London 2002 (= *The Collected Works of E.V.*, Vol. 6), p. 84-98.

acknowledged that my sentiments appeared to be in a minority grouping which did not equivocate on the merit of Voegelin's scholarship. Pick up any of the soon to be completed thirty-four volumes of Voegelin's *Collected Works*, note the distinction between collected and complete, and one finds a sentence on the back cover of the dust jacket that is more puzzling than misleading: "Eric Voegelin (1901-1985) was one of the most original and influential philosophers of our time." As I have already intimated, perusing even a few pages of any of the books will validate the first part of the statement about the novelty of Voegelin's thought. It is then the term "influential" that gives me pause because it appears that Voegelin has had only a relative influence. To those proud few called "Voegelinians," if that is not some kind of blasphemy, Voegelin was certainly a great influence on their thought. Beyond (and sometimes including) this group, there were and still are people who have tried to use Voegelin's thought for some political end. These negative influences should be included in the discussion because the "abuse" of Voegelin has no doubt contributed to the silencing of Voegelin's work. Even so, all of the discussion above deals with the small circle of persons who have actually engaged Voegelin's work. In light of the voluminous work, the contents of which show Voegelin to be a true believer in the benefits of illumination derived from cross-disciplinary study, the silence is deafening.

I am not the first person to have noticed the lack of regard for the thought of Voegelin. This topic of silence was very explicitly discussed by Ted V. McAllister in a book review of Barry Cooper's *Eric Voegelin and the Foundations of Modern Political Science*⁶ in the *Review of Politics*.⁷ McAllister came up with two reasons. The first was to blame Voegelin himself for expecting a high level of background reading on the subjects which were to be found in a text written by Voegelin. Further complicating matters was that as a product of Voegelin's erudition, he had developed a language of discourse that takes great effort and care to discern. This was less a

⁶ Barry Cooper, *Eric Voegelin and the Foundations of Modern Political Science*. Columbia/London 1999.

⁷ Ted V. McAllister, "Voegelin's Neglect: Who's Responsible?" *The Review of Politics* (2000), Vol. 62, p. 820-823.

fault of Voegelin and more owed to the difficulty of penetrating the material under consideration. Voegelin had no space in his writing for intellectual slovenliness and was not going to muddle up passages by defining his, at times, “arcane” terminology while trying to achieve “luminosity.” However, McAllister makes a good point that often the texts of Voegelinians are written haltingly because Voegelin’s terms have not been explained in common sense understandings of these words.

The other reason given as to why Voegelin is rather little known in the United States is the academy itself. For reasons that McAllister does not discuss, but I think are important for this topic of silence, most of Voegelin’s time teaching in the United States was spent at my alma mater, Louisiana State University (LSU). McAllister claims that being at LSU compared to Leo Strauss’ University of Chicago, for example, Voegelin did not have access to the United States’ best students.⁸ Indeed, Voegelin did not even teach at an institution with a graduate program until he was asked in 1958 to fill the chair at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich which had been vacant since Max Weber died in 1920. Voegelin would only remain in Munich for eleven years before retirement and he then spent the years from 1969 until his death in 1985 at the Hoover Institution located at Stanford University. Therefore, in the US, Voegelin had no students associated with him who could propagate the study of his work. The only American student who finished a doctoral degree in Munich with Voegelin was Ellis Sandoz. Sandoz’ entire teaching career has been in the US and he has done yeoman’s work promoting Voegelin in that country, but it is a tough road to hoe with help coming from German students or people who never directly worked with Voegelin and who are not well known.

While I would like to go deeper into the two suggestions made by McAllister about the “neglect” of Voegelin, I think other reasons for the silence also exist which I will discuss throughout this work. Ultimately, I suggest that Eric Voegelin is a thinker who should not be silenced. Those who choose to pick up his work should not expect a cake walk, nor should they expect Voegelin to paint with a narrow

⁸ Ibid., p. 822.

brush. It is a definite challenge to read Voegelin and to think with him, but it is not an impossible enterprise. I do not presume to cover the whole of the situation which has led to Voegelin being underappreciated, but merely try to shed some light on pertinent points regarding the matter. I cannot, however, presage any revival of Voegelin studies or of political philosophy for that matter.

II

What do Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Leo Strauss, Hannah Arendt, and Eric Voegelin have in common? All of these scholars were forced to flee Europe during the National Socialist period. Voegelin is unlike the rest of those thinkers an important respect as a university professor. Voegelin never acquired a position at a top university in the United States. The question of what was different in Voegelin's case arises. I will try to give a tentative analysis of what prevented Voegelin from getting hired.

Voegelin also was the only one of the scholars listed above who studied in the United States before emigration. Voegelin first came to the United States in 1924 as a result of a Laura Spellman Rockefeller Fellowship (a three year fellowship). He was in the United States from 1924-1926 and studied at Columbia University, Harvard University and the University of Wisconsin. The academic year of 1926-1927 was spent in Paris. Among others, Voegelin studied with John Dewey, John R. Commons and Alfred North Whitehead during the two years in the US. While the professors Voegelin studied with opened him up to a world of knowledge which he "had hardly suspected the existence" of, the libraries of the American university were the "most important influence" for Voegelin.⁹ At Columbia's library, he discovered American and English common sense philosophy. This experience with a common sense tradition freed him from any interest in the methodological debates which were raging in Europe. Further experiences with John R. Commons and through reading of George Santayana's work (Voegelin did not meet Santayana) "immunized" Voegelin from

⁹ Voegelin, *Autobiographical Reflections*, p. 28.

Martin Heidegger's influential *Sein und Zeit* (1927).¹⁰ The appeal of the Northeastern universities which Voegelin first visited in the 1920's resided more with unmatched facilities like Harvard's Widener Library than the prestige of any of the schools. Widener in particular was held in high esteem by Voegelin. Coincidentally, Voegelin's first academic appointment upon emigration from Austria was Harvard University.

Voegelin had friends at Harvard, including Arthur Holcombe, then chair of the Department of Government, who arranged for Voegelin to get a part-time instructorship at Harvard in 1938. Other friends in Austria helped Voegelin get his exit visa to Switzerland before he could be rounded up by the Gestapo. Concurrent with Voegelin's arrival at Harvard he was made to understand by Holcombe that the position at Harvard would last for one year only. Thus began the academic problems for Voegelin in the United States and his rationalizations for leaving the East Coast.

It could also be argued, however, that Voegelin's troubles in American academia began before he left Europe. An exemplary example is his failed attempt to get a job at the University of Wisconsin. The chair of the political science department at Wisconsin, Frederick A. Ogg, wrote Voegelin back with praise of Voegelin's scholastic accomplishments up to that point and the news that there were no jobs for him. Ogg's reason was that there was no chance that money could be raised to pay for extra positions. Ogg ignored Voegelin's statement that the Rockefeller Foundation had agreed to pay for half of Voegelin's salary for three years at an American institution.¹¹ In any event, the promised money from the Rockefeller Foundation did not help Voegelin immediately win any suitors. In 1939, when he was not commuting between Bennington College in Vermont and Cambridge to attend to his position at Harvard, Voegelin was applying for jobs. In this pursuit he wrote more than forty letters in all, around twenty of them to American institutions. The school he would ultimately leave Bennington for, the University of Alabama, was one of the twenty. Voegelin departed

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 29f.

¹¹ See Cooper, *Eric Voegelin*, p. 12-15.

Bennington with controversy (something he apparently did not bring up with Sandoz during their interview sessions in 1973). Voegelin had rejected the offer of \$5,000 for the year of 1940. Turning down this generous sum shocked and angered the faculty of Bennington.¹² Instead, Voegelin taught a summer course at Northwestern University in 1939 before going down to Alabama for half of the pay that he would have received at Bennington. I must scrutinize Voegelin's account of why he left the East Coast for Alabama because it appears entirely possible that Voegelin did not want to acknowledge the fact that he represented a threat to the old guard of political scientists at these institutions.

The justification Voegelin gave for leaving Bennington (and the East Coast completely) is related to a self-inflicted silencing of Voegelin by Voegelin. Voegelin said that the environs of the East Coast did not suit him any more than had Austria under occupation by the National Socialists. Elaborating, he noted that there was a "very strong leftist element" at Bennington along with some vociferous Communists among the faculty and even more in the student population. Another problem was that the East Coast was full of Central European refugees. Voegelin did not want to be associated with that crowd because he wanted to become an American. He assumed that becoming an American would be impossible, or at least unnecessarily prolonged, in such a situation. Voegelin also said that he had decided to become a political scientist, which seems to have meant an American political scientist judging from his actions. A necessary step in this process was to learn about the American government by teaching about it. Teaching courses in American government was not a possibility for a foreigner at "any of the *major* Eastern institutions."¹³

It should be obvious enough that Voegelin could not have made a comparison between Vermont in 1939 and Austria in 1938 without a good deal of hyperbole being involved. However, arriving in the United States in 1938, Voegelin would have been hard pressed not to find a leftist element anywhere in the country on account of the

¹² Ibid., p. 22-23.

¹³ Voegelin, *Autobiographical Reflections*, p. 58, my emphasis.

widespread acceptance of the New Deal. Voegelin himself could be accused of associating with leftists when he studied with the labor historian and institutional economist John R. Commons at Wisconsin in the 1920's. Voegelin also dedicated the longest chapter of his first book to the thought of Commons.¹⁴ Voegelin was also intrigued by the progressive politician Robert La Follette and wrote about his "Wisconsin Idea" which Voegelin described in short as "the Restoration of the Government to the people," which of course was not a unique phenomenon of Wisconsin.¹⁵

Voegelin seemed to be oblivious to the Communist situation in Alabama when he accepted the job at the University of Alabama. Located in the Deep South, Alabama was the stronghold of the Communist Party during the Great Depression. A reason why Voegelin might not have said anything about this is that the Communist Party of Alabama was largely comprised of thoroughly religious African-Americans who had no connections to European Communism.¹⁶ A further explanation might depend on the fact that the University of Alabama was still segregated when Voegelin taught there. Even so, the Communist Party in Alabama was mostly comprised of laborers, not intellectuals or students. The Communist Party of Alabama would dissipate two years after Voegelin started teaching at the University of Alabama. Unlike the Bennington experience, Voegelin did not say anything about a leftist or communist element in Alabama. As was the case with most European émigrés, Voegelin appeared not to have a good understanding of the problem of race problems of the country.¹⁷

¹⁴ Eric Voegelin, *On the Form of the American Mind*. Eds. Jürgen Gebhardt/Barry Cooper. Baton Rouge/London 1995 (= *The Collected Works of E.V.*, Vol. 1), p. 205-282.

¹⁵ Eric Voegelin, "La Follette and the Wisconsin Idea," in: *Published Essays, 1922 – 1928*. Eds. Thomas W. Heilke/John von Heyking. Columbia/London 2003 (= *The Collected Works of E. V.*, Vol. 7), p. 192-193.

¹⁶ See Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression*. Chapel Hill/London 1990; Mark Solomon, *Their Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917-1936*. Jackson 1998, p. 112-128.

¹⁷ See *Voegelin Recollected*, p. 41ff.

A casual look at the so-called leftist environment in Vermont from which Voegelin had escaped would seem to confirm Voegelin's assessment of Vermont. Marxism at Bennington certainly received a boost when Erich Fromm began teaching there in 1941. George Aiken, the Republican governor of Vermont while Voegelin was at Bennington, was falsely labeled a Communist by his own party.¹⁸ The state of Vermont has long been known for its "progressivism" which was supposed to be embodied in the ideals of Bennington College. This attitude had also taken hold of the "impressionable" young women at Bennington, according to the social psychology research studies of Theodore Newcomb.¹⁹ However, Voegelin appears to have overstated his case in 1973. Thomas Brockway notes that the "college was remarkably free to invite speakers of every persuasion and the faculty itself was far from united in politics, although most of them voted for Roosevelt. During the Leigh era students tended to move toward the left but few of them advocated anything more revolutionary than the New Deal, and student leaders took on themselves the duty of protecting the college from organizers and agitators."²⁰ Moreover, Voegelin's wife, Lissy Voegelin, did not corroborate his story on the leftist element. Lissy Voegelin gave a different description about an anti-refugee element among the some of the girls at Bennington. Despite the presence of this sentiment, according to Voegelin's wife, the girls at the school were fond of her husband and tried to convince the president of the college to keep Voegelin there for five years. While Lissy Voegelin said she enjoyed Vermont, Eric Voegelin said Bennington was

¹⁸ See Samuel B. Hand, *The Star That Set. The Vermont Republican Party, 1854-1974*. Lanham 2003; Michael Sherman, Ed., *The Political Legacy of George D. Aiken. Wise Old Owl of the U.S. Senate*. Woodstock 1995.

¹⁹ See Newcomb, *Persistence and Change: Bennington College and Its Students After Twenty Years*. New York 1967; Newcomb et al., *Political Attitudes Over the Lifespan: The Bennington Women After 50 Years*. Madison 1992.

²⁰ Thomas Brockway, *Bennington College. In the Beginning*. Bennington 1981, p. 81. The Leigh era refers to the tenure of the first president of Bennington College, Robert Devore Leigh, who was president from 1932-1941.

located “in the mountains in the snow and ice where I see only fifty people and they hate each other. I don’t like it there.”²¹

That Voegelin wished to become a United States citizen is evident not only in the fact that he was naturalized in 1944 and retained his citizenship for the rest of his life, but also in admonishments of letter writers who referred to Voegelin as a European or a refugee.²² Voegelin was on his way to becoming an American political scientist by teaching a class on American Government at Bennington so it is important that he qualified his statement by saying that he would not be able to teach such a class at a “major Eastern institution.” Voegelin described the situation correctly, but also hinted that he did want to stay in the East. What must be remembered about Voegelin’s reason given to Sandoz is that it took place more than three decades after the fact. By 1973, Voegelin had already retired from teaching and would have had at that point what could be described as a successful career. There was no reason for Voegelin to complain about his American struggles in the 1940’s and 1950’s, though he could have. Yet it is exactly these struggles which are important to the matter at hand because they help explain part of the reason why Voegelin is not widely known in American political science.

Unpleasant intellectual surroundings or not, it is clear that Voegelin was not going to build a successful career at Bennington. The school was not accredited, had no graduate program, and was not even co-educational until 1969, the same year Voegelin officially retired from teaching and arrived in California to take his position at the Hoover Institution. Voegelin went to Alabama in this pursuit to start a career even though the salary was half of what Bennington was offering. That the University of Alabama was not going to be a permanent home became obvious after only a short time. At Alabama, Voegelin quickly drew the ire of university administrators when he put in a purchase request at the library for \$100 worth of

²¹ Eric Voegelin quoted by Lissy Voegelin in: *Voegelin Recollected*, p. 163.

²² Letter to Robert Schuettinger, October 13 1969, in: *Selected Correspondence*, p. 625; Letter to Wolfram Ender, November 1 1971, in: *Selected Correspondence*, p. 708.

books which he thought he needed for research.²³ Voegelin recalled the Southern hospitality he received from “southerners who somewhat condescendingly enjoyed protecting an innocent from Europe.”²⁴ Such an attitude of protection did not extend to the administrators of the University of Alabama. The book buying request had been too extreme and the university was considering firing Voegelin. He was able to persuade the administrators not to take such action. When it was made known to Voegelin that the university would rather hire Alabamans over foreigners, no matter how talented, Voegelin realized he would not be rehired, much less gain tenure. He then resigned from Alabama to take the LSU opening.²⁵ This move resulted in a slight increase in salary. The facilities were comparable to Alabama’s, which is to say, not up to Voegelin’s standard. He would become enthusiastic on more than one occasion to give guest lectures at elite Northeastern colleges in the hopes of getting employed at one. Johns Hopkins, Harvard, Yale, etc. were all more than happy to let Voegelin visit, but a job was not in the offering at any of these institutions. The situation of 1937 at the University of Wisconsin had not changed at all. The closest Voegelin could get to the East Coast after he left it was to spend summers at Widener and to give an occasional lecture at a prestigious university.

The disappointing situation at Yale where Voegelin gave a guest lecture/job audition is the most well known of Voegelin’s attempts to acquire gainful employment on the East Coast at a major institution. The year was 1948. Voegelin had eleven publications for the decade up to that point, on varied topics as usual. Most of these publications were written for important journals in political science. Yet, instead of aiding Voegelin, this genuine ability to do political science seemed to ruin him in American political science. It will therefore be instructive to flesh out the nature of that event at Yale as a representative example of the difficulty Voegelin faced in getting a job on the East Coast.

²³ Cooper, *Eric Voegelin*, p. 26.

²⁴ Voegelin, *Autobiographical Reflections*, p. 58.

²⁵ See Cooper, *Eric Voegelin*, p. 26f.

Voegelin was hopeful about his chances of getting the Yale job when he returned to Baton Rouge. Voegelin wrote his friend Robert Heilman in March of 1948:

Yale begins to show visible interest in my presence . . . Last week I was up there; and everything seemed to go well. No word has yet been breathed about an offer; but I was studied with obvious care by the various notables; and the chairman of the department went to the extreme of saying that I was just what they would need and that he hoped for further correspondence. Same has not arrived yet.—Through Cleanth [Brooks], who takes a lively supporting interest in the affair, I know that they intend to make an offer; but according to Cleanth the offer will be lousy: an Associate Professorship with \$6000. In the end I would take that of course, if it should materialize, but I would feel exploited. The lecture looked to me like a great success; with discussion it lasted for two hours and could have gone on for another hour. Perhaps they are impressed and will think better of the salary. We'll see! For the rest, the whole incident was great fun. Yale is most desirable; lavishly equipped, a touch of snobbery, somewhat like an exclusive club. I don't mind; I like it as long as I can laugh about it.²⁶

Heilman was apprehensive in his response because of the “unimaginative dimensions of the possible offer.” The salary was, after all, only one thousand dollars more than Bennington College had offered in 1939. Heilman also presciently diagnosed the situation at Yale. “Maybe a prospect of a serious improvement in the faculty is almost as difficult to face at Yale as elsewhere.”²⁷

As time began to pass, Voegelin seemed to resign himself to the fact that the job would not be forthcoming, especially when the only news he had heard was from Willmoore Kendall about what sounded like a failed coup d'état in the Yale faculty. “I went home with the idea that in the course of the next two or three weeks an offer would

²⁶ Charles Embry, Ed., *Robert B. Heilman and Eric Voegelin. A Friendship in Letters, 1944 – 1984*. Columbia/London 2004, p. 53-54, my bracketed addition.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Letter to Eric Voegelin, April 26 1948, p. 55.

come. As a matter of fact: nothing has come, not even a line of thanks for giving them a lecture which cost me six working-days, inconvenience, etc., and for which I did not receive an honorarium.”²⁸ Kendall’s letter, which Voegelin summarized for Heilman, noted that the lecture was “a roaring success and that in particular the graduate students were overwhelmed.” However, there was also the matter of the failed “revolution” in the Yale political science department which was stifled by the full professors. Voegelin relates that ultimately, “Kendall opines that either [Cecil] Driver or [Arnold] Wolfers, or both, have vetoed an appointment for me because they were afraid that my presence might invite comparisons with their performance about which they did not care.”²⁹ Heilman responded by notifying Voegelin about Cleanth Brooks’ penchant for “melodrama” and ability to steer Kendall into his escapades. As in a previous letter, Heilman was able to get down the bottom of the matter. “If the old-timers don’t at the moment want you, it is of course the old question of quality; but that is the truth no one can ever admit; so they will be hot on the trail of finding a real disqualification; and if you could be tied up with a backstairs operation run by a couple of young revolutionaries, they would probably feel that the Lord had given them a wonderful piece of discrediting evidence.”³⁰ Heilman would follow up with Voegelin after he received a letter from the Yale co-conspirator, Brooks. Heilman quoted the following “confidential” passage from the Brooks letter.

Voegelin did brilliantly, but nothing has happened, and though I was told by one of the department members the other day that the dept was still interested, I don’t know. I am also told—quite confidentially of course—that Voegelin’s lecture was simply too good: that some of the members of the dept had cooled off because they thought that V’s presence here would jeopardize their own laurels. Anyway, I

²⁸ Ibid., Letter to Robert Heilman, May 1 1948, p. 58.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 58.

³⁰ Ibid., Letter to Eric Voegelin, May 8 1948, p. 59-60.

hope for the best, but it's obvious that nothing is going to be done in the way of an offer for the present.³¹

Soon after the letter, Voegelin saw Kendall in Chicago and got first hand confirmation that the lecture was too good. Although he was not certain of the veracity of Kendall's statements, Voegelin related them to Heilman. Voegelin never read from a manuscript while giving a lecture. The Yale talk on "The Western Revolutionary Movements" was no exception to this practice. This free-speaking custom, Voegelin says, created the very unfavorable impression that I knew what I was talking about and had my subject-matter at my finger-tips; the discussion was even worse because it ranged over a variety of subjects on which I also seemed to be informed in the most improper manner. Such ungentlemanly erudition frightened at least two members of the department so thoroughly that their thumbs turned down on me. Yale is a respectable place and such casual pouring forth of knowledge which should be divulged only with all symptoms of sweat on the brow from a carefully prepared paper cannot be tolerated.³²

Voegelin also speculated in this letter that once his *History of Political Ideas* came out that Yale might again be interested. As we know, Voegelin shelved his massive project and Yale did not call on him. After the Yale experience, Voegelin was cynical in 1949 when Johns Hopkins invited him for a lecture. "I shall give a talk in Johns Hopkins, again with the understanding (as last year in Yale) that I am looked over for an opening. I am full of black suspicions and firmly resolved to talk point-blank and tough unless an adequate offer is forthcoming."³³ This lecture and others yielded the same result. In the case of Johns Hopkins, Leo Strauss may have had a hand in preventing Voegelin from being hired. I will talk more about the Strauss and Voegelin relationship later. In any event, Sandoz says that "there was a direct statement that Voegelin was characterized as being 'too controversial' to be appointed at Johns

³¹ Ibid., Letter to Eric Voegelin, May 18 1948, p. 63.

³² Ibid., Letter to Robert Heilman, January 1 1949, p. 69.

³³ Ibid., Letter to Robert Heilman, April 2 1949, p. 77.

Hopkins.”³⁴ However, Voegelin was ready to give the United States one more chance (before seeking employment in Europe) with the publication of his *New Science of Politics*.

Voegelin had already received offers for a professorship at Munich and Freiburg by the time the *New Science of Politics* was published in 1952. Yet, he told Heilman he wanted to prolong these offers for two years if possible to see if his book would have any effect.³⁵ Some of the reviews of the book were good and some of them were bitter in tone and attacked Voegelin. He confided to Heilman that “the reactions to my poor book certainly are becoming a nightmare.”³⁶ Voegelin admitted that his mastery of English was not the best and that he was unaware that some of the technical terms he used would be so offensive to readers’ sensibilities.³⁷ We know that Voegelin did not stay in the United States past 1958 despite the commercial success of the *New Science of Politics*. In fact, at the apogee of his importance in the United States, Voegelin was on his way out of the country. By May 1956, Voegelin was actively seeking a job in Europe instead of waiting to be courted by universities in Germany.³⁸ By 1957, everything was settled in Munich for Voegelin’s own Institute and he had announced to his friends and foundation sponsors that he would take the job.³⁹ When the good news came in 1958 that Voegelin’s *Israel and Revelation* had sold out of the first printing, it was too late to try to change his mind because Voegelin was already in Munich.⁴⁰

Voegelin founded his Institut für Politische Wissenschaft in Munich in 1958 with little more than a few empty rooms. LSU’s political

³⁴ Sandoz in: *Voegelin Recollected*, p. 182.

³⁵ *Heilman and Voegelin*, Letter to Robert Heilman, May 3 1952, p. 107.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Letter to Robert Heilman, March 14 1954, p. 136.

³⁷ See Letter to John Hallowell, February 4 1953, in: *Selected Correspondence*, p. 141.

³⁸ *Heilman and Voegelin*, Letter to Robert Heilman, May 19 1956, p. 147.

³⁹ See Letter to Alfred Schütz, May 31 1957, in: *Selected Correspondence*, p. 313; Letter to Kenneth W. Thompson, June 29 1957, in: *Selected Correspondence*, p. 318-321.

⁴⁰ See Letter to Donald R. Ellegood, March 29 1958, in: *Selected Correspondence*, p. 334-335.

science department was merely considering establishing a Ph.D. program in 1955 which had not occurred by 1958. Munich was going to allow Voegelin to build his Institute the way he wanted it and allowed him to have a dual professorship in the colleges of political economy and the humanities. This dual position also included lecture, exam and graduation rights in both colleges.⁴¹ Voegelin's salary nearly doubled when he went to Munich despite the higher cost of living. He also benefitted from the German pension system which was better than what was offered in the United States. The German pension also included provisions to support the spouse of the employee after the death of the employee. In Munich Voegelin would also finally have a chance to train graduate students to carry on the craft of political science. The Institute would flourish and Voegelin only returned to the United States during his tenure in Germany for research trips or to be a visiting professor at Notre Dame every other summer so he could retain his US citizenship. The temporary position at Notre Dame was as close as Voegelin would become to being a regular faculty member at a prominent university in America. Apparently, while Voegelin approached the German legal retirement age of sixty-eight, there was still a chance to acquire a coveted position at a top school. These opportunities obviously did not pan out either.⁴²

The move to Germany and the inability to get a job at a prestigious American university is ultimately responsible for the academic legacy Voegelin has today. With few exceptions, everyone who promotes Voegelin's work today studied with him at Munich. This list includes Voegelin's most dedicated advocate, Ellis Sandoz. Richard Allen, who wrote a doctorate dissertation (which was rejected) under Voegelin in Germany, played a key role in getting Voegelin the position at the Hoover Institution following his retirement in Germany.⁴³ The German students of Voegelin have

⁴¹ See Letter to Alfred Schütz, February 12 1957, in: *Selected Correspondence*, p. 304.

⁴² See Letter to Cleanth Brooks, August 1 1966, in: *Selected Correspondence*, p. 511.

⁴³ Richard Allen worked for Nixon's National Security Council in 1968 and was Reagan's National Security Advisor from 1981-1982.

also had an important impact. Nearly all of the German students became professors of political science at German universities. Voegelin had encouraged these students to engage in their own work and not to follow him. An acceptable exception to this is the work on political religions, which Voegelin had finished with, done by Claus-Ekkehard Bärsch and Klaus Vondung. There was also one student, Michael Naumann, who along with a successful career in journalism was the German culture minister in the first Gerhard Schroeder government in 1998. Naumann ran unsuccessfully for Lord Mayor of Hamburg in the 2008 elections.

Voegelin's students who entered politics did not advocate foreign policy disasters like those of certain policy makers in the George W. Bush administration and (its supporters in the conservative press) who claim to have been influenced by Leo Strauss. This situation, as is well known, has brought unfair condemnation of Leo Strauss' work from certain corners, academic and general. Unlike Strauss, Voegelin does not enjoy the advantage of having thoroughly committed students who wish to cultivate the teachings of the master through the classroom and their work. As I alluded to earlier, Voegelin did not want a scenario, which the Straussians can be seen to represent, where work on any topic is grounded in the teacher's texts and texts by the students. Voegelin expected original work from his students. By looking at the areas covered in their publications, one can observe that Voegelin's students have respected his wishes. However, this means that to become well known, Voegelin would have to rely on the strength of his own work and the ability to publicize himself. His refusal to engage the public, though he had opportunities in the US and Germany, is an element of Voegelin's current silence and the topic I turn to next.

III

The public intellectual is necessarily a public figure with a politically active voice. The public intellectual is also an abundant figure while the public philosopher is a *rara avis*. There appears to be two general types of public intellectual. One variety of public intellectual seeks to "speak truth to power," while the other type agrees with the

governing power's policies and tries to persuade the public to be in favor of such policies. The intensity of commitment to both positions varies. The public philosopher may be of either type because, as we remember, Martin Heidegger and Carl Schmitt tried to lend legitimacy to the National Socialist regime. Nonetheless, either of these positions is problematic for the personal peace of the public intellectual. The societal critic may be arrested, mocked, forced to flee, or even killed by the society which is critiqued. The death sentence which resulted from the guilty verdict in the trial of Socrates is the most famous example of the extreme sacrifice that a public philosopher may endure. Likewise, the intellectual who stands in support of the government must be ready to be hated by the public should policies fail which the intellectual defended. The sycophantic public intellectual will be challenged by the critical public intellectual on general principles of truth and ethics. The sycophantic intellectual could also be killed if there is a revolt which results in a change in governing policy or more drastically, a change in the rulers as well. Not all of the dangers which face public philosophers need to be spelled out here. The history of political philosophy is filled with examples of what has happened to public political philosophers.

Voegelin decidedly did not fit this framework of public intellectuals. Voegelin *was* a philosopher, but not a public one. He did have two great opportunities to become a public intellectual but he shied away from both. I do not mean to say that these two events were Voegelin's only opportunities. His newspaper articles written while he was an assistant professor in Austria and his qualified support of the authoritarian Austrian state "may be seen," as Barry Cooper has said, "as a practical attempt to help form public opinion to resist the propaganda of those who . . . were only concerned with the abolition of democracy."⁴⁴ I argue that this lack of public engagement was not due to any timidity on Voegelin's part, but can instead be seen as attached to his commitment to philosophy. This conscious choice by Voegelin in turn diminished his stature as a philosopher to be reckoned with both in the eyes of the public and with scholars who could get away with being ignorant of Voegelin's thought.

⁴⁴ Cooper, *Eric Voegelin*, p. 6.

Voegelin's decision to not enter the public realm created the conditions of possibility which allowed the memory of Voegelin's work to languish to the point that an anamnestic project must be undertaken before Voegelin's thought can be approached seriously in general.

It is obvious enough that in order to enjoy the widest possible reading audience, the public intellectual, and especially the public philosopher, must possess a writing style that is easy for general readers to comprehend. Along with a lucid writing style, it is also important in the US for public intellectuals to turn themselves into a sellable commodity to reach the distracted public. Getting a good book reviews in large daily newspapers is not enough to reach the American reading audience. Most of the books written by intellectuals which become bestsellers today are not even published by academic presses. This means that the public intellectual must acquire a literary agent as commercial publishers will not look at manuscripts not submitted by an agent. Once this step has been taken, educating the public, how ever important it may be to the intellectual, is secondary to the pecuniary interests of the agent and publisher. The intellectual is then simply another author competing with novelists, self-help gurus, celebrity tell-all books, etc. The intellectual, vying for the public's attention, must be a good salesperson to get their work noticed. Selling one's work is a crucial element of the process of becoming a public intellectual in the United States, although it is not the case in Europe. A captivating and persuasive speaker and writer can sell a work to the general public which would be panned by the academic community. If the "sell" is well executed, intellectuals can be seen by the public as authoritative figures on political topics that have little or no connection to their academic background. Two prominent figures in this respect in the United States are the evolutionary biologist and physiologist Jared Diamond and the linguist Noam Chomsky.⁴⁵ The

⁴⁵ Diamond's important works as a public intellectual are *Guns, Germs and Steel*. New York 1997 and *Collapse. How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. New York 2005. Chomsky has written many critical works on US foreign policy, the most recent of which is *Failed States. The Abuse of Power and the Assault on Democracy*. New York 2006.

routine involved in selling one's work includes the book tour which is made up of book signings at bookstores, appearances on television programs, public talks at universities and public forums, giving interviews, etc. I will discuss Voegelin's refusal to become the "academic equivalent to a rock star," as Allan Bloom referred to the experience, in connection to the *New Science of Politics* and the Munich Hitler lectures.

Voegelin's *New Science of Politics* was not directed at the general reader. The text itself contains technical terminology in the English, French, German, Greek, and Russian languages. The linguistic situation arose not because Voegelin was showing off but because he wanted to avoid imprecision in his analyses which drew on original source materials. Any translation into English of the terms from other languages would have clouded the original meaning built into the terms and the experiences which engendered them and was thus avoided where possible. Voegelin's use of English has been called idiomatic and glossaries of Voegelin's terms are extant, though he did not authorize such glossaries. The book itself grew out of the important Charles R. Walgreen Foundation lecture series at the University of Chicago. Voegelin gave his lectures on "Truth and Representation" in 1951. The lectures were given the new title, *The New Science of Politics: An Introduction*, for the published book form. The title appears to be an emulation of Giambattista Vico's *La Scienza Nuova*. Both Vico and Voegelin were engaged in a restoration of a philosophy of history and politics in their books called the "new science" As Voegelin describes in his *New Science of Politics*, his work is not really new at all. Instead it was an attempt at the reunification of the philosophy of history and the philosophy of politics which were fields which were "inseparably united when political science was founded by Plato."⁴⁶ Voegelin is not interested in a return to Platonic political science. "One cannot restore political science today," he says, "through Platonism, Augustinianism, or Hegelianism."⁴⁷ The "restoration of political science to its principles" which Voegelin speaks of is a result of the "movement

⁴⁶ Eric Voegelin, *New Science of Politics*. Chicago/London 1987, p. 1.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

toward retheoretization.” As this movement was not well known generally, Voegelin intended his book as an example that the work of the movement had done enough in its salvage project of the principles that “the application of results to a basic theoretical problem in politics can at least be attempted.”⁴⁸ The “basic theoretical problem” was, as Voegelin described in a letter, to try to lay the groundwork for “an ontology of political societies, or at least the essential nucleus of one.”⁴⁹ As the book grew out of six lectures, Voegelin did not have the space to go into a detailed analysis of the “movement toward retheoretization.” Instead, he chose to demonstrate through his work what constitutes the general project of retheoretization. There are two parts. The first part consists of a critique of the destruction of science and those who were responsible for the destruction. Voegelin is not speaking of natural science but social science. The destruction of social science which he had in mind is the idea that social science ought to use the methodology of natural science. Concurrently with this idea, an opinion developed in social science which concluded that any work which did not fit the model of natural science was not properly scientific because it was not rigorous or “objective.” In the *New Science of Politics*, Voegelin works through his critique of “scientism” in social science in the “Introduction.” The rest of the book and the second portion of retheoretization then, is Voegelin’s example of what a restored political science can do. Leo Strauss’ *Natural Right and History* (1953), which Voegelin might have considered a work representative of the “movement toward retheoretization,” also follows this two-part form.⁵⁰ Voegelin did not list any specific works in this movement and Strauss’ book appeared after Voegelin’s work. However, Voegelin did see an article sent by Strauss in 1950 which became part of Strauss’ book. Voegelin was impressed with the piece, agreed with Strauss’ “excellent analysis of historicism,” and

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 3.

⁴⁹ Letter to Thomas H. Clancy, S.J., April 26 1953, in: *Selected Correspondence*, p. 156. See also *ibid.*, Letter to A. Styron, April 2 1953, p. 150.

⁵⁰ See Strauss, *Natural Right and History*. Chicago/London 1953.

was “eager to read what follows.”⁵¹ *Prima facie*, it does not seem possible that either of these books would be of any interest to the general public in the United States. However, for Voegelin, the *New Science of Politics* is his best selling book which is still in print and not just because it is still being placed on course syllabi at colleges and universities.

The pinnacle of Voegelin’s chances for success among the public in the United States was when his *New Science of Politics* was used in a *Time* article, “Journalism and Joachim’s Children.”⁵² This one article threw the door wide open for Voegelin who simply did not stride through it.⁵³ Nonetheless, the article which talks about Voegelin’s book is important as the *Time* author used it to reflect on the thirtieth anniversary of publication of the magazine. The article’s author, Max Ways, made Voegelin a public intellectual for a short time by appropriating parts of the book to apply to current affairs. This is something that Voegelin would not have done of his own volition. The *Time* piece had several themes drawn from the *New Science of Politics*. The United States of America was faced with a crisis of meaning because its intellectuals disagreed on meaning itself. The West was filled with Gnostic politicians who had dreams of world peace and progress. On this point, Voegelin was drawn on directly in the only section of his book which addressed the post WWII world.⁵⁴ The idea which was circulating about an apocalyptic end to the Korean War and the Cold War was attacked as being derived from the thoughts of Gnostic activists. Social science was said to be lacking in direction because of the rotting remnants of positivism. Senator Joseph McCarthy was seen as someone who represented the

⁵¹ Letter to Strauss, December 4 1950, in Emberely and Cooper, Eds. *Faith and Political Philosophy. The Correspondence Between Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, 1934 – 1964*, p. 72. Strauss’ article was “Natural Right and the Historical Approach.” *The Review of Politics* (1950), Vol. 12, p. 422-442.

⁵² Max Ways, “Journalism and Joachim’s Children,” *Time*. May 9 1953.

⁵³ In any event, Voegelin was in the hospital following a surgical procedure when the article appeared and was therefore limited from making the most of the publicity.

⁵⁴ Voegelin, *New Science of Politics*, p. 171.

end of the trust of the public in what intellectuals had to say. McCarthy had to be opposed with the kinds of things which Voegelin represented. Although Voegelin was grateful about the attempt to popularize his work, he was not pleased with the presentation of his book.

Voegelin disagreed with the use of “certain chapters on Modern Gnosticism out of context.”⁵⁵ In fact, Voegelin was genuinely shocked when the article appeared because he had nothing to do with it. He did commend *Time* for taking a “severely theoretical work” which “makes no concessions to popularity” and trying to “mediate problems of such complexity” for its readers. “You have seen, what probably not too many will see, that the theoretical propositions are applicable to the concrete questions of our time. I am sure your article will help even professionals in the field of political science to understand the pragmatic value of my analysis.”⁵⁶ Ways’ article was met with a mix of reactions in letters to the editor. Some letters referred to Voegelin as an “egghead,” the dismissive term for intellectuals in the 1950’s. Other letters praised the piece as the most interesting thing to ever appear in *Time*. One letter writer was not convinced of the attack on positivism and criticized the discussion of August Comte in the article with the intimation that positivism in social science had advanced past the level it was at when Comte was writing. This critique was also found in a professional review of the *New Science of Politics*.⁵⁷ The reason for ignoring his contemporaries in social science was obvious for Voegelin. He had dealt with the most able positivist thinkers in Comte, Husserl and Weber, for instance, and found them wanting. Why would he then drop down to discuss the mediocrity which was practiced in the social science of his time?

⁵⁵ See Letter to A. Styron, April 2 1953, in: *Selected Correspondence*, p. 150.

⁵⁶ Letter to *Time* Magazine, n.d., in: *Selected Correspondence*, p. 154. A section of this letter was published in the April 20 1953 issue of *Time*.

⁵⁷ See Robert A. Dahl, “The Science of Politics: Old and New.” *World Politics* (1955), Vol. 7, p. 485-486.

The leaps which Voegelin makes in connecting Joachim of Flora to Hegel and Marx and Hitler are not really leaps at all. This is an important fact to note because these connections bothered both respondents to the article and professional political scientists. In the background lie the connecting threads in Voegelin's *History of Political Ideas*. Since Voegelin had done research, which anyone who invested the effort could have done, on the periods of thought in between Joachim and the modern Gnostics, Voegelin felt he could simply state that there was a connection which he had seen. Voegelin was not the first to assert such a nexus between medieval and modern Gnosticism.⁵⁸ Sales of this work were not impacted by the fact that most political scientists were not convinced of Voegelin's presentation. Voegelin's book sold so many copies that the *New Science of Politics* has never gone out of print at the University of Chicago Press. The continuing popularity of this book resulted in a limited license to publish the *New Science of Politics* in the fifth volume of Voegelin's *Collected Works, Modernity Without Restraint*.⁵⁹ Voegelin never used the opportunity granted to him by the *Time* article. He left for Europe in 1958 having only left his mark on conservatives who adored his *New Science of Politics* and *Israel and Revelation*. Voegelin would have more than one chance in Europe to engage the public, but I will only talk in detail about the event of the Hitler lectures in 1964.

In 1964, Voegelin gave his lectures during the summer semester entitled, "Hitler und die Deutschen." Thomas Hollweck reminds us that Voegelin's lectures were not an isolated event of self-reflection in Germany "and the controversies they created inside and outside the university placed Voegelin straight in the middle of a German debate from which he would have undoubtedly emerged as the spokesman of a new generation of political scientists in Germany—if the lectures had been published in short order."⁶⁰ While Hollweck is correct that it was no coincidence that Voegelin decided to give the

⁵⁸ See Jacob Taubes, *Abendländische Eschatologie*. Bern 1947; Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History*. Chicago/London 1949.

⁵⁹ I got this information from Manfred Henningsen who edited the volume.

⁶⁰ *Selected Correspondence*, p. 11.

lectures in the summer of 1964,⁶¹ he may be overstating the case in terms of Voegelin's potential influence when we recall the impact that the Frankfurt School had in Germany.⁶² The responsibility for the delay in publication (1999 in English, 2006 in German) fell with Voegelin. The publisher had made the arrangements to turn the lecture series into a book along with another manuscript, *Anamnesis*. Although Voegelin signed the contract for both the Hitler lectures and *Anamnesis* in 1964, he never worked on the manuscript for the Hitler lectures while *Anamnesis* was published in 1966. Voegelin was not a completely unknown professor at this time in Germany. With his inaugural lecture at the University of Munich, Voegelin became the first person to teach political science there since Max Weber's death in 1920. This lecture, which determined that such major German thinkers as Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, and Heidegger were Gnostics, was entitled "Wissenschaft, Politik und Gnosis" (translated for English publication as *Science, Politics, and Gnosticism*). In response to the lecture, an editorial appeared on the front page of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the leading German liberal paper, which said Voegelin was guilty of engaging in "irrationalism."⁶³ Perhaps luckily for Voegelin, the author of the editorial was unaware of Voegelin's critique of Weber's "value-free science" in the *New Science of Politics*.⁶⁴ Voegelin said in a letter that he had succumbed to the pressure of his students at the Institute, "who were outraged at Schramm's introduction to 'Hitler's Tischgespräche'" and wanted a course given on the problem.⁶⁵ The lectures were a sensation and drew a large crowd every week.⁶⁶

⁶¹ See # 65.

⁶² See # 72.

⁶³ Quoted in Eric Voegelin, *Modernity Without Restraint*, Ed. Manfred Henningsen. Columbia/London 2000 (= *The Collected Works of E.V.*, Vol. 5), p. 3.

⁶⁴ See Voegelin, *New Science of Politics*, p. 13-22.

⁶⁵ See Letter to Bishop Johannes Neuhäusler, January 18 1965, p. 493. Schramm refers to Percy E. Schramm who wrote, "The Anatomy of a Dictator" on Hitler for *Der Spiegel*. These articles were turned into the preface to Hitler's *Tischgespräche*. See Henry Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier. Hitler, wie er wirklich war*. Stuttgart, 1963.

⁶⁶ See the accounts of Voegelin's students in: *Voegelin Recollected*, 66f.

Presumably no one was lukewarm about the proceedings as Voegelin's tone brought out unequivocal reactions. A Neo-Nazi paper claimed that Voegelin harbored a "systematic hatred of the Germans." However, most of Voegelin's students would probably agree with Henningsen that the lectures were "the high point of their German education, for they had met no one else who had told them the truth more bluntly."⁶⁷ One truth Voegelin asserted was that the idea of a German "collective guilt" (*Kollektivschuld*) was nothing more than a cliché which became "an alibi in two respects." The first sense could be seen through the rubric of "contemporary history" (another cliché). What contemporary history was supposed to entail was the uncovering all of the past atrocities which had occurred during the National Socialist period. However, this method of "mastering the past" (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) avoided the issue altogether by talking about things which can no longer be changed. "The other method," Voegelin says, "is the rejection of a collective guilt for the past, again with the ulterior motive of refusing to master the present."⁶⁸

Detlev Clemens points out that Voegelin's lectures struck a nerve in the German public because he "challenged, on several fronts, the Germans' dominating attitude regarding the Nazi past." The real issue at stake that Voegelin had pointed to was the possibility that "there was a continuity in the mentality and political culture of the Germans beyond the break of 1945, a continuity of moral and spiritual decline that had made possible the rise of National Socialism and that in the Federal Republic prevented a thorough dealing with individual guilt and responsibility for the crimes committed."⁶⁹ In the lectures, Voegelin sought out to prove that such continuities did exist. In the case of German science, the findings of a recently concluded research study about the Deutsche For-

⁶⁷ Article from the *Deutsche National und Soldatenzeitung* and Henningsen quoted in Eric Voegelin, *Hitler and the Germans*. Eds. Detlev Clemens/Brendan Purcell. Columbia/London 1999 (= *The Collected Works of E. V.*, Vol. 31), p. 1-2.

⁶⁸ Voegelin, *Hitler and the Germans*, p. 76-77. The entire account of the cliché of collective guilt is, *ibid.*, p. 75-82.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

schungsgemeinschaft (DFG) give weight to Voegelin's claims that not much had changed in the mental and political lives of Germans after the fall of the Third Reich.⁷⁰ However, unlike the results of this research study, Voegelin did not want to submit his results to a candid public.⁷¹ Publishing the Hitler lectures might have helped Voegelin step out of the shadow of the Frankfurt School which lessened the impact of Voegelin's work in Germany.⁷² Clemens says that Voegelin did not want to "give his lectures a wider audience than that of the University of Munich and his students."⁷³ The main reason might have been that "Voegelin knew that if 'Hitler and the Germans' were published, he would expose himself and his Institute of Political Science to fierce reactions—of which the audience reactions were only a foretaste—and would be publicly drawn into the discussion of 'this most disagreeable of topics,' as he called it, which increasingly polarized and impassioned the German society." Getting into such a public fracas would have taken time away from what Voegelin wanted to do, philosophize.⁷⁴

Voegelin, I argue, stayed away from public entanglement over political issues as part of his philosophical commitment to finding order in history. This dedication was so strong that Voegelin's political asides seem to aim at nothing else but the restoration of order. Voegelin's student, Manfred Henningsen says of Voegelin that he "was not a political creature. He had all kinds of talents, but he would have responded to the assembly in Athens the same way Plato did. No, I think, worse: he would have fled."⁷⁵ Another

⁷⁰ For the research study see the DFG-Geschichte site, <http://projekte.geschichte.uni-freiburg.de/DFG-Geschichte/> (accessed February 2 2008). See also Alison Abbott, "Lessons From the Dark Side," *Nature* (2008), 451, p. 755.

⁷¹ See Press Release, No. 6, February 1 2008, http://www.dfg.de/en/news/press_releases/2008/press_release_2008_06.html (accessed February 2 2008).

⁷² See Tilo Schabert's reflection in *Voegelin Recollected*, p. 108; Voegelin, *Modernity Without Restraint*, p. 16.

⁷³ Voegelin, *Hitler and the Germans*, p. 17.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁷⁵ Quoted in: *Voegelin Recollected*, p. 97. Henningsen maintains that Voegelin never tried to dissuade his German students from getting involved with

student, Michael Hereth, shared a similar sentiment with Henningsen and said Voegelin was “very much a Platonist about politics: no involvement in politics at all.”⁷⁶ This distanced attitude is quite telling as a source of what Hereth called Voegelin’s “stupid” political judgments on German politics.⁷⁷ The judgments often took the form of irrational outbursts. More than one former student recalled that Voegelin’s response to the Iran Hostage Crisis (1979-1981) was that the United States should bomb Tehran and that would end the whole affair. Hereth relates that the bombing comment came at a colloquium at Hamburg University and Voegelin specifically suggested that an atomic bomb be used. This was a statement, which not surprisingly, left the crowd appalled.⁷⁸

Voegelin’s offhand political comments when placed side by side with his academic work seem impossible to reconcile. However, Voegelin was interested in his philosophical truth quest and politics ate away at the time needed to engage in the quest, which was personal, even mystical. This does not by any means excuse Voegelin, but does help us to see why he made such crude statements. And, we are able to recognize what was necessary for Voegelin’s theoretical project: peace.

Henningsen says that in response to sit-ins at Voegelin’s lectures in 1968, Voegelin “wanted calm, he did not want turmoil.”⁷⁹ In nearly all of Voegelin’s work from the early attempts to deal with the problem of the National Socialists, to modern Gnostics, to his theory of consciousness in the *Anamnesis*, and at the end of his life with *In Search of Order*, I see a continuity of a focus on order. One could

Social Democrat organizations. Voegelin also did not try to prevent Henningsen from writing for newspapers.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 96

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 95. See also the section entitled “Politics”, *ibid.*, p. 94-102.

⁷⁸ See *Voegelin Recollected*, p. 94f. Voegelin made similarly ill-formed statements, although he did not suggest an atomic bomb be used, about the event of Vietnam War, see Voegelin, *Autobiographical Reflections*, p. 117-118.

⁷⁹ *Voegelin Recollected*, p. 41. Henningsen also says that Voegelin also used his “Bavarian-Austrian phrase,” “ich will meine Ruhe haben” [I want to have my peace], my translation.

also argue that Voegelin was aiming at the restoration of order during his time as a professor in Austria.⁸⁰ Voegelin made a clear elaboration about the necessity of order in an April 1953 letter to Thomas Clancy, saying that “I do not think that peace is an aim at all. It is a concomitant result of stable order, just as happiness is not an aim in itself but the concomitant result of a certain substantive state of the soul. Hence, what one can strive for in politics is only a stable order under given historical circumstances.”⁸¹ Most of all, his philosophizing, as Voegelin says, in the preface of *Israel and Revelation*, is a “means of establishing islands of order in the disorder of the age.”⁸² To me that line sums up Voegelin’s project because this kind of order (the island) is the order that a mystic philosopher (which Voegelin called himself) needs to operate.⁸³ A public philosopher, which Voegelin did not want to be, needs more space. I do not think such an island would have been possible to establish had Voegelin critiqued the United States or if he had published his Hitler lectures while teaching in Munich. Voegelin’s freedom from public entanglements which allowed him to produce his large body of work came at the heavy toll that few people know about his work and even fewer try to understand it.

In the next section I will discuss the nature of the relationship between Voegelin and Arendt and Voegelin and Strauss. Arendt and Strauss were like Voegelin in the sense that they wanted to retreat to their own islands to think. However, unlike Voegelin and Strauss, once Arendt took her moment to “*stop-and-think*,” she would return from the island to tell the public the results.⁸⁴ Thus far I have laid the blame for the silencing of Voegelin at almost solely Voegelin’s feet. While he has to share the burden, I now deal with factors external to Voegelin which contribute to the silence.

⁸⁰ See # 44.

⁸¹ *Selected Correspondence*, p. 156.

⁸² Eric Voegelin, *Israel and Revelation*. Baton Rouge/London 1956 (= *Order and History*, Vol. 1), p. XIV.

⁸³ See Letter to Gregor Sebba, February 3 1973, in: *Selected Correspondence*, p. 751.

⁸⁴ Arendt, *Life of the Mind/Thinking*. Orlando 1978, p. 78, original emphasis.

IV

It is not uncommon to make a comparison of the thought of Hannah Arendt, Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin. I am therefore breaking no new ground in considering Arendt, Strauss, and Voegelin together. Indeed, the grouping of these thinkers is common enough that any study which takes up the thought of one the thinkers and neglects one or both of the others may be said to be deficient. The situation I want to discuss is not the accord and discord which exists between the thought of Arendt, Strauss and Voegelin so much as the silent passing over of Voegelin by scholars of Arendt and Strauss. Such refusal to read or comment about Voegelin in work on Arendt and Strauss shows a lack of engagement with Voegelin and his work that Arendt and Strauss did not exhibit. Voegelin is regularly purged as one of these participants in the life of the mind in secondary literature. One thing which can be said about what Arendt scholars and Straussians have in common is that they do not talk or write much about Voegelin, if they deal with Voegelin at all.⁸⁵ In the case of Arendtian scholarship, the neglect of Voegelin should not be considered a reflection of any animosity between Arendt and Voegelin because they never experienced a break as did Strauss and Voegelin. A general trend that can be described in scholarly work on Arendt's thought is the awareness of Voegelin, but no interest in what he had to say. As a corrective to this trend, I recommend a fresh look at the thought of both Arendt and Voegelin on totalitarianism. To encourage such attention, I discuss the nature of the relationship between Arendt and Voegelin and point to the agreement the thinkers came to on the phenomenon of National Socialism. A different situation appears when one considers the inattention

⁸⁵ A very notable exception is the French Arendt scholar Sylvie Courtine-Denamy. In addition to writing extensively about Arendt's thought, she has translated the following Voegelin books: *Rasse und Staat* as *Race et État*. Paris 2007; *Autobiographical Reflections* as *Réflexions autobiographiques*. Paris 2004; *Faith and Political Philosophy. The Correspondence Between Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, 1934-1964* as *Foi et philosophie politique. La correspondance Strauss-Voegelin 1934-1964*. Paris 2004; *New Science of Politics* as *La nouvelle science du politique*. Paris, 2000. Courtine-Denamy has also done secondary work on Voegelin.

Voegelin receives from the Straussians. Unlike with Arendt, Voegelin exchanged dozens of letters with Leo Strauss. The Strauss-Voegelin correspondence was collected, translated and printed in a volume in 1993. In reading the correspondence, it becomes clear to the reader where Strauss and Voegelin divide on issues of philosophy. Despite this opposition, both Strauss and Voegelin came away from arguing out ideas in letters to each other with a focus on their own projects. The Straussians, unlike Strauss himself, do not seem to want to engage Voegelin's work. The Straussians, again unlike the Arendt scholars, are seemingly not unaware of the nature of the relationship between Strauss and Voegelin or of Voegelin's work. Voegelinians have attempted to bring Straussians to the ongoing dialogue on the thought of Strauss and Voegelin with disappointing results. I know of no effective method to encourage the Straussians to engage Voegelin's thought. Instead, I wish to highlight the evasive maneuvers of the Straussians when the topic of discussion is Voegelin and to point out that Strauss himself did not pass up the opportunity to listen to Voegelin.

On the illumination of the relationship of Arendt and Voegelin and the lack of attention paid to it, no one has done more work than Manfred Henningsen.⁸⁶ Henningsen is not alone in pointing out the affinity of Arendt and Voegelin on totalitarianism. Peter Baehr, a scholar of Arendt's thought, noticed the similarity of Voegelin's thought on Hitler to that of Arendt. Baehr, heading off a digression on Arendt's statements about totalitarian leadership which he does not wish to pursue, simply states that the "chief argument in relation to Hitler is that his much-vaunted gift of fascination was a 'social phenomenon' that had to be 'understood in terms of the particular company he kept.'" In a footnote, Baehr then relates that Voegelin has "a broadly similar position" in *Hitler and the Germans* and briefly elaborates. "Voegelin concluded that only those who were already spiritually compromised, and who, because of that debility,

⁸⁶ See Voegelin, *Modernity Without Restraint*, p. 2f; "The Arendt-Voegelin Controversy on Totalitarianism," in: *Politik und Politeia. Formen und Probleme politischer Ordnung, Festgabe für Jürgen Gebhardt zum 65. Geburtstag*. Hsrg. Wolfgang Leidhold. Würzburg 2000, p. 189-197; "Totalitarianism and Political Religion." *Merkur*, Vol. 637 (2002), p. 38-44.

were allowed into the Hitler circle, could be swept away by the Führer's 'aura.'"⁸⁷ It is unfortunate that Baehr did not have the occasion to consider the book fully, but it is nevertheless a promising step to see that an Arendtian is aware of the Hitler lectures. Unfortunately, Henningsen's pieces and Baehr's realization were published too late for the scholars in the *Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt* to utilize for their articles.⁸⁸ While the appearance of *Hitler and the Germans* caught the attention of Baehr, he seems to be alone in this recognition as the attitude of most Arendtians has not changed toward Voegelin. This attitude is detrimental to analyses of Arendt's thought on totalitarianism. Arendt responded to Voegelin's critique, according to Henningsen, "because it went to the center of her intellectual self-understanding."⁸⁹

Therefore, the point of discussing the personal relationship of Arendt with Voegelin is that it makes it impossible for anyone who is serious about the thought of either of these thinkers to claim ignorance of the influence of one on the other. The same can be said for the personal relationship of Strauss and Voegelin, although as I have stated, the Straussian silence is a different case. But, it may be suggested, the Cambridge volume published in 2000 was an introductory attempt which updates work which has already been done on Arendt. Perhaps the Arendtians were saving the new reflections in light of studying Voegelin for their articles and books. A review of the literature proves otherwise.

The Arendt-Voegelin exchange in *The Review of Politics* took place in 1953. Arendt's "Reply" is the catalyst for mentioning Voegelin at all for Arendtians. Yet, no matter how many times this *Review of Politics* event is referenced, it never spurs a hard look at the man Arendt felt compelled to respond to. This fact, I think, can only be explained by a lack of intellectual curiosity. Therefore, instead of

⁸⁷ Baehr, "Identifying the Unprecedented: Hannah Arendt, Totalitarianism, and the Critique of Sociology." *American Sociological Review* (2002), Vol. 67, p. 813.

⁸⁸ *Cambridge Companion to Arendt*, Ed. Dana Villa. New York/Cambridge 2000.

⁸⁹ Henningsen, "The Arendt-Voegelin Controversy on Totalitarianism," p. 192.

rehashing the Arendt-Voegelin exchange again, I want to move beyond what has been a convenient escape route which allows for the negation of a serious comparison of the two thinkers and instead bring to light the little discussed Arendt-Voegelin friendship. I now turn to facts of the Arendt-Voegelin relationship that are available (and have been for sometime) for anyone who puts forth the effort.

Arendt scholars seem to have no idea that Arendt and Voegelin had a “friendly relationship.” This relationship certainly did not resemble the friendship of Arendt and Mary McCarthy, to be sure. Despite the relative paucity of contact between Arendt and Voegelin, it certainly and importantly extended beyond (and even before) the exchange in the *Review of Politics*. In light of the biographical content I discuss below, the disconnect between the accounts of the Arendt-Voegelin relationship presented by Arendtians and the reality of the relationship starts to come into view.

Voegelin first wrote to Arendt in March 1951, before his review of the *Origins of Totalitarianism* appeared. Voegelin thanked Arendt for having the publisher send him a copy of the book, which he said he was “very anxious” to see since he had read her articles in the *Review of Politics*. Voegelin even presciently announced, “As a whole this study is likely to have a lasting significance as a standard work, through the elucidation of the connections and the masterful categorization of a huge mass of material of which others only managed to extract individual details.”⁹⁰ Some of the disagreement which would find its way into the review of the book can be found in the letter, including the often cited debate over the term “nature.”⁹¹ However, the points of contention in the letter are presented mildly. Arendt responded favorably to Voegelin and noted the importance of his work for her thought.⁹² What might seem incredible is that Voegelin’s review, which is much more abrasive than the 1951 letter to Arendt herself, was the event which started the “friendly

⁹⁰ *Selected Correspondence*, p. 69-70.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 70-71.

⁹² She had already cited Voegelin’s *Rasse und Staat* (1933) as “The best historical account of race-thinking in the pattern of a ‘history of ideas’” in: *Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: 1958, p. 158.

relationship” between Arendt and Voegelin that ended with Arendt’s death in 1975.⁹³ Even without knowing this detail, anyone who reads the Arendt-Jaspers correspondence, in English or German, is confronted by Arendt’s interest in Voegelin’s *New Science of Politics*. Arendt announced to Jaspers in November 1952 that Voegelin’s work had come out and that “I think the book is on the wrong track, but important nonetheless.”⁹⁴ Arendt later noted her disagreement with the main thesis of the *New Science of Politics* in her book *On Revolution*.⁹⁵ This was not a dismissal of the thought of Voegelin by any means. The same year as *On Revolution* appeared, the *Festschrift* for Voegelin’s sixtieth birthday appeared for which Arendt had been a contributor and active editor in soliciting contributions.⁹⁶ One of Voegelin’s assistants, Peter Weber-Schäfer, had written Arendt in 1960 about editing the volume because he claimed that he had heard Voegelin “express his great admiration” for Arendt’s work. Arendt promptly replied and accepted the joint editorship. She then sent letters to at least six people on the list of possible contributors sent by Weber-Schäfer.⁹⁷

Before the appearance of the *Festschrift* and *On Revolution*, Arendt visited Voegelin in Munich during a break from the Eichmann trial in 1961. This was no mere social call. She had been invited to give a guest lecture at Voegelin’s Institute and Arendt accepted. Arendt wrote to her husband about this trip and said the Voegelins had been

⁹³ See Voegelin, *Modernity Without Restraint*, p. 2.

⁹⁴ *Hannah Arendt/Karl Jaspers. Briefwechsel, 1926-1969*. Hrsg. Lotte Köhler/Hans Saner. Munich 1985, p. 240 [*Hannah Arendt-Karl Jaspers Correspondence, 1926-1969*. Eds. Lotte Köhler/Hans Saner, trans. Robert and Rita Kimber. New York 1992, p. 203].

⁹⁵ Arendt, *On Revolution*. New York 1990, p. 284, n. 8.

⁹⁶ *Politische Ordnung und Menschliche Existenz. Festgabe für Eric Voegelin zum 60. Geburtstag*. Hrsg. von Alois Dempf, Hannah Arendt and Friedrich Engel-Janosi. Munich 1962.

⁹⁷ See Letter to Gottfried von Haberler, November 3 1960. This letter and the ones to and from Weber-Schäfer are available on the Library of Congress American Memory website, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/-arendhtml/arendthome.html>. The Library of Congress houses the Hannah Arendt papers.

“*sehr nett*” (very nice).⁹⁸ Following Arendt’s lecture about the Eichmann trial, most of the students whom she engaged in Voegelin’s seminar had the same feeling about their encounter with Arendt.⁹⁹ Not even the standard biography of Arendt written by Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, has any details about Arendt’s lecture at Voegelin’s Institute nor does Young-Bruehl mention that Arendt had visited the Voegelins on her trip. Perhaps the standard framing of Voegelin in opposition to Arendt is derived from this biography because Voegelin is presented exactly in this manner by Young-Bruehl in the book.¹⁰⁰

In Voegelin’s third attempt to come to some understanding of the National Socialist regime, a decade after he had written his review of the *Origins of Totalitarianism*, he found himself agreeing with Arendt.¹⁰¹ Although the two books under comparison were born of different circumstances, Arendt was reporting on the Adolf Eichmann trial and Voegelin was not pleased by the nature of the German society which surrounded him, Arendt and Voegelin are so close in their understanding of Nazi Germany that they discuss the same themes and have similar interpretations.¹⁰² A theme of crucial importance to the self-understanding of Germans was the “flourishing” of former National Socialists in the Federal German Republic.

Both Arendt and Voegelin described “laxity toward former Nazis” on the part of Germans in the 1960’s. Arendt uses the example of the court case Martin Fellenz (who was a former Higher S.S. and Police Leader and important member of the Freie Demokratische Partei) which occurred “six months after Eichmann’s name had disappeared

⁹⁸ *Hannah Arendt/Heinrich Blücher. Briefe 1936-1968*. Hrsg. Lotte Köhler. Munich 1996, p. 549.

⁹⁹ See *Voegelin Recollected*, p. 77f.

¹⁰⁰ See Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*. New Haven/London 1981, p. 252ff.

¹⁰¹ Voegelin talked about Nazism in published work as political religion 1938, then as Gnosticism in 1952, and finally in the Hitler lectures, published posthumously, as burlesque in 1964.

¹⁰² The books are obviously not mirrors of each other. Arendt’s book is a “trial report,” as she called it. In Voegelin’s lectures, Germans are symbolically on trial.

from the news,” to suggest that Germans “themselves did not much care one way or the other” about their past. Likewise, Germans “did not particularly mind the presence of murderers at large in the country, since none of them were likely to commit murder of their own free will.” Arendt says that Fellenz was “accused of participation in and partial responsibility for the murder of forty thousand Jews in Poland.” Fellenz was sentenced to four years and received time already served for two and a half years for time spent in jail waiting for a trial.¹⁰³ Voegelin culled an event from the Auschwitz trials (1963-1965) to show some of this same nonchalant attitude. A man on the witness stand during the trial of a Gestapo guard at Auschwitz had shouted “murderer” when he saw the defendant who had beaten him into a cripple. The defendant had also been seen killing other prisoners by the witness. Voegelin notes that the newspaper report he was quoting from faults the witness for a “loss of self-control.” For Voegelin, the message from the journalist is that “one should peacefully allow oneself to be killed and shouldn’t in any way shout ‘murderer.’”¹⁰⁴

One man both Arendt and Voegelin focus on is Hans Globke.¹⁰⁵ Globke was called to testify for the prosecution at the Nuremberg Trials. Globke testified that he was a “mitigator” who stayed in his Ministry of the Interior position in the Reich to stop “real Nazis” from entering such offices. It was pointed out by both Arendt and Voegelin that bureaucrats like Globke were capable of assessing and taking action on the “Jewish question” even before Hitler came to power.¹⁰⁶ In 1932, Globke issued a top secret circular letter which stated that “proof of Aryan descent” was necessary before one could change their name. This “mitigator” arguably “made things worse

¹⁰³ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. New York 1994, p. 16.

¹⁰⁴ Voegelin, *Hitler and the Germans*, p. 64. See *ibid.*, p. 63-69 for a more complete discussion of German laxity.

¹⁰⁵ Globke was a key adviser for West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. Before being enlisted by Adenauer, Globke had been a high-ranking officer in the Prussian Ministry of the Interior in 1932 and retained such a position in the Reich Ministry of the Interior.

¹⁰⁶ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p. 127-128; Voegelin, *Hitler and the Germans*, p. 66-67.

than they were under ‘real Nazis’” with his interpretation of the Nuremberg Laws of 1935. The only thing that could be proven to have been mitigated by Globke is the situation of Czech brides. Before his action, German soldiers were required to provide photos of the potential brides in a state of complete undress in order to obtain a marriage license. After a Globke decree, the photo *only* needed to show the future bride in a swimsuit.¹⁰⁷ Yet, Globke was easily able to reenter the German government in 1949 as a bureaucrat in the federal chancellery.

Under Chancellor Adenauer, West Germany had a reason for acting in such a lax manner toward former National Socialists. As Arendt points out, “if the Adenauer administration had been too sensitive about employing officials with a compromising Nazi past, there might have been no administration at all.”¹⁰⁸ In this vein, Voegelin gives details about two industrialists who were highly involved in the Third Reich (one used slave labor, the other helped Hitler receive his German citizenship) who received the Federal Cross of Merit from the West German government. The only reason why such exploits were described publicly in newspapers was because someone, by chance, happened to have a functioning memory. Why a remembrance occurred after the Cross of Merit was conferred (which resulted in a revocation of the medal) did not similarly happen when a former S.S. man, who had been imprisoned for four years for several murders, was allowed to flee Germany on a valid visa, was beyond Voegelin’s comprehension. He then pointedly asked his lecture audience, “Does it not look like an operetta republic if things like that happen here? Second, a more serious question: Up to what level is our whole federal-republican society still so riddled in an organized form with National Socialists that it is almost impossible to overcome such things, especially in the judiciary and the police service?”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p. 128. See also Voegelin, *Hitler and the Germans*, p. 67.

¹⁰⁸ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p. 17-18.

¹⁰⁹ Voegelin, *Hitler and the Germans*, p. 67-69.

I have tried to show that the original tension between Arendt and Voegelin over her interpretation of totalitarianism was not as great as it initially seemed. That this gulf was bridgeable can be seen by comparing *Eichmann in Jerusalem* to *Hitler and the Germans*. Voegelin recognized that in some sense he shared a fundamental similarity to Arendt. “When I saw her library in New York, she had practically the same books on her shelves as I had on mine. We had read the same things.”¹¹⁰ However, we must remember what Voegelin considered the key difference between himself and Arendt which kept their thought projects separate. “But there is one great difference: She has an original inclination toward Marx; and my analysis of the philosophy of experience as well as my critique of ideologies, especially of Marxism, simply went against her grain. That Marxism should be nothing but a questionable sectarian movement . . . ran counter to her sense of propriety.”¹¹¹ In light of the fact that Arendt and Voegelin “read the same things” and yet had, for the most part, different interpretations and approaches to those readings, is it not then time for Arendt scholars to review Voegelin’s thought on totalitarianism?

The Straussian avoidance of Voegelin seems more sinister than that of the Arendt scholars because there is nowhere to hide from Voegelin for the Straussians. The only alternative to dealing with Voegelin is to suppress his thought. It appears that the main reason that Straussians refuse to engage Voegelin’s thought is that they believe that he is a historicist, although Voegelin was not.¹¹² This is a theme which can be seen in the two latest works on Strauss, *The Truth About Leo Strauss* and *Reading Leo Strauss*.¹¹³ Another place

¹¹⁰ Voegelin quoted in *The Drama of Humanity and Other Miscellaneous Papers, 1939-1985*. Eds. William Petropulos/Gilbert Weiss. Columbia/London 2004 (= *The Collected Works of E.V.*, Vol. 33), p. 446.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 446.

¹¹² Cooper has a good discussion of the events surrounding Voegelin’s review of Strauss’ *On Tyranny*, Strauss’ “Restatement” and Strauss’ false characterization of Voegelin as a historicist through “sophistic remarks,” see *Eric Voegelin*, p. 124-130.

¹¹³ Catherine and Michael Zuckert in *The Truth About Leo Strauss. Political Philosophy and American Democracy*. Chicago 2006, p. 47-48, present

this avoidance was observable was the 2007 American Political Science Association (APSA) Annual Meeting. Two Straussians invited to speak on a panel about Arendt, Strauss and Voegelin dealt solely with Strauss in their papers.¹¹⁴ I will not speak about agreement between Strauss and Voegelin, as I did with Arendt and Voegelin, because there are no works to highlight which show the affinity of the thought Strauss and Voegelin. I will instead detail the strange silencing of Voegelin by the Straussians and suggest that it is unacceptable to do so.

It cannot be said that Straussians are ignorant of Voegelin and his thought. It might not be too extreme to say that Straussians exhibit a willful ignorance of Voegelin. The Straussians have been given opportunities to come together with Voegelinians and discuss the thought of the two men. Yet, Straussians, when they do appear, refuse to enter the dialogue. Strauss is seen as simply right and therefore Voegelin is simply wrong. It does not matter that both Strauss and Voegelin did not believe in such endings to philosophical discussion. At a crucial juncture in the correspondence with Voegelin, Strauss says about their dispute on a point, "God knows who is right."¹¹⁵ It is in this spirit of the Strauss quote that I focus on a particularly striking occasion where Straussians refused to

Voegelin in this manner, albeit without making a real effort at communicating what Voegelin actually said in his review of *On Tyranny*. In *Reading Leo Strauss. Politics, Philosophy, Judaism*. Chicago 2006, Steven Smith only mentions Voegelin to cite Strauss' view of Machiavelli in a reply to Voegelin's review of Strauss' *On Tyranny*, see *ibid.*, p. 134.

¹¹⁴ See Michael Zuckert, "Why Strauss is Not an Aristotelian. An Exploratory Study." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Hyatt Regency Hotel and Sheraton Chicago Hotel & Towers, Chicago, IL, September 1 2007. <http://www.lsu.edu/artsci/groups/voegelin/EVS/2007%20Papers/Michael%20Zuckert.htm> (accessed March 10 2008); James Stoner, "The Catholic Moment in the Political Philosophy of Leo Strauss." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Hyatt Regency Hotel and Sheraton Chicago Hotel & Towers, Chicago, IL, September 1 2007. <http://www.lsu.edu/artsci/groups/voegelin/EVS/2007%20Papers/James%20Stoner.htm> (accessed March 11 2008).

¹¹⁵ Letter to Eric Voegelin, June 4 1951, in: *Faith and Political Philosophy*, p. 91.

enter the ongoing dialogue which Strauss and Voegelin started but left in a suspended state in 1964.

The express purpose of the correspondence volume which collected the correspondence of Strauss-Voegelin was to bring out the correspondence which was not widely known. The commentary essays, which were included only in the original 1993 volume, were a way to have thinkers familiar with the thought of Strauss and Voegelin discuss certain aspects of the correspondence and the thought of both men. The attempt to build a bridge between scholars who are influenced by Voegelin and Strauss by the editors, who are sympathetic to Voegelin, failed because the Straussians failed to enter the discussion. This is clear from the two Straussian essays.

Even though Stanley Rosen and Thomas Pangle are forced to mention Voegelin because of the context, they both avoid taking Voegelin's thought seriously. Their essays seek to prove that Voegelin was a historicist and that Strauss was a superior thinker about philosophy. Rosen's essay, "Politics or Transcendence?: Responding to Historicism," is the shortest essay in the volume. Economy of space did not result in concentrated quality of content. Rosen cites only letters from the correspondence and Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*. The letter citations are meant to show that Voegelin was closer to the "Judeo-Christian tradition" while Strauss' paganism was closer to the correct anti-Historicist position represented by (in this case) "Nietzsche's scientific slant."¹¹⁶ Rosen's piece descends into unabashed speculation in order to separate Voegelin whose "orientation as a political thinker is Christian" from Strauss' orientation which is that of a pagan.¹¹⁷ Strangely, Rosen says that Strauss "takes metaphysics more seriously than does Voegelin" not because "Strauss is the more serious metaphysician of the two, but that he tacitly rejects metaphysics altogether." Rosen adds, "Strauss never stated the full reasons for this rejection, and certainly there is no basis in these letters for reconstructing the argument." It seems from this statement that Rosen could reconstruct Strauss' argument if he wanted to, but

¹¹⁶ Rosen in: *Faith and Political Philosophy*, p. 266.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 263f.

declines without giving a compelling reason why we should accept this move. It is therefore highly questionable that on the basis of an argument which we are not allowed to inspect that Rosen declares that Strauss, through his rejection of metaphysics, gets access to the “phenomenon of historicism.” Voegelin, on the other hand, is not able to see historicism until it has been immanentized.¹¹⁸ Rosen’s refusal to take on Voegelin’s thought can be seen in reference to an earlier event in his life, i.e., his essay on the first three volumes of *Order and History*.¹¹⁹ Rosen argues against Voegelin’s work for many reasons, the most serious of which for Straussians is Voegelin’s historicism. Voegelin’s historicism arises because he takes seriously the fact that Plato, for instance, lived at a certain time and not at another time. The great fault, according to Straussians, is the assertion that the concrete situation of a particular age is bound to have an impact on one’s philosophy. It seems commonsensical to research the times in which a historical thinker lived as a way to help understand what they said. Straussians reject this research as historicism. Such rejection was described by Gregory Vlastos as Strauss’ “addiction to the strange notion that a historical understanding of a historical thinker is somehow a philosophical liability.”¹²⁰ Similarly, John Herman Randall Jr., says contra Strauss, “the historian does indeed try to find out what past thinkers thought about their problems. But he also asks why these problems were problems for them, and why they were limited in the answers they gave—questions which past thinkers did not ask. The historian thus does understand the past better than it understood itself—a fact which Dr. Strauss finds odd.”¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 262.

¹¹⁹ Rosen, “*Order and History*.” *Review of Metaphysics* (1958), Vol. 12, p. 257-276. For a discussion of why this essay was responsible for the silencing of Voegelin in the minds of Straussians see Sandoz, “Medieval Rationalism or Mystic Philosophy? Reflections on the Strauss-Voegelin Correspondence,” in: *Faith and Political Philosophy*, p. 314.

¹²⁰ Vlastos in an untitled review of *On Tyranny*. *Philosophical Review* (1951), Vol. 60, p. 593.

¹²¹ Randall, “Between Socrates and Machiavelli.” *New York Times*. May 1 1949.

Pangle's essay is much longer than Rosen's and cites work from Strauss and Voegelin and not merely the correspondence. However, more pages did not result in a serious look at the thought of Voegelin. Pangle admits that he has only "limited familiarity with Voegelin's works," but recognizes Voegelin's "great work" is *Order and History*.¹²² So limited is Pangle's knowledge of Voegelin (at least as he presents it in his essay on Platonic political philosophy) that he nowhere cites Voegelin's *Plato and Aristotle*. For what Voegelin has to say on Plato, we are directed by Pangle to the *New Science of Politics* and the correspondence. He spends one page on "the common ground" of Strauss and Voegelin which can be summed up as noticing the "problematic character of the lawful ordering of human society" and a diagnosis "of the moral and philosophic self-estrangement of modern man."¹²³ Then, Pangle seeks to elaborate Voegelin's historicism on the next three pages. After this blow has been struck, the two disputes considered by Pangle become attacks on Voegelin in favor of Strauss. Strauss wins the first round about the "status of revelation" by declaring that philosophy cannot presuppose "a *specific* faith."¹²⁴ Voegelin's Christianity had already been described by Pangle as a faith peculiar to Voegelin himself which is likely to be shared by few.¹²⁵ Strauss' paganism, to use the language of Rosen, is seen by Pangle as a philosophic position starting from "truly self-evident premises that must be granted by all thinking men (e.g., the existence of oneself as thinking and willing, the duty to do what is truly right, the visible motions, causality)."¹²⁶ Key to ending the dispute over Platonic rational philosophy is that Strauss asserted that philosophers are by their nature uneasy wherever they may live. Because Strauss elaborated "the true teaching at the heart of the *Republic*" (an analysis of a "strict correlation between types of soul and types of

¹²² Rosen, "Platonic Political Science in Strauss and Voegelin," in: *Faith and Political Philosophy*, p. 321.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 322.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 330. Pangle cites Strauss his Letter to Eric Voegelin, June 4 1951, p. 89, emphasis original.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 326-330.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 330-331.

society”) and a correct interpretation of Plato’s *Laws* (a city established without dialogue), it follows that philosophers “are far more independent than they would otherwise be of every political order, and in particular of their own ‘historical situations.’”¹²⁷ The implication is that philosophers are ahistorical and Voegelin who cannot see this point is wrong. Voegelin is then dropped completely from the concluding seven pages of the essay. It is obvious that Pangle takes Strauss’ side in an unfinished debate when he says to open the concluding section: “In contrast to Voegelin’s faith-inspired historical philosophizing or philosophy of history, Strauss takes an intransigent stand for philosophy as rigorous science.”¹²⁸

All attempts to bring the Straussians into a dialogue have not made honest participants out of the Straussians. The reticence to enter a discussion by the Straussians as just described above is unfortunate. Strauss had an influence on Voegelin and vice versa—whether one wants to admit that this impact occurred does not matter. Influence does not have to lead to agreement. One can see this fact by looking at Heidegger’s influence on Strauss and the influence of Hans Kelsen on Voegelin for example. The letters in the correspondence between Strauss and Voegelin also show that influence even in disagreement can help one’s own thinking. We can let Strauss himself have the last words as to why Straussians should read Voegelin. After an exchange of letters about the content of Voegelin’s then upcoming Walgreen Foundation lectures, Strauss welcomes Voegelin’s future presence at the University of Chicago to deliver the lectures. “We will not be in ‘agreement’—but for me it is always a great benefit and a rare joy to speak to a man who chooses the hard way.”¹²⁹

A look at Voegelin’s work beyond his review of Arendt’s *Origins of Totalitarianism* would be a benefit to the work of Arendtians. Voegelinians might have new reason to read both the *Origins of Totalitarianism* and *Eichmann in Jerusalem* in light of the similar conception of National Socialism which Arendt and Voegelin came

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 339.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 341. Pangle appears to mean that Voegelin engaged in faith-inspired philosophical reflections.

¹²⁹ Letter to Eric Voegelin, October 12 1950, p. 76.

to. Study in other areas of the work of both thinkers might bear fruit as well considering that they read the same books, but thought about them differently, as Voegelin said. The cause of the Straussian lack of engagement with Voegelin will be harder to overcome. The only recommendation I can give is to keep inviting Straussians to the discussion and hope that someday they will take after Strauss in terms of conversing with people they disagree with about how to philosophize.

V

It would be preposterous to suggest that writing about Voegelin requires an intellectual treasure hunt for materials. There are already more things published on Voegelin than one could ever read without being a philologist. Other factors appear to dispel the notion that Voegelin's thought is silenced. The Eric Voegelin Society (EVS) boasts a large international membership. The EVS is responsible for approving the panels for the annual meeting of the EVS which coincides with the annual meeting of the APSA. The EVS panels represent one of the largest group sections at the conference. Voegelin's international bibliography, edited by Geoffrey L. Price, is 305 pages.¹³⁰ There have been no fewer than three American political science special journal issues dedicated to the thought of Voegelin. There are three Voegelin research centers, one in the United States and two in Germany.¹³¹ Apart from the two languages in which Voegelin published (English and German), Voegelin's work has been translated into Chinese, Czech, French, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish, and Swedish. There has been secondary work done on Voegelin's thought in all of these

¹³⁰ *Eric Voegelin: International Biography, 1921-2000*. Ed. Geoffrey L. Price. Munich 2000.

¹³¹ The Eric Voegelin Institute for American Renaissance Studies is located on the LSU campus in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The German centers are the Voegelin *Bibliothek* at the University of Erlangen and the Voegelin *Archiv* (recently renamed *Voegelin-Zentrum für Politik, Kultur und Religion*) at the University of Munich. A decade ago there were additional centers located in England and the Czech Republic which are no longer in operation.

languages except Chinese, Japanese, and Swedish. In addition, while there are no works of Voegelin translated into Dutch or Turkish, secondary work on Voegelin is extant in these languages. It is therefore necessary to confront this outpouring of scholarship on Voegelin in a project which is concerned with the silencing of Voegelin. I am obviously not going to undertake a literature review which would encompass all of the work mentioned above. I will suggest that despite the impressive size of the list of secondary literature, and sometimes perhaps because of it, the thought of Voegelin is still not approached by scholars. To follow out the implication of this suggestion, I will review the general theme of the use and abuse of Voegelin. This theme can be seen non-exhaustively in the topics 1) Voegelin as Christian, 2) Voegelin as conservative, 3) and the “use and abuse” of Voegelin’s thought in secondary literature.

Voegelin was born to Lutheran parents in Cologne, Germany in 1901, but since that time Voegelin’s personal Christianity has undergone many permutations in writings about him. Voegelin noted that he had documents which labeled him, among other things, a Catholic, a Protestant, a neo-Augustinian, and a Thomist.¹³² Part of this labeling of Voegelin as this or that type of Christian is Voegelin’s own fault. In a letter to John East, who was writing a piece for *Modern Age* on Voegelin,¹³³ this guilt is made clear. East had asked Voegelin about Russell Kirk’s classification of Voegelin as a “pre-Reformation Christian.” Voegelin responded,

The ‘pre-Reformation Christian’ is a joke. I never have written any such thing. These *canards* arise because I frequently have to ward off people who want to ‘classify’ me. When somebody wants me to be a Catholic or a Protestant, I tell him that I am a ‘pre-Reformation Christian.’ If he wants to nail me down as a Thomist or Augustinian, I tell him I am a ‘pre-Nicene Christian.’ And if he wants to nail me

¹³² *Autobiographical Reflections*, p. 46.

¹³³ East’s article was published as “Eric Voegelin and American Conservative Thought.” *Modern Age* (1978), Vol. 22, p. 114-132. For Voegelin’s critique of this piece see Letter to John East, July 25 1978, in: *Selected Correspondence*, p. 840-841.

down earlier, I tell him that even Mary the Virgin was not a member of the Catholic Church. I have quite a number of such stock answers for people who pester me after a lecture; and then they get talked around as authentic information on my 'position.' I don't know where Russell Kirk got his information.¹³⁴

Much has been written about Voegelin's personal Christianity up to this point and I cannot add much in the way of information. What I can do is issue the disclaimer that Voegelin's personal faith was certainly not an institutionalized form of Christianity nor was it Christianity per se. Further, the speculation of others on this point matters little because Voegelin was first of all a scholar and any kind of rigidity in thought was considered unscholarly by Voegelin. By being a philosopher and a scientist, Voegelin could not be a dogmatic Christian of any kind. Voegelin was a mystic philosopher and this put him at odds with institutional Christianity. Voegelin was highly critical of both the Catholic and Protestant Churches in Germany in his Hitler lectures. The symbolism of what Jesus meant to humanity was far superior to Voegelin than anything to do with the historical Jesus. This was an issue that upset some of Voegelin's Christian readers and this frustration became especially heated after the publication of the fourth volume of *Order and History, The Ecumenic Age*. Christianity, which originally was going to take up two volumes of space in the *Order and History* series, had been relegated to a single chapter.¹³⁵

Besides speculation which has raged for years in publications on Voegelin, there have been some specific accounts which have made possible a Christianization of Voegelin posthumously. There was no deathbed conversion by Voegelin however. This can be established by turning to a memorial fabrication written by Fr. James V. Schall

¹³⁴ Letter to John East, July 18 1977, in: *Selected Correspondence*, p. 825. Kirk referred to Voegelin as a "pre-Reformation Christian" in print in his review of *Israel and Revelation*, see "Behind the Veil of History." *Yale Review* (1957), Vol. 46, p. 466-476.

¹³⁵ For good discussions of the fallout after the publication of the *Ecumenic Age*, see Michael Federici, *Eric Voegelin. The Restoration of Order*. Wilmington 2002, p. 166-182; Henningsen, "The Emerging Universalism of Eric Voegelin." *The Political Science Reviewer* (1998), Vol. 27, p. 102-103.

and by remembering the fact that Voegelin had made his own burial arrangements in December of 1984. Schall says,

On the day of Voegelin's death, a Psalm was read as he passed into unconsciousness. The Psalm was the Twenty-fifth. "Oh, keep my soul, O Lord, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in Thee" Voegelin died peacefully while this Psalm was being read. As his wife was too weak and anxious, the Psalm was read to Voegelin by his American Indian housekeeper whose name was, with splendid paradox, Hiawatha.¹³⁶

Henningsen says that Schall's account of Voegelin's death "borders on hagiography." Schall was not at the Voegelins' home when Eric Voegelin died and he did not name his source for this misinformation. Therefore, it is worth quoting Henningsen's correction of the facts here at length.

Apart from the fact that he did not have an American-Indian housekeeper named Hiawatha but actually an African-American nurse by that name, this nurse was very religious and resolute and decided, while Mrs. Voegelin was not in the room, to read to her dying patient from the bible. The text she chose had offered itself when the copy which she had taken from Voegelin's library opened at the part of David's Psalms. Neither the patient nor his wife was involved in the choice of the passage. Yet in the imagined death scene of the philosopher he has to conform to a sublime, slightly exotic image. He cannot be shown as he really was up to his death, namely the radical questioner who was unwilling to be satisfied by the answers of convention, tradition and institutional religion. He practiced the art of questioning until his last hours. 'He was watching himself dying,' his wife said. He was curious to the end.¹³⁷

When Voegelin did not capitalize on his entrance into American popular culture, his book lost the attention of most everyone except for the conservative movement spearheaded by the late William F.

¹³⁶ Schall, "On the Death of Plato." *The American Scholar* (1996), Vol. 65, p. 414.

¹³⁷ Henningsen, "The Emerging Universalism of Eric Voegelin," p. 102. See also Hiawatha Moore's reflections in *Voegelin Recollected*, p. 12-13.

Buckley, Jr. and the conservative organization he created, the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF)—though they did not seem to understand Voegelin either. Voegelin did not appear on Buckley's television program *Firing Line* which started in 1969 and continued to air until 1999. As far as I can tell, Buckley never invited Voegelin to do an interview. He did write Voegelin in 1979 and asked him to write a monthly one page column on any topic, at double the usual rate, in *National Review* as "a guest philosopher of the year." This offer would stand as long as Voegelin remembered that he was supposed to enlighten readers and meet the deadlines.¹³⁸ Voegelin politely declined and gave several excuses. His main reason was that he was "simply not talented for the kind of writing you have in mind." Voegelin conceived of the idea of a column like William Safire's *New York Times* magazine column "On Language," except that the focus would be on the "intellectual misuse of philosophic language." Voegelin said that this idea would become so interesting that he would miss deadlines. At the close of his letter, Voegelin mentioned that he would be receiving an assistant, Paul Caringella, to aid him in finishing *In Search of Order*. Voegelin also sent Buckley a copy of "Wisdom and the Magic of the Extreme" to suggest that *National Review*'s readership would not be interested in "this kind of philosophical analysis."¹³⁹ This experience with Buckley was not an isolated one. The matter might have died down had the initiative to spread Voegelin's importance not been taken up by two of the most popular American conservatives, Buckley and Russell Kirk. These two men founded the publications *National Review* and *Modern Age* (where Voegelin's name and thought is still invoked) which are lasting monuments of the conservative embrace of Voegelin.

Voegelin, despite the statements I related earlier, was not a conservative. Voegelin could also be quite short with American conservatives to whom he felt he had nothing to say. Sometimes he had literally nothing to say to conservatives.¹⁴⁰ As he described in a

¹³⁸ Buckley quoted in: *Selected Correspondence*, p. 849, n. 1.

¹³⁹ Letter to William F. Buckley, Jr., June 20 1979, p. 848.

¹⁴⁰ See Henningsen's remembrance of Voegelin's encounter with Russell Kirk, in: *Voegelin Recollected*, p. 42.

December 1955 letter to Heilman about conservatives, “As far as I can understand the odd animal that goes under the name of the American political intellectual at all, nothing exciting or serious is happening . . . I don’t read this type of literature because the authors are no partners in a discussion; these things are only an *object* of investigation, and at the moment I have no much time for them.”¹⁴¹

The conservatives did have time for Voegelin. In the 1960’s, Buckley’s cliché, “don’t let them immanentize the eschaton,” could be found on political buttons, YAF bumper stickers, and even clothing as a counter protest to the Left.¹⁴² That the cliché was coined by Buckley was enough for conservatives who did not even feel that they needed to read Voegelin to wear one of the buttons, as William Kristol recently admitted.¹⁴³ When William Safire asked Buckley to explain his phrase, he did so without any reference to Voegelin’s context in the *New Science of Politics*.¹⁴⁴ Conservatives living during the Cold War who were opposed to Communism and conservatives living today who oppose secularism see in the book an easy answer they can stand behind: enemies of conservatism can be called Gnostics. The fact that the erudite book was written by a philosopher who seemed to be a conservative only aided to legitimate this answer in the minds of American conservatives who were revolted by and were revolting against modernity. However, Voegelin did not write to give conservatives ammunition for their ideology, and refused to publish in conservative publications.

Voegelin’s Machiavellian moment also appears in relation to conservatives. While he had little use for conservatives themselves, he could always get funding from the wealthy foundations of the conservatives. And, he wrote letters to and received money from at least a half dozen of these foundations. Voegelin did not care about

¹⁴¹ *Selected Correspondence*, p. 258-259, original emphasis.

¹⁴² Voegelin was surprised and amused when he received his sweatshirt and button, see Letter to Gerhart Niemeyer, November 29 1967, p. 548.

¹⁴³ William Kristol, “The Indispensable Man.” *New York Times*. March 3 2008. Kristol also concedes that he has still not read much of Voegelin’s work.

¹⁴⁴ See Safire, *The Right Word in the Right Place at the Right Time*. New York 2004, p. 252-253.

the name on the foundation or what they promoted. He sought to get funds for his work and these foundations could not persuade him to join conservative clubs or write to give aid and comfort to conservatives. This was a matter of principle as Voegelin explained in turning down an offer to join the Philadelphia Society: "To let myself be formally identified as a liberal or conservative, would be counter to my whole lifework of trying to get out of ideological problems. I think I owe it to my reputation, as well as to the authority of my work as a scholar, not to join."¹⁴⁵ One can only wonder if Voegelin would have still received money from conservative foundations or support from conservatives such as Buckley and Kirk had it become known that he made money in the stock market on his intuition that the birth control pill would be very popular.¹⁴⁶

It is interesting to recall words from the 1980's which still have a certain relevance to the problem of the uncritical use of Voegelin's thought. In a review of Sandoz' *Voegelinian Revolution*, R. Bruce Douglass remarked, "Voegelin's work perhaps in retrospect may turn out to be as seminal as Sandoz et al. today assert, but it will take more than reverent repetition of his ideas to make it so . . . What is now needed is to move beyond exposition to a thorough and fully critical testing of the validity of the many provocative claims Voegelin makes. Only after that has occurred will it be possible even to begin to make an educated judgment about the historical significance of his work."¹⁴⁷

Cooper, who otherwise writes an excellent study in *Eric Voegelin and the Foundations of Modern Political Science*, is only interested in exposition. Cooper says, "The most general purpose of this study is to indicate as clearly as possible the depths or the circumference of Voegelin's political science. I have attempted an exposition, not a critique, on the grounds that, before one is in a position to criticize, it

¹⁴⁵ Letter to Stephen J. Tonsor, April 3 1969, 591.

¹⁴⁶ I received this information about Voegelin's stock trading habits from Manfred Henningsen.

¹⁴⁷ R. Bruce Douglass, untitled review of *The Voegelinian Revolution. Journal of Politics* (1983), Vol. 45, p. 544.

is necessary to be reasonably secure in one's understanding."¹⁴⁸ This is in some sense a fair point because Cooper was dealing with material which had only recently been published and also a wealth of unpublished material in Voegelin's letters. His book is obviously not a replacement for reading those volumes, but does some good work toward drawing attention to those books.

If we recall a statement of Eugene Webb, we can see why the time to uncritically repeat what Voegelin said is over. In an early work on the thought of Voegelin Webb said, "Although Eric Voegelin is one of the major philosophical thinkers of the twentieth century, his work is only beginning to be studied widely and intensively. It is my hope that the rapidly growing appreciation of his importance among historians, political philosophers, and scholars of comparative religions will bring him a larger and broader audience among the public at large."¹⁴⁹

It is obvious that to the extent that Webb's statement was true in 1981, one can only puzzle over what happened in the intervening time period. It is easy to mistake the volumes and essays which appear on the thought of Voegelin as proving Webb right. A careful consideration of the authors of the growing number books on Voegelin and the reviews of those books shows almost without exception that these undertakings are a Voegelinian enterprise. The Voegelinians have not brought the thought of Voegelin to the "public at large" as Webb hoped for. This task has fallen to public intellectuals such as historian Michael Burleigh. This is not necessarily a positive development for Voegelin's work. Burleigh, for his own reasons, will not move beyond Voegelin's *Die politischen Religionen* despite the fact that Voegelin himself pointed out this book was an example of "a number of stopgap notions" and "ad hoc explanations" which he had diverged from.¹⁵⁰ I do not find the citations in literature to say Voegelin's importance has steadily increased in other disciplines since Webb's comment. One exception

¹⁴⁸ Cooper, *Eric Voegelin*, p. XI.

¹⁴⁹ Webb, *Eric Voegelin. Philosopher of History*. Seattle/London 1981, p. VII.

¹⁵⁰ Voegelin, *Modernity Without Restraint*, p. 252.

would be Mongol studies where Voegelin has been cited as an authority on the “Mongol Orders of Submission to European Powers” which he wrote about in 1941.¹⁵¹

What can be said to constitute “use” and “abuse” of Voegelin’s thought? Any work which takes Voegelin’s thought on its own terms and represents accurately what Voegelin has to say may be considered a work which has made a fair use of Voegelin. The exception to fair use can be said to be the uncritical restatement of what Voegelin said in his works. I think the imminent completion of the *Collected Works* and the amount of introductory studies to the thought of Voegelin which already exist are reason enough to move in a new direction with scholarship on Voegelin’s work. An abuse of Voegelin occurs when his thought is appropriated and used in a manner inconsistent with Voegelin’s aims or where Voegelin’s thought is irrelevant to the problem(s) at hand. These simple “rules” do not cover every scenario and are meant to aid in an attempt to tease out reasons why secondary literature can prevent the study of Voegelin’s thought.

The problematic of use and abuse can be seen in a recent issue of the *Review of Politics*. Two students of Voegelin were included in the issue in different capacities. Jürgen Gebhardt wrote an article which, at pertinent places, draws upon Voegelin’s thought and a recent book written by Sandoz, which holds Voegelin hostage in an account of American exceptionalism, was reviewed. Rather than use the language of globalization, Gebhardt prefers to speak about an emerging global *ecumene* (universal community). Gebhardt sees “a creative response by political philosophy” to Bhikhu Parekh’s challenge of Western political philosophy on the issue of “the

¹⁵¹ To gauge this exception I reviewed literature which appeared after Cooper’s *Eric Voegelin*. For the use of Voegelin’s essay before 1999, see Cooper, *Eric Voegelin*, p. 278-279. To the books Cooper discussed, the following books citing Voegelin’s “Mongol Orders” paper should be added: Anne F. Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Muslim Worlds*. New York/Cambridge 2008; Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate. A Political and Military History*. New York/Cambridge 2003; George Lane, *Earl Mongol Rule in Thirteenth Century Iran. A Persian Renaissance*. London 2003.

changing context of human existence” as “the quest for a hermeneutical science of man that breaks with the axiomatic assumptions of mainstream Western social science to develop the ‘language of cross-cultural theory’ Charles Taylor proposed many years ago.”¹⁵² The creative response imagined by Gebhardt is that of “intercivilizational” political thought. He concedes that while Max Weber was “an outstanding comparativist,” an “intercivilizational, comparative political theory does not make sense” using Weber’s rational science because it “homogenizes the civilizational multiversums of culture.” This homogenization is seen as legitimate because only the science of the modern and disenchanting rational scientist can make sense and give meaning to “chaotic reality.”¹⁵³ Voegelin is brought in sparingly but importantly as a representative of “the epistemological counterposition to Weber.”¹⁵⁴

After describing a break from “a one dimensional notion of modernization,” Gebhardt focuses on an alternative hermeneutical approach. He says that “the investigation of social reality must first turn to the symbolic universe of human self-interpretation, since societies and other human figurations express experiences of order and disorder by means of imaginative symbolization. Only by studying those acts of self-interpretation that flow from the experiential world of concrete human persons can the entire fabric of human existence be brought into focus on its own terms.”¹⁵⁵ This is an insight Gebhardt finds elaborated in Voegelin’s *Ecumenic Age*. A reconsideration of the concept of “the political” leads Gebhardt to Hellas over other axial civilizations for the “most penetrating understanding of the axial emergence of a new form of symbolism and political order.” This realization does not mean that we must become Greek philosophers (we live in the post-axial epoch after all), but instead that we should further “the Greek rational effort.” This effort allows us to see that in Greek “science,” “*to politikon* is raised to the status of a universal that, in turn, redefines and

¹⁵² Jürgen Gebhardt, “Political Thought in an Intercivilizational Perspective. A Critical Reflection.” *The Review of Politics* (2008), Vol. 70, p. 5-6.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 7-8.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10-11.

individualizes the universal so that it can refer to specific cases like the polis.”¹⁵⁶ Indeed, “Hellenic philosophy reflected on the grand theme of the axial age—the basic tension between the mundane and the transcendental orders—and translated the specific case of the polis-existence into an authoritative paradigm of humankind’s humanity, the *philosophia peri ta anthropina*.”¹⁵⁷ He contends in closing that, “Hermeneutic theorizing accepts the diversity of humankind and is truly universal because its transcendental point of reference is the vision of universal humanity.”¹⁵⁸ In his essay, Gebhardt’s debt to Voegelin’s work can be seen, but he is neither parroting Voegelin nor completely reliant on him.

In contrast to Gebhardt’s use of Voegelin’s thought to elaborate an ecumenical political philosophical analysis, Sandoz’ essay collection titled, *Republicanism, Religion, and the Soul of America* (2006), may be placed as an abuse of Voegelin while promoting the questionable universality of Americanism.¹⁵⁹ I do not mean to say that the essays which deal with Voegelin (all reprints except for “Carrying Coals to Newcastle: Voegelin and Christianity”) are as willfully selective as is Burleigh and his use of Voegelin’s concept of political religion. Instead, Sandoz’ use of Voegelin in the volume is an abuse because Voegelin’s thought does not belong in that particular space. We learn in the Preface that “the first half of the book addresses aspects of American thought influential in the Founding, including the neglected question of the education of the Founders for their unique endeavor, common law constitutionalism, the place of the Greek and Latin classics.” The second half then “continues with studies of Eric Voegelin’s philosophy, itself conditioned by his own early American experience, its relationship to Christianity, the watershed debate with Leo Strauss over the true meaning of *philosophy*, the theory of Gnosticism as basic to radical modernity, and an exploration of the

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 21-22.

¹⁵⁹ See also Federici, “Religion and Americanism.” *The Review of Politics* (2008), Vol. 70, p. 136, “What Sandoz assumes about Americanism and its global application is inconsistent with the American tradition represented by Washington, John Adams, and Hamilton.”

spirit of Voegelin's late remarkable writings." The conclusion of the book deals with neither of the first two parts and is aimed at "some preliminary reflections on the current epoch in history," that is to say, the epoch "under the shadow of lethal conflict with Islamist jihadism." Sandoz' reflections on this peculiar epoch are meant to identify "possible meanings for America and for humankind."¹⁶⁰

Immediately the reader is struck by the apparently lack of unity. This fact is not lost on the author who attempts to justify his arrangement of materials. "The thematic unity of the volume," Sandoz describes, "arises from the non-reductionist philosophical framework within which the questions I address are examined."¹⁶¹ The question still lingers, what does Voegelin have to do with the content of the book? Sandoz' answer again claims a unity which is unconvincing. "A theoretical perspective unifies the book, one which I am indebted to Eric Voegelin, who figures prominently in the pages which follow."¹⁶² It is a strange idea that one's influences merit the space of one half of the chapters in a volume that putatively has nothing to do with them.¹⁶³ Sandoz' description of the influence of religion on the founding of the United States is not a new topic (although he is correct to point out its neglect) and it draws on some of his earlier publications.

The presentation however is completely uncritical and emblematic of what may be called the "myth America."¹⁶⁴ Sandoz' mythical United States is exceptional because of its apparent chosenness. This exceptionalism is summarized through the use of the term "phi-

¹⁶⁰ Sandoz, *Republicanism, Religion, and the Soul of America*. Columbia/London 2006, p. XII.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. XI.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. XI.

¹⁶³ Sandoz also oddly includes a "Bibliographical Appendix" which consists of a list of the books of Voegelin's *Collected Works*. The lack of unity in the volume was noted by reviewers, see Federici, "Religion and Americanism," p. 134-136; Kenneth B. McIntyre, "Immanentizing Arcadia?" *Intercollegiate Review* (2007), Vol. 42, p. 53.

¹⁶⁴ See Henningsen, *Der Mythos Amerika*. Berlin 2009, p. 1, n. 1. McIntyre also captures this sentiment without using the terminology in "Immanentizing Arcadia?", p. 55-56.

losophical anthropology” which was coined by Max Scheler and developed by Voegelin and which, Sandoz says, resides at the “bottom of republicanism.” Philosophical anthropology is crucial to the republican “just regime” which like any just regime uses “natural law and consent of the people as foundations.”¹⁶⁵ That “the people” were not allowed to consent to the Constitution as it was drafted and ratified without the input of “the people” is passed over by Sandoz. Likewise, there is no mention that the Protestant fundamentalist roots of republicanism conceptually emptied the continent to allow for the killing and removal of the American Indian tribes and also the propagation of African slavery. I am not attempting to demonize the USA with such comments. Sandoz invites the reader to see if what is presented about the founding period of the United States is not the case.¹⁶⁶ I think the case can be made that Sandoz’ account is not complete. The founding violences of English settler colonialism, which continued well after the founding, do not match the claim that the “American community” of the eighteenth century saw the “individual person and citizen as unique in the eyes of his Creator.”¹⁶⁷ The subject of the exclusion of non-Americans from the dignity they are owed because of their common divine origin is still pertinent to discuss. To relegate even the acknowledgment of such uncomfortable contradictions to oblivion is to engage in super-patriotism and the kind of enterprise Voegelin would not participate in.

What I have been trying to suggest is that the type of use of Voegelin’s thought can have an effect on engagement with Voegelin’s work. There are too many works published by too many authors to read everything which leads people to look for shortcuts. The American Conservative portrayal of Voegelin as a fellow traveler can lead those persons adverse to that ideology to write off Voegelin without reading his work. A similar foreshortening of engagement could occur from trying to fit Voegelin into the mold of a Christian philosopher. More important for serious scholarship is the use of Voegelin in secondary literature. Voegelin’s work can be

¹⁶⁵ Sandoz, *Republicanism*, p. 9.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. XII.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. XI.

utilized creatively to further one's own scholarly pursuits, as represented by the Gebhardt essay, but paying one's debts to Voegelin need not take the extreme form represented by Sandoz' book. As R. Bruce Douglass pointed out, more than expositions of Voegelin's work are needed. Voegelin must be approached with a critical eye if his work is to gain the acclaim which is already been heaped upon it.

VI

I will begin to speak about Voegelin's obscurity in contemporary academia by recalling the situation in which I first encountered Voegelin's work during my time as an undergraduate at LSU (2002-2006). The Eric Voegelin Institute is housed on the same floor as the political science department and a painting of Voegelin hangs in the main political science office, yet Voegelin seemed almost like a non-entity. In a department of around twenty professors, Ellis Sandoz was the only political theorist (out of a total of three) to have Voegelin on the syllabus. On one occasion, I heard a graduate student relate a story about Voegelin's *New Science of Politics*, and any critical discussion of quantitative methods, being banished from a scope and methods seminar. It must be remembered that LSU should not be seen as a microcosm of the academy in the United States. How could it possibly be? Besides the housing of the Voegelin Institute in the political science department, Voegelin was one of the first three Boyd Professors at LSU. He is still the only political science professor to be so honored.¹⁶⁸ If there is any university in the country where the work of Voegelin should receive respect and attention, it is LSU. Yet with respect to the hostility to,

¹⁶⁸ There have only been 65 Boyd Professors since the establishment of this professorship in 1953. There is no higher rank of professor at LSU. The distinction is given only to those professors "who have attained national or international distinction for outstanding teaching, research, or other creative achievement." See "Boyd Professors" [http://appl003.lsu.edu/acadaff/-aaffairs.nsf/\\$Content/Boyd+Professors?OpenDocument](http://appl003.lsu.edu/acadaff/-aaffairs.nsf/$Content/Boyd+Professors?OpenDocument) (accessed January 21 2008).

indifference to, and/or silencing of Voegelin which I experienced, LSU can be considered in the mainstream of the discipline at large.

A recent article by Jon R. Bond entitled, “The Scientification of the Study of Politics: Some Observations on the Behavioral Evolution in Political Science,” can be seen as a representative example of the problem of scientific thinking in political science in the United States.¹⁶⁹ Bond does, however, build upon the Centennial Issue of the *American Political Science Review* by showing us that the nature of the problem of scientism in American political science goes back to the founding the discipline.¹⁷⁰ Bond’s argument for scientification can be summarized as the following: political science is a science in the same way that “natural and material sciences” are sciences,¹⁷¹ the “behavioral revolution” did not occur in the 1960’s because behavioralism was a founding principle of American political science,¹⁷² political science is a newer science than the “natural and material sciences,” but is nevertheless progressing towards becoming a “real” science.¹⁷³ However, it is perhaps best to retreat to the beginning of Bond’s essay and start working through the problems it presents.

What does Bond mean by the “scientification of the study of politics?” He says this phrase “refers to the process through which political science as an academic discipline has come to use the scientific method for the production and dissemination of knowledge about politics.” By knowledge, Bond means the “modern” usage from the eighteenth century to the present. That is to say, science is

¹⁶⁹ Bond, “The Scientification of the Study of Politics. Some Observations on the Behavioral Evolution in Political Science.” *Journal of Politics* (2007), Vol. 49, p. 897-907.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 900-904. See also twenty-five articles on the “evolution” of the discipline in the Centennial Issue of *American Political Science Review* (2006), Vol. 100, especially Lee Sigelman, “The Coevolution of American Political Science and the *American Political Science Review*,” p. 463-478; John Gunnell, “The Founding of the American Political Science Association: Discipline, Profession, Political Theory and Politics,” p. 479-486.

¹⁷¹ Bond, “The Scientification of the Study of Politics,” p. 898ff.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 900-904.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 904-905.

seen as “a method of learning based on systemic observation using the scientific method.”¹⁷⁴ The “archaic sense” of science as simply “knowledge or knowledge gained by studying” was dismissed as being outdated. Bond seems unaware that this sloughing off of science’s “archaic” meanings, and thus his confusion over what constitutes science, is a problem of the English language. It does not occur in German science for instance. *Wissenschaft* (science, scholarship) is derived from *Wissen* (knowledge). One can then make such distinctions as *Naturwissenschaft* (science, natural science, physical science), *Geisteswissenschaften* (humanities), *Sozialwissenschaft* (social science), and *politische Wissenschaft* (political science). Furthermore, it is an unacceptable anachronism to apply the “modern” English sense of science to Aristotle’s *episteme politike* (political knowledge) as Bond does.¹⁷⁵ In any event, the political science of Plato and Aristotle is still currently applicable. Voegelin was able to describe what this political science consisted of when he gave a general outline of the “subject matter, analytical method, and anthropological presuppositions,” of *episteme politike* in *Science, Politics, and Gnosticism*. Voegelin says that far from being esoteric, political science is “concerned with the truth of things that everyone talks about.” To give a few examples cited by Voegelin, things ancient Greeks talked about included questions such as: What constitutes happiness? How should a person live? What is the right size and population for a *polis*? What is virtue and how is it related to justice? What should the form of government be and what professions should the *polis* have? These questions are not drawn from thin air but from the concrete existence of human beings living in a society. Even philosophers cannot escape this situation and must therefore be concerned with the same types of questions other citizens are asking.¹⁷⁶ In order to carry out political science in the manner of Plato and Aristotle today it is clear that we have to modify some of the questions listed above. For example, the *polis* is no longer in operation so we must therefore ask about other types of political formations.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 897.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 899.

¹⁷⁶ See Voegelin, *Modernity Without Restraint*, p. 257-258.

Returning to Bond, who does not appear to be acquainted with the fundamentals of *episteme politike*, one notices that he cannot be giving an accurate account of the ongoing “debate” in political science when he discusses three essential questions of the debate.¹⁷⁷ The question “is politics art or a science?” is not a valid query up for debate, but a false dichotomy. According to Aristotle, politics is both art (*techne*) and knowledge (*episteme*) and Bond agrees, but again he does not understand the difference between Greek *episteme* and English science.¹⁷⁸ Bond’s second formulation is a question which deals with the possibility of political science being a “real” science which can find “underlying laws of politics.” This has in part been answered by way of the German example above. I will take up this problem again below. The final question considers the possibility of political science as “real” science as a good thing.¹⁷⁹ In the sense which Voegelin discussed, political philosophy as a way to put one in contact with the divine ground of order, political science can be said to be a good thing. Political science in Bond’s sense, i.e., a science on the path of progress which lags behind its older counterparts, cannot be a good thing. One is not permitted to describe something as good which is falsely constructed. In this specific case, Bond attempts to make political science participate in the false notion of progress. This will be spelled out in more detail below in conjunction with the discussion of political science and its ability to uncover the hidden “laws” of politics. What is at stake in this disciplinary “debate,” according to Harold Lasswell’s definition of politics as “who gets what, when, how” on which Bond relies, is the education of students. It should be clear to Bond that while education is at stake, he is not being joined in a debate. The Straussian political philosopher Harvey Mansfield and Leo Strauss, who are used as representatives of “politics as art,” do not have any common ground to stand on with positivists and thus the debate is negated.¹⁸⁰ If not classifiable as a historicist by the Straussian benchmark (because Bond is not doing philosophy), Bond at least

¹⁷⁷ Bond, “The Scientification of the Study of Politics,” p. 897-898.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 899.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 897.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 897-898.

displays his belief in progress which signified for Strauss the element which was “most responsible” for historicity.¹⁸¹

Bond’s own positions which “come down squarely on the side of science” in a non-existent debate are the following:

1. I believe that while there is an art to politics, there are basic laws that explain political behavior and these laws can be discovered through the scientific method.
2. I believe that political science is a ‘real’ science, though in an earlier stage of development than the natural and material sciences. Notice that I didn’t call those other fields ‘hard’ sciences.’ Political science is truly a ‘hard’ science because of the difficult challenges we face in the measurement of key concepts and even in observing the political processes and behavior we seek to study. James March was right when he said, ‘God gave all the easy problems to the physicists’. I don’t know if our challenges to measurement and data collection are greater than those say, astronomers or meteorologists, but we do have the additional burden of having to justify our work as science. I doubt that astronomers ever claim to be astrologists (or vice versa).
3. I believe that the scientific study of politics is a good thing because it advances knowledge and human understanding. It’s not the only way to study and learn about politics. I agree with Professor Mansfield that the study of great books and great men—and women—deserves a place at the center of the university. But just as science is not the only way to learn and create knowledge, neither do the arts and humanities have a monopoly on education. If Aristotle is right that ‘man by nature is a political animal’ (*The Politics* 1253a1-3), then the study of politics is the most important part of becoming an educated person and citizen. And recall that Aristotle studied both the art and science of politics. He is an early example of a great

¹⁸¹ See Arthur M. Melzer, “Esotericism and the Critique of Historicism.” *American Political Science Review* (2006), Vol., 100, p. 291. This signification is Melzer’s attribution to Strauss from the Strauss passage quoted. For the negative relation between the idea of progress and esotericism, see *ibid.*, p. 291-293.

scholar and philosopher who analyzed the art of politics informed by systemic, empirical observation (*The Politics*, Book III).¹⁸²

In these statements we see Bond cite Aristotle, which is a good start, but the attempt miscarries because he has misunderstood Aristotle. As Voegelin pointed out to students, “You can’t refer to Plato’s political ‘system’ or Aristotle’s or anyone else’s until Hegel.”¹⁸³ Voegelin is correct on this point. The Greek word *systema* (system) does not appear in the entire Corpus Aristotelicum. One is left wondering if Bond knows about Aristotle’s observation in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that political science was an inexact science and that we should expect no more preciseness than political science allows.¹⁸⁴ Bond’s point number one above, therefore, is ridiculous. No one who has not lost contact with reality can seriously entertain the notion that politics is governed by invisible laws that just have not been discovered. On Bond’s point number two, I refer the reader back to the discussion of science and the “debate” on what science is.

Bond does not even seem to have the scientific method of natural scientists understood properly. He states, “Theory building proceeds from description to explanation and prediction.”¹⁸⁵ Peter Manicas is helpful in correcting such confusion. “Indeed, while the theoretical work of physical scientists often begins with the effort to understand patterns, they are not interested in, nor generally capable of, providing either ‘explanations’ or ‘predictions’ of particular events.”¹⁸⁶ About the “fundamental goal of theory,” Manicas says, “in both the natural and social sciences is not, contrary to widespread opinion, prediction and control, or the explanation of events (including ‘behavior’). Rather, more modestly, theory (at least in one

¹⁸² Bond, “The Scientification of the Study of Politics,” p. 898-899.

¹⁸³ David Edwards quoting Eric Voegelin in: *Voegelin Recollected*, p. 35.

¹⁸⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094b15-1095a15.

¹⁸⁵ Bond, “The Scientification of the Study of Politics,” p. 899.

¹⁸⁶ Peter T. Manicas, *A Realist Philosophy of Social Science. Explanation and Understanding*. New York/Cambridge 2006, p. 1.

of its clear senses) aims to provide an understanding of the processes which jointly produce the contingent outcomes of experience.”¹⁸⁷

What Voegelin’s attempt at restoration shows us is that political science is participatory. The ability of the political scientist depends on how finely tuned the instrument, that is the political scientist, for conducting the science is. Voegelin’s epistemology is starkly opposed to the kind of Archimedean point fact gathering on display in scientific journal articles. Voegelin’s break from the modern epistemological model, which is based on Descartes’ distinction between subject and object, is most evident in his *Anamnesis*.¹⁸⁸ Gilbert Weiss says of Voegelin’s theory of consciousness presented in *Anamnesis* that Voegelin came to the conclusion that “consciousness is not an inner *entity* separated from the outer reality, but an *event* within reality, and, accordingly, consciousness is constituted by reality, not the other way around. Something like a transcendental consciousness or subject has no ground in the ‘reality of common experience.’ The only thing we know from experience, and therefore talk about, is the consciousness of concrete human beings living in concrete social and historical settings.”¹⁸⁹

While Bond’s article is a representation of the problem of scientific thinking in contemporary American political science, an article by Jody Baumgartner and Jonathan S. Morris can be seen as a paradigmatic example of what is wrong with the practice of most American political science.¹⁹⁰ This article combines the most

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁸⁸ On Voegelin’s divergence from this model, see Lee Trepanier, “Voegelin’s and Nietzsche’s Response to Cartesian Subjectivity and the Rationalization of Politics.” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Marriott, Loews Philadelphia, and the Pennsylvania Convention Center, Philadelphia, PA, August 31 2006. <http://www.artsci.lsu.edu/voegelin/EVS/2006%20Papers/Lee%20Trepanier.htm> (accessed January 11 2008).

¹⁸⁹ *The Authoritarian State. An Essay on the Problem of the Austrian State.* Ed. Gilbert Weiss. Columbia/London 1999 (= *The Collected Works of E. V.*, Vol. 4), p. 8-9, original emphasis.

¹⁹⁰ “The Daily Show Effect. Candidate Evaluations, Efficacy, and American Youth.” *American Politics Research* (2006), Vol. 34, p. 341-367.

confused elements of Bond's political "science" with a lack of imagination and perception with regard to the materials. The paper is classified as "media studies" which is a fairly new example of the problem of overspecialization. Focusing on the media for the whole of the analysis instead of only a part, cuts off the rest of the political reality in which people live. Further, the authors stick to a pedantic restriction in the field of media studies and therefore uncritically accept a dichotomy of, "hard" versus "soft" news, which is highly questionable.¹⁹¹ The conclusion of the article states that *The Daily Show's* host, Jon Stewart, should not be so hasty in branding programs like CNN's *Crossfire* (canceled) and Fox News Channel's *The O'Reilly Factor* and *Hannity and Colmes* as "hurting America" because the "findings" show that Stewart's show, like the others just named, negatively influenced its major demographic by "lowering support for both presidential candidates and increasing cynicism."¹⁹² If television shows appear to be impacting voting frequency negatively by exposing the failings of candidates, one should ask fundamental questions about the ability of the party system of the United States to produce choiceworthy candidates. To ask such questions would necessarily involve a larger discussion of the political formation of the United States and its people. More surveys will not help in this area because to ask a survey question is to foreshorten the range of possible answers that can be given. And, surveys are not a form of discourse nor do they get beyond triviality. One could also consider whether programs such as *The Daily Show* are actually good for the United States by indirectly acting beneficially for the US as Diogenes and the Cynics were helpful for Athens.¹⁹³ The inability of the authors to see that all television news, including "reputable" networks like ABC, NBC and CBS, should be

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p. 342-345. An example of a "hard" news program is the *CBS Evening News* while *Hannity and Colmes* is considered a "soft" news program.

¹⁹² Ibid., p. 361. It must be remembered that *The Daily Show* is a political satire and styles itself as "fake news."

¹⁹³ See Alejandro Bárcenas, "Jon the Cynic. Dog Philosophy 101," in: *The Daily Show and Philosophy. Moments of Zen in the Art of Fake News*. Malden, Mass. 2007, p. 93-104.

considered “soft news” or better yet, entertainment is less troubling than the detailing of the data collection in the paper itself.

Baumgartner and Morris actually imagine that they were in the laboratory while conducting the experiments to collect their data based on a few hypotheses. I will briefly discuss the research design of these two political “scientists” which appears to be written as if their “controlled experiment” is as replicable as an elementary biology experiment on the *Drosophila melanogaster* (fruit fly). Baumgartner and Morris state “To examine the effects of *The Daily Show* on young adults, we constructed a controlled experiment” This experiment used volunteers from “introductory-level courses at a medium sized university.”¹⁹⁴ The students were shown clips of election coverage from the “hard” news source, the *CBS Evening News* and from *The Daily Show*. Baumgartner and Morris then had the students fill out questionnaires about their “demographic and political” backgrounds and also answer survey questions about the TV clips. The authors “found” that the humor of *The Daily Show* had what limited effect on opinion that it did on non-regular viewers.¹⁹⁵ The “drawback of the survey findings” was said to be the lack of a nationwide sample.¹⁹⁶ It appears from this article that these two “scientists” think political science is about escaping into the laboratory to examine young people as if they were lab rats. Whether Baumgartner and Morris donned lab coats and sterilized the room they were calling a laboratory was not mentioned in the paper. Yet, the “drawback” is an insufficient sample size and not that their “controlled experiment” has removed all of the social and historical concreteness of both themselves and the students.

It is no surprise based on the two accounts above that the best work done on elections and the political system of the United States in the past four decades was done not by an Americanist political scientist but by a journalist, Hunter S. Thompson.¹⁹⁷ He was not one of those

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 346.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 356.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 359.

¹⁹⁷ Hunter S. Thompson (1937-2005) was an American journalist and author who created Gonzo Journalism which is a standard feature in his work.

journalists in the television news media that the Baumgartner and Morris seem to think present “hard news.”¹⁹⁸ Thompson was able to achieve the level of intelligibility and persuasiveness that he did through his participatory political analysis (Gonzo Journalism). Thompson’s 1973 book, *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail '72* was considered by the best account of the 1972 presidential campaign by *The Washington Post* and the best attempt to portray “what it feels like to be out there in the middle of the American political process” by the *New York Times*.¹⁹⁹ However, while Thompson’s Gonzo Journalism got him to the “meat-hook realities” he was after, the use of drugs, alcohol, and unrestrained verbiage is not something Americanists should emulate. Nevertheless, his insight that saying something provocative and compelling about the electoral process and the political system of the United States requires participation, not distance, ought to be well noted by Americanists.

I choose to focus here on the Americanists because they are the largest part of the discipline. The problem of scientism extends to other fields of the discipline in the US as can be seen by perusing the contents of the three main APSA journals (*American Political Science Review*, *Perspectives on Politics*, *PS: Political Science and Politics*). A closer look reveals an utter confusion about the fundamentals which prevents serious discussion. This is a problem which makes itself evident in the existence of such things as “game theory,” “rational choice,” and the narrow minded “isms” of International Relations. When humans are not totally excluded from scientific formulations, they do not appear as any humans on Earth do.

Perhaps the most visible symbol of what is new in the American political science discipline in the United States is the APSA Annual Meeting. This is a massive conference that unites scholars from across the country and also includes international scholars. The 103rd

¹⁹⁸ See Thompson’s discussion of TV journalism in: *Generation of Swine: Tales of Shame and Degradation in the '80s*. New York 1988, p. 43.

¹⁹⁹ Thompson, *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail '72*. New York 1973.

meeting in 2007 was held in Chicago. There were ten panels about Eric Voegelin or the application of some aspect of his thought—this number was the most ever for the EVS. All of these panels were hosted by the EVS. This number of panels is the most ever for the EVS and made it easily the second largest group panel and the only group panel dedicated to one person. The influence of Voegelin, as represented by the number of panels at the APSA meeting, was equivalent to Aristotle, Cicero, Hegel, Machiavelli, John Stewart Mill, Montesquieu, Nietzsche, and Rousseau combined. Aristophanes, Plato (sponsored by EVS), and Wollstonecraft each had one panel. The title of both of the panels on the “founders” of political science, Plato and Aristotle, makes reference to their “relevance,” which should not be necessary to state. Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss were the focus of only two panels and both were compared to Voegelin in an EVS panel. George W. Bush, a very controversial sitting president and possibly the worst president ever according to some historians, had only managed to land on six panels as the topic of discussion.²⁰⁰ At first glance, it seems that Voegelin is well represented at this important conference. The fact of the matter is much different. There were 1091 panels at the conference meaning that Voegelin factored in around one percent of the total panels.

The main problem with the Annual Meeting is not so much the quality of the panels, although complaints could be registered, but that the meeting seems largely unnecessary considering what takes place at the event. While he never spoke out publicly, Voegelin was nonetheless unequivocal in his lack of enthusiasm for the APSA Annual Meeting.²⁰¹ “I have not attended a meeting of the American Political Science Association in years, without being appalled at the mediocrity of the performance and without hearing numerous, frank expressions of disgust.”²⁰² Presenting a paper and doing work is

²⁰⁰ See Eric Foner, “He’s The Worst Ever.” *Washington Post*. December 3 2006.

²⁰¹ See Letter to Gerhart Niemeyer, October 8 1964, in: *Selected Correspondence*, p. 472; Letter to Jürgen Gebhardt, September 9 1976, in: *Selected Correspondence*, p. 811.

²⁰² Unsent draft to Karl Ettinger, included as an attachment to Letter to Joseph Willits, January 14 1954, in: *Selected Correspondence*, p. 194.

secondary at the conference to the social gathering and networking aspects of the Annual Meeting. It was this social aspect which caused Voegelin the most grief.²⁰³

In fact, the preliminary program for the APSA meeting promoted socializing in the “Program Highlights” section as a reason for graduate students to attend the “Graduate Student Happy Hour” during the meeting. “Graduate students are invited to network with each other and meet informally with APSA President Robert Axelrod and other APSA Officers and Council.”²⁰⁴ It should be noted that this invitation does not mandate that graduate students need to be delivering a paper or acting as discussants. I was invited to the *Review of Politics* wine and cheese reception at the APSA despite the fact that I was not planning on attending the meeting in a business capacity. All I had done to merit such an invitation was to submit a paper to the *Review of Politics* for publication which was not given an outside review by the editors. The preliminary program which lists all the panels and participants (naturally also with advertisements and notifications of the “official” travel agency, airline, and rental car companies) runs 192 pages. The “Guide to Chicago” section of the preliminary program informs the reader about the co-headquarter hotels which were different than the last meeting in Chicago. The reason for the move was to make it convenient for “you to take advantage of all the wonderful dining, shopping, arts and entertainment options that Chicago has to offer!”²⁰⁵

Less than half of all members of the APSA attend the meeting. The vast number of panels and the timing of the panels in part leads to the result that the panels are poorly attended. Nothing particularly earth-shattering is going to be presented at the APSA. Quantitative political scientists are not going to discover a new form of government through scientific experimentation, as the Onion joked

²⁰³ See Letter to Gerhart Niemeyer, October 8 1964, in: *Selected Correspondence*, p. 472

²⁰⁴ See “Preliminary Program” supplement to *PS. Political Science and Politics* (2007), Vol. 40, p. 10.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

about a month after the meeting, even if they think they are in the laboratory.²⁰⁶ As with other meetings of professionals, it should come as no shock that the real “business” of the Annual Meeting occurs during sessions of rubbing elbows at receptions and at the bars and restaurants of the big cities where these meetings occur. As the official title of the meeting is the “Annual Meeting & Exhibition,” I should not forget to mention the exhibits. There are scores of book and journal publishers that attend the meeting to hawk their wares which in turn creates the unique situation of an annual political science Woodstock (as in the thoroughly commercialized one which took place in 1999).

Symbolic of the state of the discipline is the theme from that conference: “Political Science and Beyond.” The “beyond” refers to the discipline of political science. The theme of the meeting was the promotion of interdisciplinary study. The “Presidential Address” shows the problem the discipline faces when it comes to fundamentals. When President Robert Axelrod was searching for a way to begin the address, he chose to tell a tale about his favorite story about importing ideas from another field. He chose Darwin importing “a key insight” from Malthus’ *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1826). The insight which gave Darwin a theory to work with turned out to be the idea that under conditions of “struggles for existence” that “favorable variations would tend to be preserved, and unfavorable ones to be destroyed.”²⁰⁷ Axelrod adds to the Darwin story, “The *really neat thing* is that twenty years later, another political economist, namely Marx, imported Darwin’s conception of political struggle back into political economy.” Axelrod also considers Marx’s import from Darwin’s *On the Origin of the Species*, a contribution to the field of political economy. He

²⁰⁶ “Political Scientists Discover New Form of Government.” October 30 2007, http://www.theonion.com/content/news_briefs/political_scientists (accessed March 11 2008). In the same vein, Michael Parenti discusses a political cartoon which ridicules the profession in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, see “Patricians, Professionals, and Political Science.” *American Political Science Review* (2006), Vol. 100, p. 504.

²⁰⁷ Axelrod, “Presidential Address.” *Perspectives on Politics* (2008), Vol. 6, p. 3.

also states that Darwin could have exported if he had “written about biology’s applicability to class struggle.”²⁰⁸ But the good reason why Darwin did not write about biology’s applicability to class struggle is because he was not an “intellectual swindler” as Marx was.²⁰⁹ We should remember that Axelrod, a recent President of the Association, is speaking about Marx’s deliberate deception as a “really neat thing.” This is the President who the graduate students of the discipline were invited to meet during the “Graduate Student Happy Hour.” I have not heard that any of the graduate students informed Axelrod at the informal get together that Marx did no such “really neat thing.” Nor does it appear that any of Axelrod’s colleagues wanted to spoil the mood over hors d’oeuvres and cocktails at the Opening Reception following the Presidential Address by pointing out Marx’s intentions. While his heart was in the right place, it would be refreshing *intradisciplinary* study if Axelrod read and understood important works for political science before spending the time trying to do interdisciplinary study by exporting game theory to cancer researchers.²¹⁰

It is a simple fact that to get hired or advance in rank in the political science discipline one must publish work and attend conferences. When we consider that the scientific “researchers” make up the majority of persons in the discipline of American political science and that they have detached themselves from reality, it seems reasonable to ask if this is the kind of political science we want to legitimate in journals and with conference invitations, let alone by granting Presidential terms. Voegelin’s idea for an institutional solution was to do interesting political science, in the sense of *episteme politike* and not disciplinary political science, which would attract young people away from the behavioralists. I have suggested that this practice cost Voegelin a chance at finding employment at a top university in the United States. However, Voegelin’s approach faces difficulties when we know that it is possible at many schools

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 4, my emphasis.

²⁰⁹ This is Voegelin’s characterization from his Inaugural Lecture at the University of Munich. See Voegelin, *Modernity Without Restraint*, p. 264-265.

²¹⁰ Axelrod, “Presidential Address,” p. 4-5.

(LSU included) to obtain a Bachelor's degree in political science without having taken one theory course. Besides the fact that the elite schools which train Ph.D.'s tend to treat political philosophy as a non-required subfield, part of the reason why I think behavioralism has not gone away, as many theorists had hoped it would is that there are not enough confrontations with the behavioralists when they talk about important political science texts without having tried to understand them. Judging from the content, or lack thereof, in the main three APSA journals and at the APSA Annual Meeting, it seems that the Perestroika (restructuring) Movement, which was started by the e-mail "Mr. Perestroika" sent in 2000, has stalled.²¹¹ With all due respect to Ellis Sandoz, he was too early in writing the epitaph of behavioralism in 1972.²¹² The continuing influence of scientism in American political science can be suggested a reason for the silencing of Voegelin in particular and "qualitative" research in general, by the discipline.

VII

Will the silence surrounding Voegelin's thought ever be broken and Voegelin be allowed to take his rightful place, whatever that may be, in the history of political thought? Voegelinians seem certain—some are more certain than others. Sandoz, who is given the last word in *Voegelin Recollected*, concludes after a quick comparison of Voegelin to Beethoven: "The stature of Voegelin is going to hold up. Voegelin, I think, is going to be recognized as the greatest thinker of our time—in due course."²¹³ Geoffrey L. Price took a more prudent approach in speaking only about Voegelin's last two major works. "*The Ecumenic Age* appeared as the fourth volume of *Order and History* in 1974, after a long period during which Voegelin's

²¹¹ For a discussion of this event in American political science, see Kristen R. Monroe, *Perestroika! The Raucous Rebellion in Political Science*. New Haven/London 2005. The e-mail can be found, *ibid.*, p. 9-11.

²¹² See "The Philosophical Science of Politics Beyond Behavioralism," in: *The Post-Behaviorial Era. Perspectives on Political Science*. Eds. George J. Graham, Jr./George W. Carey. New York 1972, p. 285-305.

²¹³ *Voegelin Recollected*, p. 278.

sensitivity to historical data had forced him to recast his conclusions several times. It may be a century before the full achievements of this work, and the posthumously published culminating volume *In Search of Order* (1987), are fully appreciated.”²¹⁴ I will offer no new predictions. The problem with such conjectures is that they do not get at the silencing of Voegelin which makes more or less hopeful suggestions as quoted above possible. Furthermore, these statements about the future reception of Voegelin’s work do not do anything toward overcoming the current silence. For this reason, in this paper I have tried to uncover some of the situations which made the silencing of Voegelin possible. I have also made some suggestions about how to do something about the silence surrounding Voegelin’s work. I will revisit both briefly.

Voegelin was a political philosopher who made bold statements in his work, but he thought he had done the work to not only justify but also to reinforce such lines as: “Marx *was* an intellectual swindler.”²¹⁵ “This elementary humanity—that what concerns my neighbor concerns me too—this was lacking. In a wider sense, it was lacking in the whole Western world, and, in what became a quite specific and criminal sense, in Germany, and especially in the Churches, which used their theological position to renounce humanity.”²¹⁶ And, most famously, asking us to “recognize the essence of modernity as the growth of Gnosticism.”²¹⁷ This certainty also came out in Voegelin’s speech which could make him sound arrogant. He did say one time for example, “I am German philosophy!” (Ich bin die deutsche Philosophie).²¹⁸ I have suggested that the way Voegelin presented himself, through a long list of publications and the showmanship of giving highly informative lectures without notes, cost him a position at a top university in the

²¹⁴ Eric Voegelin. *A Classified Bibliography*. *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, (1994), Vol. 76, p. 6.

²¹⁵ See Voegelin, *Modernity Without Restraint*, p. 264, original emphasis.

²¹⁶ Voegelin, *Hitler and the Germans*, p. 153, Voegelin here was referring to John Donne’s poem, “For Whom the Bell Tolls,” used in the epigraph of Ernest Hemingway’s eponymous novel.

²¹⁷ Voegelin, *New Science of Politics*, p. 126.

²¹⁸ See *Voegelin Recollected*, p. 106-107.

United States. However, intimidating potential colleagues by taking political philosophy seriously is not something which Voegelin can really be blamed for. Nonetheless, not acquiring one of these positions cost Voegelin a chance to work with top young people in the United States and he went to Germany where he was overshadowed by the Frankfurt School. Something for which Voegelin can be blamed for is his public inaction. He had opportunities in both the United States and in Germany to publicize his work. To do so he would have had to risk stagnation in his work while being involved in public controversies. For Voegelin, his “island of order” was more desirable place to live and he did not venture into the public realm for very long.

Voegelin’s personality and his refusal to become a public philosopher are obviously not things anyone today can do anything about. Similarly, no one can get Voegelin a job at Yale, Harvard or Johns Hopkins. However, having identified these past contributions to the silencing of Voegelin, it is important to determine why Voegelin is neglected today. I have described Voegelin’s relations with Arendt and Strauss earlier. While both Arendt and Strauss entered into a dialogue with Voegelin, the students of the thought of Arendt and Strauss are reluctant to engage Voegelin’s work. In terms of political scientists who work on political philosophy, not having a hearing from these two groups has impacted the extent to which Voegelin is known. My only suggestion is to keep inviting these scholars to discuss the work of Arendt, Strauss and Voegelin. The discipline of American political science at large is a different story. However, it will not do any good to continually beat the drum of Voegelin and hope that political scientists will finally listen. Instead, producing more critical and original work on Voegelin’s thought, as well as unique work which incorporates Voegelin’s thought, is the best approach in the attempt to gain a wider audience for Voegelin. Only then will students of Voegelin be able move from asserting Voegelin’s importance to having others see it demonstrated.

One area where recognition of Voegelin’s significance has been visible is in scholarship on racism. Voegelin’s work on European race ideas, which are usually less emphasized than his other work, has attracted the attention of Paul Gilroy, Ivan Hannaford, and Alana

Lentin. Hannaford and Lentin focus on the concept of race as fundamentally tied in with the nation-state and divorced from ancient notions of race as Voegelin had described in *Rasse und Staat*.²¹⁹ Gilroy sees the importance of Voegelin's contention that "race" thinking helps to constitute social reality which helps to explain the persistence of "race" thinking in spite of the fact that the biological race idea has been thoroughly disproved.²²⁰ Voegelin was certainly not alone in pointing such things out, but what is interesting about the use of Voegelin by prominent scholars who focus on racism is that they were not students of Voegelin, nor had they met Voegelin. It is this independent discovery of Voegelin's work which is perhaps most intriguing and important regarding the silencing of Voegelin because the audience which Voegelinians hope to reach is the uninitiated. That an underappreciated area of Voegelin's work was utilized by scholars who were unfamiliar with Voegelin maybe telling in pondering the silence surrounding Voegelin's thought and how it can be surmounted.

²¹⁹ See Hannaford, *Race. The History of an Idea in the West*. Baltimore/London 1996; Lentin, *Racism and Anti-Racism in Europe*. London 2004.

²²⁰ See Gilroy, *Against Race*. Cambridge, Mass. 2000.

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