

In Memoriam: G. Ellis Sandoz (1931-2023)
Louisiana State University, Department of Political Science 1978-2015

The LSU Department of Political Science, the Eric Voegelin Institute for American Renaissance Studies, and a vast community of scholars from the United States and Canada to Europe and beyond, lament the passing of G. Ellis Sandoz. He died peacefully on September 19, 2023, after an extended illness. Ellis, as he was known to all, was a Louisiana native, born in 1931, whose family emigrated to the United States from Switzerland. He earned B. A. and M. A. degrees from LSU, studying history, philosophy, and political science, the latter under the tutelage of LSU's first Boyd Professor, Dr. Eric Voegelin. One of the prominent political philosophers of the twentieth century, Dr. Voegelin, and his wife, escaped from Austria after the Nazi Anschluss in 1938 and joined the LSU political science faculty in 1942, where he remained until moving back to Germany in 1958 to create the *Institut für Politische Wissenschaft* at the University of Munich. Meanwhile, after a brief foray as a Capitol Hill Policeman for the United States House of Representatives, and three years of service in the United States Marine Corp, wherein he rose to the rank of First Lieutenant, Ellis followed Dr. Voegelin to Munich and eventually earned his doctorate (*Dr. oec. Publ.*) under Voegelin's direction in 1965, the only American student to have done so.

Ellis' first academic appointments were at Louisiana Tech University (1958), for a decade and then East Texas State University (1968) for another decade. He joined the LSU political science faculty in 1978 and stayed until his retirement in 2015, and, for a time, served as Chair of the Department. His major administrative achievement, by his own estimation, was the founding of the Eric Voegelin Institute in 1987, for which he remained the director until his retirement. Attendant to that founding, and a symbol of his endless energy and persistence, Ellis served as a member of the Editorial Board and as General Editor of *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin* (LSU Press, 1989-1999, and U. of Missouri Press, 1999-2012), 34 volumes! Ellis worked closely with Beverly Jarrett, who rose from copy editor to Managing Editor and Executive Director of the LSU Press and who had worked with Voegelin on the publication of the fourth and fifth volumes of *Order and History*. When the LSU Press fell on hard times, Ms. Jarrett moved to the University of Missouri Press, again as Director and Editor-in-Chief. Both Ellis and Beverly were possessed of the "finishing spirit," and both saw to the eventual publication of the entire 34 volumes. As part of his endeavor to see that the ideas and writings of Eric Voegelin would be available to a larger community of scholars, Ellis founded and served as long-time President-Secretary of the Eric Voegelin Society, whose existence in the American Political Science Association annual meetings is instrumental in gathering scholars from around the world to discuss political theory and public policy. Dr. David Walsh, Ellis' long-time friend and colleague, and current President of the Voegelin Society, has written about these communicative endeavors: "The written word is not the only way of preserving memory, as Plato reminds us, for it can only become a living force when the spark of understanding leaps from one soul to another. Thinking, Ellis understood, is not a solitary activity but something that is best done in company with others."¹

¹ In Memoriam: Ellis Sandoz. <https://voegelinview.com/in-memoriam-ellis-sandoz/>

Ellis was a prolific scholar. In addition to the monumental task of directing the publication of Voegelin's writings, he authored, co-authored, or edited twenty books, countless articles, and an extraordinary number of invited lectures all over the world. That outpouring of scholarship was widely noticed and acclaimed. Ellis was the first political scientist to be recognized as a Distinguished Research Master at LSU. He was chosen as a Fulbright 40th Anniversary Distinguished American Scholar and appointed by President Reagan to a term of six years on the National Council of the Humanities. He was elected President of the Philadelphia Society, in 2000; and invited to give the prestigious John Witherspoon Lecture on "Republicanism and Religion: A Conspiracy of Faith and Reason" in 2004; as well as the Alpheus T. Mason Lecture on Constitutionalism at the James Madison Program, Princeton University, in 2008. He delivered invitational lectures in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Norway, Guatemala, and Genoa; and he lectured widely across the United States and Canada. He received the University Medal from Palacky University Olomous, in the Czech Republic; and was appointed to the endowed Herman Moyses Jr. Distinguished Professorship of Political Science at LSU, a professorship that was specifically created for him. Finally, it should be noted that while engaged in this extraordinary fifty-seven-year academic career, Ellis taught the classical writings of political theory to thousands of undergraduate students and a host of doctoral students at LSU. Indeed, he attracted those graduate students and secured Earhart Foundation fellowship funding for many of them over the course of his tenure at LSU.

Of the many books and essays that Ellis authored, four books and one essay stand out as examples of the professing task he had chosen and the scope and breadth of his scholarly interests. Indeed, he had a particular fondness for each of them. The first is his dissertation written under Dr. Voegelin's tutelage and then published, and revised, for a second edition: *Political Apocalypse: A Study of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor*. Not only is this work a seminal study of a work of fiction, and, thereby, a testament to the importance of literature in the study of political theory, it is also a significant commentary on modern nihilism. A second work, *Conceived in Liberty: American Individual Rights Today*, was written for use in American Government courses at East Texas State University. Duxbury Press, the publisher of the text, informed Ellis that it had been adopted by Harvard University, to be used in their introductory American politics course. On hearing the news Ellis wrote: "Commerce [as in Commerce, Texas] enlightening Cambridge appeals to the underdog in me." That appeal extended to a brief note from Sidney Verba, Chair of the Harvard Government Department, which Ellis kept in his papers: "Just a quick note to say that we have been using *Conceived in Liberty* . . . and it really stands out above the other readings . . . The book is very good." A third important publication, not surprisingly, is *The Voegelinian Revolution: A Biographical Introduction*. This work is still in print and still the standard exploration of Voegelin's corpus, but most especially it is a study of Voegelin's theory of consciousness and its explication in perhaps the most authoritative of Voegelin's writings on the subject, *Anamnesis: On the Theory of History and Politics*. Finally,

David Walsh is the Chair Board Member of VoegelinView, President of the Eric Voegelin Society, and Professor of Political Science at Catholic University of America. He is the author of a three-volume study of modernity: *After Ideology: Recovering the Spiritual Foundations of Freedom* (Harper/Collins, 1990), *The Growth of the Liberal Soul* (Missouri, 1997), and *The Modern Philosophical Revolution: The Luminosity of Existence* (Cambridge, 2008). His latest book is *Politics of the Person and as the Politics of Being* (Notre Dame, 2015).

Ellis produced a two-volume collection of *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era*, which should be considered in accompaniment with his last published essay on “The Philosopher’s Vocation: The Voegelinian Paradigm,” published in *The Review of Politics*. In these two publications Ellis reveals his affection for the prophetic voice and, most decidedly, for its relevance to a disordered world. Both works emphasize the importance of recognizing human existence, in all its individual and social forms, as living in the middle, and, thereby, seeking the intersections of transcendence and immanence. In “The Philosopher’s Vocation,” Ellis quotes Voegelin on this matter. It is a statement of what Voegelin called the equivalences of experience, of the constancy of human consciousness seeking out the gods, in whatever form they may appear.

As far as my own vocabulary is concerned, I am very conscious of not relying on the language of doctrine, but I am equally conscious of not going beyond the orbit of Christianity when I prefer the experiential symbol "divine reality" to the God of the Creed, . . . I am very much aware that my inquiry into the history of experience and symbolization generalizes the Anselmian *fides quaerens intellectum* [faith seeking understanding] so as to include every *fides*, not only the Christian, in the quest for understanding by reason. In practice this means that one has to recognize, and make intelligible, the presence of Christ in a Babylonian hymn, or a Taoist speculation, or a Platonic dialogue, just as much as in a Gospel.²

Ellis concludes his essay with a comment on this statement and what it meant for Voegelin, as well as what it meant for himself.

Perhaps as clearly as any other text, this remarkable statement captures the revolutionary thrust of Voegelin's work. It is a set of claims to be pondered by anyone devoted to the study of order and disorders in human experience in its broadest amplitude, in service to Truth and in resistance against deformation and evil. This is the philosopher's vocation.³

Clearly, it was the vocation of that collection of preachers for liberty and justice that Ellis compiled so lovingly, just as it was Voegelin’s vocation; and just as clearly it is the vocation Ellis chose for himself, or, perhaps, one that chose him.

² “Response to Professor Altizer,” in *Eric Voegelin's Thought: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1982), 190-91; repr. in *Collected Works*, 12, 292-303 at 294.

³ Ellis Sandoz, “The Philosopher's Vocation: The Voegelinian Paradigm,” *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 71, No. 1, Political Philosophy in the Twentieth Century (Winter 2009), p. 66.