



Voegelinian Readings of Modern Literature (ERIC VOEGELIN INST SERIES)

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The work of renowned thinker Eric Voegelin is largely rooted in his literary sensibility. Voegelin's contributions to the field of philosophy grew from the depths of his knowledge of history's most important texts, from ancient to modern times. Many of the concepts he emphasized, such as participatory experience and symbolization in philosophy, have long been significant to literary criticism as well as philosophical study. Voegelin himself even ventured into the field of criticism, publishing a critical examination of Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* in 1971. Since it is so strongly influenced by the written record of man's search for meaning, Voegelinian thought makes an ideal framework for the study of twentieth-century literature.

For *Voegelinian Readings of Modern Literature*, scholar Charles R. Embry has collected essays that consider particular pieces of literature in light of the philosopher's work. These essays supply a theoretical grounding for the reading of novels, poems, and plays and reveal how the Voegelinian perspective exposes the existential and philosophical dimensions of the literary works themselves. As a unit, this collection of essays shows how modern pieces of literature can symbolize their creators' participation in the human search for the truth of existence—just as myths, philosophical works, and religious texts always have.

Voegelin's primary concern as a philosopher was to expose the roots of the disturbances of the modern era—religious conflict, imperialism, war—so that the sources of order leading to meaning are revealed. The openness of Voegelinian thought and the many ways he considered the levels of reality generate intriguing themes for literary criticism. In these essays, noted Voegelin scholars focus on American and European literary artists from the 1700s through the late twentieth century, including Emily Dickinson, Henrik Ibsen, Thomas Carlyle, D. H. Lawrence, Marcel Proust, and Hermann Broch.

While the intersection of the work of Eric Voegelin and literature has been a part of Voegelin scholarship for decades, this book explores that relationship in an extended form. Through a broad collection of thoughtful essays, *Voegelinian Readings of Modern Literature* reveals how much Voegelin did to break down the barriers between literature and philosophy and makes an engaging contribution to Voegelin scholarship.

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