



# **The Nature of the Law and Related Legal Writings (Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, Volume 27)**

*Eric Voegelin*

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During the course of his lifelong, wide-ranging reflections on history and philosophy, Eric Voegelin naturally was drawn to speculate on the nature of law. This volume consists of many of Voegelin's significant writings in this area, most notably the previously unpublished *The Nature of the Law*.

Voegelin completed *The Nature of the Law* in 1957 while he was a member of the political science faculty of Louisiana State University and teaching a course in jurisprudence at the university's law school. In it he undertakes a philosophical analysis of the law to determine its nature, or essence, and comes to the conclusion that the law does not exist as a discrete entity but instead constitutes the structure of a society.

The law, as Voegelin's analysis reveals, is not simply the command of a Leviathan handed down to others. Nor is it simply the result of a social compact among autonomous individuals or the expressed will of a majority securing its own self-defined, immediate worldly interest. It is rather a part of the order that a society discovers and specifies for itself in the effort to secure the common good. Thus laws and legal order have an integral relation with the society that declares them, for in declaring laws the society in some sense structures itself.

Also included in this volume is Voegelin's detailed outline for the jurisprudence course he taught at LSU from 1954 to 1957. The outline was distributed to Voegelin's students but otherwise has not been published. In this outline Voegelin is concerned more with the criteria for legal order than he is with the nature of law. Voegelin also prepared for his jurisprudence course supplementary notes that are essentially a compact statement of his views on the law, and the editors have included those notes here. Finally, the book contains reviews, written by Voegelin in 1941 and 1942, of four books on legal science and legal philosophy.

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