

COMMENTS FOR ROUNDTABLE ON VOEGELIN, STRAUSS, AND KENDALL CORRESPONDENCE

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I. Was Kendall a Straussian or Voegelinian?

◆ John Alvis, in his essay "The Evolution of Willmoore Kendall's Political Thought" in *Willmoore Kendall: Maverick of American Conservatives*, writes that "Kendall managed somehow to hold himself apart from declaring allegiance to either of his acknowledged mentors at the expense of the other."

◆ Two letters in the Voegelin-Kendall correspondence published in *The Political Science Reviewer* lend support to Alvis's conclusion:

◆ On 24 July 1966 Kendall wrote to Voegelin, "We are launching, this Autumn, a Ph.D. program--built, as nearly as I have known how, in the image of you and Strauss--in Politics and Literature."

◆ In an earlier (14 October 1959) letter to Voegelin, Kendall wondered about the unwillingness of Strauss's students to take Voegelin's work seriously, and concluded by writing, "I, for instance, find it possible to learn from both of you, and do not see between you and him [Strauss] the sharp differences his pupils profess there are."

II. Voegelin encouraged Kendall to concentrate on political philosophy and give up his conservative-activist pursuits.

◆ On 20 March 1957 Voegelin sends an informal evaluation of Kendall to the Acting Head of the Yale Political Science Department, in which he writes, "On the debit side must be set, at least as far as I am concerned, his publicistic activities for the cause of ideological conservatism. One could, of course, make a case for it by saying that in the economy of public opinion one foolishness should be balanced by another one, so that neither one will run to extremes. And under that aspect, one might esteem this activity a public service--certainly Kendall sees his activity in this light--though he would not consider every ideology, regardless of content, a foolishness, as I do.◆ Anyway, I deeply regret that a man of Kendall's potential as a scholar should waste his time and energy on such activities."

◆ On the same date he writes to Kendall: "I am coming back to my beef: Are you doing yourself any good, by engaging yourself in this ideology fight and by compromising yourself, even if only in a modus of rhetoric???? (the series of

question marks to be indefinitely prolonged)." He concludes this letter by asking, "What are you doing--besides mangling liberals?"