

### Book Review of 'Political Attitudes: In Search for Measure' by Camelia Florela Voinea

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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Rezension / review

#### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Alexandrescu, R. (2013). Book Review of 'Political Attitudes: In Search for Measure' by Camelia Florela Voinea. [Review of the book *Political Attitudes: In Search for Measure*; 1. Vol., by C. F. Voinea]. *European Quarterly of Political Attitudes and Mentalities*, 2(1), 89-91. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-341715>

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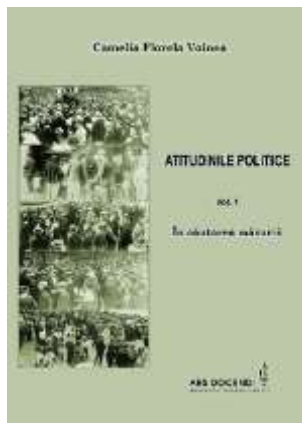
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**Book:**

Author: Camelia Florela Voinea

Title: „*Political Attitudes*”

1st Volume: „*In Search for Measure*”

Publisher: University of Bucharest – Ars Docendi Press  
Bucharest, 2012

Language: Romanian, with an English Summary

Pages: 262.

ISBN: 978-973-558-580-8, ISBN: 978-973-558-576-1.

## The *Attitude* in Political Analysis: A History of Ideas

Book Review

Raluca Alexandrescu

Submission: January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Accepted: January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2013

Camelia Florela Voinea's new book „*Political Attitudes. In Search for Measure*”, belongs, as the author herself says, to a three volume-work which aims at reconfiguring the history of the idea of „*experiment*” in psychology, to highlight its relevance for the political thought and, least but not last, to identify the particular part it played, especially by the end of the 19th century, in the emergence of the new science of Social Psychology.

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European Quarterly of Political Attitudes and Mentalities - EQPAM, Volume2, No.1, January 2013, pp. 89-91.  
ISSN 2285 – 4916  
ISSN-L 2285 – 4916

Undoubtedly, the 19th century represents, as the author herself emphasizes, a time with a special significance for the History of Political Ideas and, in general, for the expansion of Social Sciences. In the area of Political Science, the 19th century actually discovers and further witnesses the increasing necessity of accepting, after the French Revolution, the existence of a third major social actor. The „Society” at large or the „Masses” – as this third actor has been called by the political philosophers who have already been discovering it at the beginning of the 19th century – actually bursted out of the political theories of the time and gained ever since a higher relevance in the political thought.

It is the time when the European political thought, either continental or insular, started looking beyond of what has been considered the fundamental issue of the Political Philosophy: the governance and its dependence on the political regime. It is the proper time when the problem of good governance starts being approached itself on a more or less constant set of values and structures of the modern state, constitutions and governance mechanisms which are defined independently of a particular political regime. Benjamin Constant, François Guizot, Alexis de Tocqueville or John Stuart Mill are just but few of the political philosophers who have theoretically conceived a political regime based on democracy, and practically looked for technical solutions of including its fundamental principles into the increasing complexity of the social and institutional structure of Europe at the beginning of the industrial age.

The necessity of understanding “*l’esprit des masses*”, as Guizot put it, was becoming increasingly and emphatically persistent. It was clear that such a new approach, concerning a completely new research basis, would certainly require new measurement instruments and a new synthetical view, essentially different from the traditional view and method of the political theory of the time. Although some scholars like Henri de Saint-Simon and his rebel pupil, Auguste Comte, provide some of the preliminary descriptive and measurement solutions of what would become the Social Psychology as we know it today, this new scientific discipline actually appears only at the end of the century, as Camelia Florela Voinea definitely shows in this volume. In this historical endeavour, “*following both a conceptual and an experimental dimension*”, the author retrieves “*the history of the experiments and theories about the attitude measurement from the initial stages up to the present days*”. (p. 6)

From a methodological point of view, Voinea’s approach is therefore based on the history of ideas, since the concept of *attitude* is traced back in time in the works of several philosophers and scholars, starting with the ancient occurrences of this notion. In this first volume, the author is drawing on the fundamental aspects of the mind-body problem, starting from the ancient philosophical issue of describing the soul by means of corporal expressions, namely *attitudes*. (pp.22-51).

The relationship between soul and body and the mind-body problem becomes relevant as it addresses the two main issues of the volume: on the one hand, measure and measurement or, as Plato names it, the “*art of measurement*”. On the other hand, the platonic idea of comparing the structure of the human being to the architecture of the ideal city. This paralelism is further analysed in several subsequent themes, where body and soul measures and attitudes are described and interpreted by both Plato and Aristotle as a sign of the achieved (or lost!) moral good. By the early beginning of the modern age, the Civic Humanism, mainly represented by Petrarca, has revived the mind-body theme. Leaving away from the scholastic paradigm, it has actually prepared the great Scientific Revolution of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, represented by Descartes, Francis Bacon and Hobbes (see pp. 54-66) and, later on, by John Locke. The author makes a thorough analysis of the main representatives of the philosophy of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, especially of the works of Christian Wolff and Immanuel Kant and of the German school of Experimental Psychology.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter approaches the study of variability during the 17<sup>th</sup> century and its impact on the traditional statistics and on the “*political arithmetics*”. Starting with the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Statistics develops in close dependence with other sciences which emerge and develop in the same periode of time. The author thus states one of the main thesis of the volume: “*Attitude theories, which became so attractive during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, represented not only a new area of research in Psychology, but mainly a convergence space of the conceptual paradigms in several different disciplines*” (pp. 120).

Camelia Florela Voinea’s book represents a definite, comprehensive and extremely relevant work for understanding the reason and the particular way in which “*the attitude concept started being so intensively studied in Psychology at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and, especially, for understanding why has the attitude concept became an open problem today, perhaps even more than it has been at the very beginning of the attitude theoretical and experimental research*”. This book becomes therefore a precious working instrument for both the experienced researchers and for students – either undergraduated, master or graduate – who aim at a high quality professional training in Social and Political Sciences.