

Polanyi's Liberalism in the Forties

Three Zoom Sessions on May 15, 22 and 29, 2021

Michael Polanyi was a prolific writer from 1940-1950. A quick look at one of the standard bibliographies suggests Polanyi published 20 scientific articles and more than 50 non-scientific books, articles, reviews and letters in this decade. The material in the archival Michael Polanyi Papers (MPP) makes clear that Polanyi's published non-scientific writing was only a part of a much larger collection of incomplete and abandoned writing projects. Polanyi's effort to reconceive and reform liberalism in the midst of the tumultuous events of the forties seems to be the thread that binds much of this diverse writing together. The three Zoom presentations/discussions will each week focus on particular Polanyi texts, some published and some unpublished, that reflect the several dimensions of Polanyi's thinking about liberalism. This includes (but is not limited to) the problems of the inherited liberal tradition and its epistemic weaknesses, the challenge of totalitarianism and its roots in modern scientism, and how to re-imagine liberalism by re-conceiving liberty and the changing social order.

Although it is preferred that participants plan to commit to participate in all three of these 1.5 hour Zoom sessions (since they fit together as a set, like the earlier Duke Lecture Zoom sessions), it is permissible to join only sessions that fit your schedule. As was the case with past Polanyi Society-sponsored Zoom sessions, if you register, you will be sent a link for all sessions. All sessions will be recorded and posted on the Zoom cloud within approximately 24 hours so it is possible to review recordings of sessions. To register for these Zoom sessions, send an e-mail to both Gus Breyspraak (gus.breyspraak@ottawa.edu) and Phil Mullins (mullins@missouriwestern.edu).

Readings for each Zoom session (no more than 20 pages) are listed below; they can at any time be downloaded from polanysisociety.org. Posted materials are for non-commercial use of scholars and students.

Saturday, May 15, 11 a.m.—12:30 pm Central Daylight-Saving Standard Time

(1) [“Planning, Culture and Freedom”](#) (Lecture Notes, Classical Society, Manchester University, 19 Nov. 1940), Box 26, Folder 4, 0205-0210. MPP. 6 pages.

(2) [“Planning, Efficiency and Liberty”](#) (Lecture Notes, Liberal Society, Manchester University, 6 Dec. 1940), Box 26, Folder 4, 0211-0224. MPP. 14 pages.

Opening Presentation (15 minutes): Eduardo Beira

Saturday, May 22, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Central Daylight-Saving Time

(1) [“Our Times”](#) (March 1945 journal proposal), Box 4, Folder 12, 1217-1223, MPP. 7 pages.

NB: "Our Times" was later renamed "Civitas" and slightly redacted and this redacted copy was given by Polanyi to Richard Gelwick; it is included in the Gelwick Microfilm Collection (as [filename]Glwk30-Civitas-Jou Proposal-1946.pdf) at <http://www.polanyisociety.org/essays.htm>.

(2) [17 June 1947 Draft Editorial Statement for *Humanitas*](#), Box 31, Folder 3, 0176-0177, MPP. 2 pages.

(3) [Notes for Talk with Prof. Jewkes-Nov. 1940](#), Box 26, Folder 5, 0238-0240, MPP. 2 pages plus 2 lines.

(4) Two documents dated 11 March 1941 that appear to be components of a Polanyi talk on Liberalism and Socialism. [Box 26, Folder 12, 0648-0652](#) and [Box 26, Folder 12, 0653-0654](#), MPP. One component is 4 ½ pages and the second is 1 ½ pages.

Saturday, May 29, 11 a.m.-12:30 p. m. Central Daylight-Saving Time

(1) [Excerpts from Michael Polanyi, "The Growth of Thought in Society."](#) 1941 [Nov.]. *Economica* 8: 428-456. 8 pages.

(2) ["Totalitarianism."](#) 1951 (25 Aug.). *Time and Tide*. Pp. 801-802. 2 pages.

(3) ["Three Periods of History"](#) (draft of a component of an unpublished book, *The Autonomy of Science*). 1944, 1945 or 1946? Box 29, Folder 8, 0558-0566, MPP. 9 pages.