

importance of intellectual humility, and stating, “I do not claim to know many of the claims contained herein” (166).

Matheson has written an engaging book that not only argues for a the EWV regarding the epistemic significance of disagreement, but also presents the reader with a helpful guide to the various positions currently taken by the philosophers debating the issue and the arguments that have been used to defend their various views. Polanyi scholars will be particularly interested in the discussion in chapter seven regarding the skeptical implications of the view, and limiting factors on that skepticism. As we have seen, considerations regarding distinctions between kinds of reasons, and even kinds of epistemic reasons, become important in understanding the rationality of belief in controversial matters. Interesting work could be done bringing Polanyi’s *Personal Knowledge* into the current debate regarding the epistemic significance of disagreement, and specifically into conversation with Matheson’s book.

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What distinguishes humans from other animals? Some focus on our ability to make tools. Others assert that it is our capacity for language. Neurological investigations indicate that these capabilities are located in our left hemisphere. But isn’t it the case that other animals make tools and communicate with each other? Some distinguish us from other animals by drawing our attention to the capabilities of our right hemisphere. While our left hemisphere (which is attentive to predation) re-presents our awareness, our right hemisphere (which is attentive to predators) generates our contextual awareness. These emergent capabilities do not replace earlier abilities, they are built over our lizard brain, our mouse brain, our monkey brain, and so forth. The expansion of our frontal cortex in each hemisphere enhances our capacity to reflect creatively on our immediate experience, but in a different way. Each comprehends the world differently. Our right brain hemisphere is more dominant. Or at least it should be. McGilchrist, in *The Master and his Emissary* (2009), claims Western culture (since the Enlightenment and possibly from the beginning) has become too left-brained—which is another way of saying that it has become too rationalist.

The above is the neurological context for the debate at the heart of the book *Tradition versus Rationalism: Voegelin, Oakeshott, Hayek, and Others* (2018), a collection of essays edited by Lee Trapanier and Eugene Callahan. Another way of framing its content is to situate it within a dispute about the nature of science. All the thinkers discussed in this book (in their different ways) are opposed to scientism—the claim that it is only science (or more broadly only that which it is possible to render wholly explicit) that tells us about the real. But there is a difference between opposing rationalism because it pays insufficient attention to the context of its practices, that it creates cityscapes that ignore how we actually live, and an opposition to rationalism based upon the claim that it ignores spiritual realities.

Le Corbusier aspired to flatten central Paris and replace it with something more rational. I watched a BBC 24 news presenter mystified why people were crying when Notre Dame in Paris was burning. She could see that people were getting emotional, but it is clear that she thought that getting upset about a building burning down (after all, nobody was killed) was irrational, which of course it is, if you have the spiritual awareness of a rock. One sees something similar in efforts to rebuild the English Midlands after the bombing raids of WWII: the urban planners finished the job started by the Luftwaffe. The editors (in my view correctly) note there is a connection (it is a matter of degree is the implication)

between city planning and the Gulags. Just as in a new and better sort of society there is no place for the wrong sort of buildings, so there will be no place for the wrong sort of people. But Hayek and Oakeshott, as well as Polanyi and Voegelin (to pick four of the thinkers discussed in the volume), have different things in mind when they oppose rationalism. The first two believe that goods are whatever we want them to be, and people should have the freedom to pursue them, so long as they let others do the same. The second two, however, believe something is good not because we pursue it, we pursue it because it is good. It is not a difference to which the editors pay sufficient attention.

In the first essay Grant Havers notes that Wittgenstein claims that it is not the task of science to tell us how to live. Indeed it is not absurd to believe that the age of science and technology is the beginning of the end of humanity. They leave us with a void that only religion can fill. According to Wittgenstein all that Socratic inquiry does is generate more questions than answers. In a shift from Athens to Jerusalem, Wittgenstein defends the ontological argument for the existence of God. Not because the concept of God corresponds with anything in our experience, but because it justifies a form of life that counters the view that life is meaningless. Havers notes that Wittgenstein declared, “I am not a religious man but I cannot help seeing every problem from a religious point of view.” But this is like a spiritualist in Victorian times telling a skeptical inquirer that they don’t believe

people survive after their death, they just behave as if they do. The investigator might reasonably conclude that the spiritualist is a fraud.

In the next essay David Corey notes that Voegelin attempts to supply a philosophical anthropology. Following Aristotle he claims that to be a human being is to have within us an inorganic, a vegetative, an animal, and a rational nature. Each higher level contains the lower. Our rational nature also has higher and lower levels. Its lower function is instrumental. It is concerned with means. Our higher rationality is concerned with ends. Aristotle sought to comprehend the meaning of our lives by relating us to the structure of intelligible being. Voegelin argued that a healthy state for a human being is—in a term he found in Bergson—an open soul. To be human is to exist in a state of unrest deriving from questions to which we cannot find settled answers. The temptation according to Voegelin is to replace our situated/transcendent nature (our “metaxy” or state of “inbetweeness”) with ideologies.

By ideology Voegelin means claiming that the world is imperfect, that it can be perfected, and that we have the knowledge to bring about this change. This, he claims, supplies us with a dangerously inaccurate account of what it is to be human. He detects this “disorder” in the prophet Isaiah, who counseled Israel to rely upon Yahweh rather than military power and alliances, and he identifies this “metastasis” or world-ignoring enthusiasm in the early Christians, the millennial

heresies of the Middle Ages, and in various Puritan sects. An alternative approach invoked Prometheus, the Titan who rebelled against the gods. Marx prefaced his doctoral dissertation with a quotation from the play about Prometheus attributed to Aeschylus “I hate all the gods.” Voegelin, according to Corey, traces modern ideologies back to three pivotal events: the advent of Christianity, the decline of Christianity as an imperial power, and the rise of modern scientism. The early Christians tempered their eschatological expectation of the Parousia by accepting that all perfection is transcendent. In the early modern period the decline of imperial Christianity had the consequence that numerous radical sects claimed to be the true faith. Such dissident groups had always existed, but after the Reformation activists transformed Christianity into political programs. Voegelin detects a connection between Jewish messianic beliefs and various mass political movements in the twentieth century. Scientism in the Enlightenment encouraged people to recast religious expectations into the conviction that we can create heaven on Earth. All that is needed is the right knowledge, and the will to transform the universe into something better. The result is a manufactured “second reality” that has no connection with the way we actually live. Voegelin declares that all philosophies of history that reject the personal and its meaning are misguided.

At this point Corey usefully reminds us of some of the arguments of Voegelin’s

critics. It has been noted that his Gnostic claim (that utopian ideologies are varieties of Gnosticism) ran into problems when it became clear that the Gnostic writing discovered at Nag Hammadi in 1945 had as their goal rejecting the world not transforming it. Voegelin was forced to abandon his multi-volume *History of Political Ideas* when he realized that similar ideas may be the result not of intellectual influences but of individuals reflecting upon the same experiences. The quest to capture all ideas within a single narrative is misleading because there is a diversity of people and circumstances, an insight Oakeshott also recognized. Thirdly, Voegelin lumps different political approaches together as variations of the same thing. But this does not pay sufficient attention to the differences between say Russian communism and Anglo-American liberalism. Last but not least, Corey questions the implication that every attempt to improve human existence is misguided. When it is restored maybe Notre Dame could be improved by some changes to its design, maybe some of the medieval buildings of Coventry should have been demolished to make way for something better. I am not saying this is correct, but common sense dictates that there ought to be some sort of balance if we are to work with human beings as they are, creative and innovative, rather than trying to fix them at some idealized moment (which, as Voegelin noted, is itself another ideology).

In the next article, Daniel John Sportiello points out that prior to the Axial Age happiness was presumed to be

immanent, but after the Axial Age happiness was presumed to be transcendent. Voegelin claims that modern political thinkers such as Hobbes and Bentham set out to return us back to a material conception of life. Sportiello claims that the jury is still out on which approach is correct.

In his 1951 Walgreen lectures at the University of California, Voegelin asserts that scientism is driven by a will to power rooted in a self-imposed ignorance of the reality of how we know. In his 1962 McEnerney lectures at the University of California, Polanyi defends the reality of the person against the delusion of a Laplacian mind. A reductionist vision in which we are nothing more than atoms in motion undermines the very possibility of science.

In his article, Colin Cordner notes that instead of exploring how we use symbols to evoke and explore realities, Voegelin claims that a positivist approach eclipses reality in an “egophantic revolt” against the transcendent. Polanyi argues that we are driven by intellectual passions to leap across logical gaps in pursuit of intimations of a hidden reality, integrating clues into new wholes. In order to understand we must first believe. But although our convictions are fallible, they are not groundless. They draw upon and are guided by our tacit awareness, as supplied by our body, our practices, and our beliefs. Lockean empiricism, purified by Cartesian doubt, asserts it is only the critically demonstrable which counts as knowledge, but according to Polanyi such

objectivism falsifies knowing by rejecting what we know but cannot prove, even though it underlies all that we can prove. This may be a harmless delusion in the exact sciences, but it falsifies knowing beyond the domain of science. Once we abandon the concept of dispassionate knowing, the false division between facts and values collapses.

In his article, Mark T. Mitchell argues that this approach is consistent with the account supplied by Voegelin. Both Polanyi and Voegelin are committed to moral realism. There may be different views about what grounds this reality (C.S. Lewis calls it the Tao), but they agree values are not simply subjective.

According to Polanyi when moral passions are rendered homeless by the quest for objectivity, they re-emerge as moral inversions. This creates nihilists who passionately deny any distinction between good and evil, and at a political level this moral fervor is secularized into tasks justified by the end of creating heaven on Earth.

In his article, Timothy Fuller notes that Hobbes denies that we will agree about the meaning of life, and so he sought instead to justify a civic realm in which individual freedom is secured by an understanding of common features of human nature. As Voegelin explains, on the one hand societies want to maintain their established order, and on the other individuals want to change that order in the name of a new truth. Hobbes solved this conflict on the grounds that there are no public truth except the laws of

harmony and peace; any political opinion that is conducive to discord is on those grounds deemed to be untrue. Voegelin both praises and blames Hobbes. He praises him for countering apocalyptic tendencies within Christianity, but he criticizes him for seeking to explore the transcendent only immanently. Strauss responds that to abandon the search for meaning is tantamount to abandoning our humanity. Politics is the realm of opinions about how we ought to live, and what ends we ought to pursue. Oakeshott selects three key moments in political philosophy, and associates them with Plato's *The Republic*, Hobbes' *Leviathan*, and Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. He views *The Republic* as a demonstration of the limits of the Socratic quest to transform our lives for the better by securing secure the knowledge we seek. He views the *Philosophy of Right* as a commentary upon the exploration by Hobbes of the morality of individuality. There is revulsion at subjective individuality amongst those who reject Hobbes vision of civil order. Hegel seeks to reconcile subjective desire and rational will. This led to (although it is distinct from) a Marxist collectivist interpretation of political order.

For Oakeshott practices are constantly changing, and we should resist the temptation to seek transformations that settle things once and for all. Fuller concludes his article by asserting that what Oakeshott is attacking is not reason, but the misuse of reason that takes place when rationalists ignore its limitations.

In the next article, Kenneth B. McIntyre notes that Oakeshott agrees with Ryle that practical knowing is largely tacit, and that all explicit knowing relies upon practical knowledge. In the following article Ferenc Horcher points out that Oakeshott outlined a historical background for Western political thought, and is skeptical of any attempt to study political ideas in isolation from their context. This approach is shared by Alistair McIntyre, who in his book *After Virtue* (1981) declared that if moral claims become separated from the tradition within which they become meaningful, they become groundless. This explains the Enlightenment failure to secure a rational foundation for morality. Reason must be situated within the limits supplied by finitude and historicity. This, according to MacIntyre, does not necessitate relativism, because some claims can be shown to be superior.

In his article Nathanael Blake claims that much of the philosophical groundwork for McIntyre's project was laid by Hans-Georg Gadamer. According to Gadamer it is not possible to climb a ladder out of our existence and arrive at an absolute perspective from which we can objectively evaluate everything. All such projects, the progeny of the Enlightenment, are dangerous delusions. The hermeneutic process by which a knower understands the world is circular, but as we fuse with other circles of understanding we can discover new insights. As we attempt to persuade them of the validity of our beliefs, dialogue requires

a willingness to entertain the possibility that the residents of other circles may also possess truths.

In the next essay John von Heyking notes that Hayek comprehends rationality as replacing experience guided practice with abstract rules. Although he cautions against ideologies that seek to rearrange societies in accordance with a plan of political perfection, and in his defense of liberty, he (like Burke) upholds tradition and spontaneous order. Hayek (like Kant) views history as a progress towards universalist cosmopolitanism. A society organized around a vision of the good is dismissed by Hayek as a retreat to tribalism. A "Great Society" is not simply a discovery mechanism, it upholds laws that enable the individuals and communities that make up a civil society to pursue a diversity of ends. The only common good is maintaining the rules that render this freedom possible. Although social evolution yields results better than any individual can consciously devise, an increased scientific understanding of evolutionary social processes enables us to improve societies.

In the most original and insightful article in the collection, Eugene Callahan notes that even though Hayek and Oakeshott make the same contrast between a spontaneous civil order and an enterprise organization orientated by shared goals, they reign back the dreams of "Constructivist" central planners on different grounds. Although Hayek recognizes the limitations of the abstractions of formal economic theory,

and claims that because knowledge is dispersed it cannot be wholly centralized, Oakeshott on Hegelian grounds argues that abstract reasoning will always fall short of the complexity of the concrete universal. Within this vision a concept is not something outside the world of sensuous experience, it is the very structure and order of that experience. But because it is not possible to abstract without falsifying, all abstractions mislead.

For a rationalist, all that is required for a successful performance is a correct theory. For Oakeshott, however, this is to apply the standards of one mode (theoretical reason) to another mode (practice) where they are not relevant. Awarding the primacy to theory ignores that all theory is grounded in practice. Theorists are correct to believe that they have identified a higher (because more abstract) form of knowledge, but in their enthusiasm they (to put it in Polanyian terms) ignore the primacy of our tacit awareness.

Aurel Kolnai, the subject (with Oakeshott) of the final essay in this collection, declares that philosophers should try to keep as close as possible in touch with the world of ordinary experience. As the author of this essay, Zoltan Balazs, reminds us, not because reason is reducible to will, but because our quest for understanding should be informed by intellectual humility. Oakeshott reminds us that it is reality not reason, experience not inference, that is the foundation of our being. Kolnai claims however that Oakeshott gives too much emphasis to practice: rationality is treated as if it were a disease, in ways

reminiscent of European intellectual fashions between the World Wars. For Kolnai it is morality rather than science that should be our primary concern; though not the happiness centered Aristotelian, the duty obsessed Kantian, or the consequence dominated Utilitarian versions. He seeks to ground morality in an objective phenomenology.

I compliment the editors for the way they arranged the articles in their book: each follows on from the next, in ways that extend and deepen the readers thoughts on the topic at hand. I recommend it as a starting point for a study of the thinkers they discuss, not least because every one of the contributors is clear and informative.

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Bagger, Matthew, ed. *Pragmatism and Naturalism: Scientific and Social Inquiry After Representationalism*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2018. Pp. 328 + ix. ISBN 978-023-118-188-4. \$75.

What does it mean to be a naturalist, and relatedly, a pragmatist? In *Pragmatism and Naturalism* (hereafter PN), Michael Raposa writes that “one can surely be a naturalist without embracing pragmatism. It is not immediately obvious whether the reverse is true” (33), due in part to the variety of contested versions of naturalism. If Polanyi is plausibly classified as a pragmatist, Polanyians might consider whether this classification is for