



# RECOVERING THE THOUGHT OF EDWARD SHILS

Struan Jacobs

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## ABSTRACT

*This article provides an extended review of *The Calling of Social Thought*, a collection of essays about the thought of social theorist Edward Shils. The article includes preliminary observations about Shils' life and work, brief summaries of the essays included in the collection, and several suggestions aimed at encouraging additional study of Shils' writings.*

## Introduction

Edward Shils (1910-1995) is the distinguished scholar whose life and writings are discussed in the recent collection of essays edited by Christopher Adair-Totef and Stephen Turner and titled *The Calling of Social Thought* (2019). Unless otherwise noted, parenthetical citations in this review are to this work. Shils was chiefly affiliated with the University of Chicago and its Committee on Social Thought which John Ulric Nef, Robert Redfield, and Robert M. Hutchins founded in 1941. Parallel with his Chicago position, Shils held appointments at the London School of Economics (1946-1950) and the University of Cambridge (1961-1978), as well as visiting other countries such as India (1955-1956) and The Netherlands (1976-1977).

In the time I was waiting to receive a copy of the book from the publisher, I jotted down some of my main impressions of Shils' work based on my reading of it over the years. He reminds one of the great German sociologist Max Weber, except he writes more clearly than did Weber. As with Weber, his reading and learning were prodigious, and his research is characterized by detail, rigour, and integrity. Assisted by Henry Finch, Shils translated Weber's methodological writings into English (their translation of Weber's *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* first appeared in 1949), and he made important use in his own work of ideal types and other methodological offerings of Weber.

Shils' writing covers vast tracts of the social landscape, ranging from characteristic features of intellectuals to issues surrounding atomic science, from Indian social life to the fundamental constitution of society (including primary groups, sacredness and social bonds), from civil ties and civility to universities and science, etc. Thomas Kuhn attested to the catholicity of Shils' erudition in remarking in his foreword to

the English language edition of Ludwik Fleck's *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact* (1979) that Shils was one of only two people known to him who "had read [Fleck's] book independent of my intervention." Unsurprised at this, Kuhn commented Shils "has apparently read everything" (vii).

Shils was officially recognized among the leading scholars in the humanities and social sciences in the second half of the 20th century. He gave the Jefferson Lectures for the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1979 and was awarded a Balzan Prize in 1983 (a co-winner that year with the biologist Ernst Mayr and the orientalist Francesco Gabrieli). Given the undoubted high quality of his work, why is it we hear so little of Shils and his work these days? Why doesn't his work command anything like the attention devoted to the writings of social theorists such as Ulrich Beck, Michel Foucault, Jurgen Habermas, Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens, Erving Goffman, and Talcott Parsons? A Google search easily confirms Shils' relative neglect and, as further evidence of it, after 1,000 or so pages of fine scholarship in the body of the book, the highly detailed index of Roger Smith's major study, *The Fontana History of the Human Sciences* (1997), has no mention of Shils' name.

Part of the explanation of his neglect may lie with Shils' willingness to tread on the toes of his colleagues. He also ended up on the "losing" side of several arguments, supporting ideas and causes that became unpopular in the universities. For example, for a time he supported Talcott Parsons' functionalist approach to sociological explanation, a position many social scientists excoriated as rationalizing the *status quo*. To explain institutions and practices in terms of their maintaining the structure of society is innately conservative, complained critics of functionalism. Further, Shils' involvement with the CIA-backed Congress for Cultural Freedom and its journal *Encounter* was out of step with rank and file sociologists and social scientists who viewed him as a "Cold War warrior." He made himself unpopular in certain quarters by abjuring quantitative social research methods in favour of qualitative methods, and by favouring a consensual perspective on society instead of one that emphasises conflict. However, the common description of Shils as a sociologist *simpliciter* obscures the reality of his polymathic, protean mind. In explaining facts about societies and cultures, he draws on the knowledge provided not only by sociology, but also by history, philosophy, psychology, politics, literature, and anthropology. His eclecticism made him an "outsider" (48, 212).

Shils' erudition is more evident in his book *Tradition* (1981) than it is in any of his other writings. His decision to write on tradition was an unusual one for a scholar to take in the 20th century; here we have another example of him following his own course rather than conforming to academic fashion. Since the Age of Reason of the 18th century, "progressive" thinkers have disparaged tradition as procrustean, prejudiced and non-irrational, a hangover from the Middle Ages and incompatible with the rational-empiricist spirit of the (modern) age. Only musty conservatives, it was widely assumed, would bother studying tradition, and it was on account of this assumption, for example, that John Stuart Mill puzzled members of his circle of "philosophical radicals" with his sympathetic study, "Coleridge" (1840). Shils considered his book to be the first book ever devoted to analysing the subject of tradition per se. *Tradition* is a fascinating book: rich in ideas, generous with examples, and criss-crossing many fields of scholarship. Cogently arguing there can be neither social life nor culture without traditions, Shils' book has helped in stimulating scholarly interest in tradition.

Shils writes about subjects that are often complex and nuanced. Among his salient ideas are some with which I have struggled to affix definite meanings. Of none of them is this more true than "collective self-consciousness," an idea that leaves me wondering whether he hypostatized or reified it as if it were an

existing thing. “Civility,” “ideology,” and “nationality” are among other concepts of his that have taxed my powers of comprehension.

### The Essays

Given the intellectual orientation of *Tradition & Discovery*, readers of this review will want to know whether Shils is relevant to the study of Polanyi and, if so, in what way(s). The “terms of engagement” between Shils and Polanyi is the subject of Phil Mullins’ contribution to *The Calling*. Written with his characteristic verve and clarity, and based on his vast knowledge of the Polanyi manuscripts, Mullins details a friendship that commenced in 1946 and continued for 30 years. It was an intellectually supportive and productive friendship, Shils citing Polanyi as one of three “elders” he knew personally who “left an imprint on me,” the others being the economist and philosopher Frank H. Knight and the sociologist Robert E. Park (79). Shils was probably second only to the philosopher Marjorie Grene among Polanyi’s “more intimate intellectual friendship[s]” (80). Shils’ 1945 writings for the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, the journal he helped establish at Chicago, show how quickly he absorbed Polanyi’s broad understanding of pure science as animated by agents with commitments to discovering more of the spiritual ideal of truth and—as the totalitarian experience attests—ceasing to function when governments impose an agenda of planning on science. *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* would provide Polanyi with a convenient vehicle for a number of his essays beginning in 1946.

Mullins also throws light on relations between Shils, Polanyi, and Karl Mannheim, referring to Shils’ major role in translating from German to English Mannheim’s exposition of the sociology of knowledge, *Ideology and Utopia* (1936), and Mannheim’s planning tract *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* (1940). Polanyi and Mannheim knew each other from their adolescent years in Budapest, and they resumed their acquaintance in England in the 1930s. In the next decade Mannheim arranged for Polanyi to attend meetings of “The Moot,” the group of eminent English intellectuals that included T.S. Eliot, Geoffrey Vickers, A.R. Vidler, and H.A. Hodges that met informally under the auspices of the ecumenical church leader, J.H. Oldham, to discuss how Christianity might be used to revivify Britain once the allies had won World War II. Mannheim generously encouraged Polanyi to produce a book of essays on the autonomy of science for inclusion in the International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction series that Routledge & Kegan Paul launched in 1942, with Mannheim the founding editor. Polanyi’s attention got diverted by other projects, particularly his Keynesian tract for the times, *Full Employment and Free Trade* (1945), delaying the completion of his essay-collection on autonomous science and the free society—*The Logic of Liberty*—until 1951. In his intellectual autobiography, Shils suggests Polanyi had a low regard for Mannheim’s thought, which is hardly surprising given that Mannheim’s doctrines of social determination of belief and large-scale dirigiste social planning resembled themes associated with the “Freedom of Science” movement that Polanyi repudiated as contrary to the requirements of pure science and as destructive of civil society.

Relations between Shils and Mannheim and their respective depictions of ideology form the subject of Christopher Adair-Totef’s contribution to *The Calling*. Including Mannheim’s lesser known writings, as well as the books—most notably *Ideology and Utopia*—that secured his reputation, Adair-Totef does a fine job of disentangling Mannheim’s understandings of ideology. He discusses how Shils’ thinking on ideology diverged from Mannheim’s, prompting one to ponder whether some of Polanyi’s dissatisfaction with Mannheim’s thought may have rubbed on to Shils. Even so, Shils never ceased regarding ideology as

an inevitable feature of modern social life, rejecting the “end of ideology” thesis promoted by the Harvard sociologist Daniel Bell in the 1960s. Stephen Turner describes Shils’ account of ideology as a “universal, flowing,” and necessary condition for social life to be rationally ordered, coming to the fore in “times of crisis” (27).

A couple of Adair-Totef’s claims look to be disputable. He suggests as a priority claim that Shils regarded Mannheim as likely “the first person to draw attention to the notion of ideology” (111). Either Adair-Totef and/or Shils is mistaken on this: the Lockean *philosophe* Destutt de Tracy coined the term *idéologie* no later than 1796. Adair-Totef also suggests Shils looked on *tradition* as “withering away” in modern society. Shils would disagree with such a generalization. He acknowledges that certain traditions—including, for example, Christianity, the nuclear family, and the tradition of pure scientific research—have weakened in late modernity, while other traditions—practical science and technology, for instance—have never been more vibrant than they are today.

Michael Oakeshott, whose ideas exist toward the opposite end of the social-political spectrum to Mannheim’s, is juxtaposed with Shils in a chapter contributed by the distinguished Oakeshott scholar Efraim Podoksik, who displays their intellectual similarities and differences. Nothing in Podoksik’s text suggests Shils and Oakeshott had dealings with each other, that they were mutually influential, or that they were given to citing each other’s work. In light of such facts, the reader may wonder about the editors’ grounds for deciding to include a chapter on Shils and Oakeshott in the book. Presumably they based their decision on the intrinsic intellectual interest of the topic. But then, shouldn’t they also have included chapters on Shils in relation to Karl Popper and to T.S. Eliot, who are thinkers no less interesting than Oakeshott and who, as Podoksik recognizes, made “a significant impact on Shils’ thinking” (123)? In the preface of *Tradition*, Shils acknowledged Eliot’s writing as having “done so much to arouse and nourish my mind” on the subject (Shils 1981, vii). Shils, one notes, joined with Popper to lead a seminar on substantive social topics and sociological methods at LSE in the late 1940s. He cited Popper on a number of occasions, and he noted that his important idea “of the autonomy of objectivated symbolic configurations [what an ugly name is that!] was greatly aided by the appearance of Karl Popper’s ‘Epistemology without a Knowing Subject’” (Shils 2006, 126). Podoksik offers a discussion of correlations between Shils and Oakeshott rather than of demonstrated causes and effects between them. He describes Shils and Oakeshott as “anti-totalitarian” intellectuals and opponents of social planning (124-126). They reject “ideological politics” at the same time as they agree that ideology is inherent to modern politics (126, also 27). They support, says Podoksik, the politics of “plural values,” grounded in “tradition, consensus, and hierarchy,” as defining the liberal order (126, 128). Philip Altbach’s essay in *The Calling* depicts Shils as a conservative on certain issues but not as a “traditional conservative,” and Podoksik would surely agree with this description (209).

Bryan Turner’s essay, “Edward Shils and his *Portraits*,” describes and contextualizes the content of Shils’ 1997 book *Portraits: a Gallery of Intellectuals*, which includes profiles of eminent subjects such as Raymond Aron (philosopher and sociologist), Nirad Chaudhuri (historian of India), Sidney Hook (philosopher), Robert Maynard Hutchins (President and later Chancellor of the University of Chicago), Arnaldo Momigliano (historian), and Leo Szilard (nuclear physicist). Turner stresses how Shils is no different than other human agents in being “constitutionally” and “systemically” contradictory (191). Turner cites by way of illustration the disparity between Shils’ love of America and his immersion in English culture, particularly the academic life of Cambridge University. Shils’ interest in science and science policy Turner sees as contradicting his studies of tradition, and these studies as contradicting his work on contemporary society. Turner’s

meaning of “*contradiction*” is figurative: he uses the term to signify offbeat or unusual conjunctions, not the logician’s notion of incompatibility or mutual exclusion. What I find most interesting in Turner’s chapter is his interpretation of Robert Maynard Hutchins: Hutchins is well known for his involvement in the “Great Books” program of the Committee on Social Thought, but I suspect I am not alone in having been oblivious to Hutchins’ negativity. His friendship with Shils notwithstanding, Hutchins had a low regard for sociology, he doubted whether the empirical social sciences would ever have utility, and he cared little for “the physical and biological sciences.” Judging from Turner’s discussion, Hutchins’ intellectual enthusiasms were limited to the “Great Books” program and Mortimer Adler’s Aristotelian-Thomistic “philosophical framework for the analysis of American society” (200).

The theme of twists and turns and “contradictions” in Shils’ thought provides a useful peg on which to hang discussion of Stephen Turner’s introduction to *The Calling*. Like Bryan Turner, he uncovers a number of “paradoxes” and qualifications in Shils’ writings. For example, Shils took his first degree in literature rather than sociology, and his first job was in social work. He was sanguine about sociology’s prospects in the aftermath of World War II, but “disillusion soon set in” (5). Turning away from Robert Merton, Paul Lazarsfeld, and other “conventional” quantitative sociologists and disagreeing with sociologists on the political left, Shils came to regard sociology as “a form of the self-understanding of society” and as a discipline able to enhance “human autonomy” (5). His interests and commitments were too diverse for him to be properly classified as a sociologist; nevertheless, a remarkable coherence and continuity is evident in the fact that he explored only a handful of ideas “throughout his long career” (7). He was averse to “the engaged scholarship that” became popular in the final decades of his life yet “was himself engaged” (as of course was Polanyi) as an anti-Communist, writing for *Encounter* magazine and working for its host organization, the Congress for Cultural Freedom (7). Shils worked alongside Talcott Parsons for a time, and proceeded then to ignore “the theorizing that occupied the rest of Parsons’ career” (8). Eventually Shils joined Chicago’s sociology department where his writings remained remote from “the professional literature of sociology” and from “sociological theory” (Ibid). He thought and wrote at the margins of sociology and philosophy, being more of a “literary intellectual” at home in the company of novelists and possessing a fine prose style (11). Turner rightly sees Shils’ intellectual twists and turns as the manifestations of a singular, complex, and restless mind, a mind it has to be said that some critics regarded as obstinate and difficult. Turner notes Shils never produced “the great work which pulled it all together,” but still he managed to provide his readers with a coherent view of society, including themes of charisma, tradition, civil and civility, pluralism, centre and periphery, “collective self-consciousness[,] and the sacralised character of society” (8-9, 12).

Steven Grosby’s essay on Shils’ philosophical anthropology piques the reader’s interest as a text that might shed light on Shils’ important but nebulous idea, “collective self-consciousness.” Philosophical anthropology is an area, Grosby says, to which Shils felt “called,” where he could put aside the conflict-based model of society employed by Marxists and critical theorists, and instead devote himself to exploring society from the viewpoint of consensus (32). In Shils’ philosophical anthropology, the social agent appears as a utilitarian, rational calculator who is able to distinguish himself as the “I” of self-awareness from the “we” of his social context, and who prefers to compromise with his fellow citizens than to behave in an inflexible and mean-spirited way towards them. Grosby explains how Shils developed and deepened Max Weber’s four-fold distinction of types of social action with, I would submit, a discernibly different emphasis to Weber’s (46). The principal difference is Shils is adamant that tradition remains important in modernity, whereas Weber saw rationality in its social form—rationalisation—as a many-headed hydra in modern society, ubiquitous

and squeezing life from traditions (46). Moving beyond Weber's typology of actions, Grosby traces out Shils' identification of four "orientations of attachment," being the primordial, personal, sacred, and civil (33). Grosby, it has to be said, is dealing with deeper dimensions of Shils' thought, and it is this that makes Grosby's essay the most demanding of all those in *The Calling*.

Agents in a society of ordered liberty, Shils explains, bring the prevailing image of their society as just and free into correspondence with changes in the social landscape, this process being a part of his concept of "collective self-consciousness." (Here Shils reminds one of Thomas Kuhn's image of members of scientific communities practicing "normal" research, aiming to bring their "paradigm" theory of the world into closer alignment with the facts that inquiry has disclosed.) Much of the difficulty facing the reader wanting to grasp the meaning of Shils' idea of "collective self-consciousness" lies in trying to work out which part of the expression he mostly wants to emphasise. If, on the one hand, the *collective* side is emphasised, the idea recalls (intentionally or otherwise) what Ludwik Fleck's *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact* described as "thought collectives" (organic social groupings). If, on the other hand, the *self* is emphasised, Shils would seem to be affirming a social *aggregate* of individual agents (comparable to what Margaret Thatcher meant when she said, "And, you know, there's no such thing as society"). Groups of the first sort are "wholes" (irreducible *Gestalts*) and those of the second are "heaps" (reducible without remainder). Surprisingly, neither Fleck's name nor Kuhn's rates a mention in the index of *The Calling*.

Richard Boyd's essay on "pluralism and civility" is particularly valuable for its clear separation of Shils' ideas of civility. Shils, he finds, envisages civility in two main forms: *private* and *public*. When agents are respectful, cordial, well-mannered, and polite toward one another, they are enjoying relations of *private* civility (143). *Public* civility, the more fundamental dimension of civility for Shils, is essentially conduct that supports the common good. Metaphorically speaking, *private* civility lubricates the moving parts of pluralistic society, helping them to glide smoothly, whereas *public* civility ("public spiritedness") is a glue holding the liberal-democratic polity and its various "substantive values" together (143-144). Shils associates public civility with a style of politics that is respectful of people's beliefs and practices, and which acknowledges "a plurality of standards of judgement" (142). Politics of this sort contrasts with a politics of *ideology* which, embedded in a monistic view of the world, encourages fanaticism, followers aiming to remake society using violent revolution. Followers of an ideology live beyond the bounds of civil society, denying its validity and the legitimacy of its government. Boyd's interpretation of civility as practices promoting the common good of society raises questions about the constitution of the common good: is it one good or a blend of goods, is there a *summum bonum*, who is to mediate between conflicting views of the common good, and on what will any such mediators base their decisions?

There is no gainsaying the importance of notions of civility in Shils' thought; this is underscored by the number of contributors to *The Calling* who refer to them. Stephen Turner, for example, finds Shils conceiving of civility as a social art form that agents learn through trial and error practice. The emphasis in this case is on civility as politeness being a virtue necessary to liberal society. For Adair-Toteff, Shils primarily uses "civility" to signify "the virtue of the citizen' who believes in the common good," a conception that seems to combine the two ideas of civility that Boyd sees Shils as separating (117). An agent who possesses the virtue of civility is, by Adair-Toteff and Shils' reckoning, the citizen of a civil society, accepting the principle of reasoned argument-with-compromise as conducing to society's common good. Peter Mentzel's erudite chapter on "Nations, Nationality, and Civil Society in the Work of Edward Shils," renders Shils' idea of civility as a view of the world that assigns responsibility to individual agents "for the smooth functioning of

human society. In this sense, it is the foundation both for what is usually thought of as ‘civil society’ as well as for a liberal democratic state and free economic system” (156). Grosby highlights Shils’ use of “civility” to underscore the “artful adjudication of...tensions” resulting in compromise settlements (42). These various notions all depict civility as a causal activity or *process*. Shils, we note in passing, also uses “civility” to refer to *civil society* as the *product* of such causal activity.

Lenore Ealy writes of Shils’ recovery of tradition from two centuries of modern neglect. A tradition for Shils is a “pattern of actions,” both physical and mental (73). A number of people think and act in similar ways, being re-enactments that have withstood the test of experience and which later generations of agents will re-enact again. Ealy notes Shils’ view of tradition in modern society differs from that of Max Weber. As their major difference, Shils insists tradition remains influential in modernity, whereas Weber sees it being diminished by the trend of rationalisation whereby social agents require that ends be sought after by way of actions that have been found to be optimally efficient. The majority of sociologists accept Weber’s rationalisation thesis with its roots going back to the 18th century Enlightenment, the protagonists of which called for personal autonomy and free thought to supersede traditional institutions and beliefs which they deemed to be anachronistic. Weber bases his sociology on a fourfold distinction of unit acts: instrumentally-rational, value-rational, affective, and traditional. From these atomic concepts he builds models of complex social institutions and social processes. He appreciated that sociologists need conceptual models for the purpose of imposing order on what William James in another context described as the “blooming buzzing confusion” that would otherwise characterize the experience of social life. Salient in Weber’s depiction of the unit act of *tradition* is the idea of *habit*. Located at the opposite end of the spectrum to deliberative, instrumentally rational action, traditional action is devoid of meaning, Weber says, involving no agential purpose or intent. This, as Ealy notes, is a further disagreement Shils has with Weber, Shils describing tradition as a transfer of “*meaning* from the past to the present” (66, italics added). Moreover, tradition for Shils is strictly speaking not a type of action but a “*pattern*” of the actions (mental and or physical) of the members of a group (66 ff.). In Weber’s account of tradition, conduct of a particular sort continues being re-enacted because this is how the forebears of these people have behaved in the past; the conduct has no goal and is in this sense meaningless. By contrast, Shils argues members of a tradition act for a *reason*, which is to say they act *meaningfully*, whether their goal be intellectual (as with scientists trying to discover some aspect of reality), moral (as when people commit themselves to act justly), or pragmatic (as when an entrepreneur invests his capital in a factory with the aim of selling its manufactures profitably). Shils is correct to say Weber exaggerated the extent of rationalisation (critical reason) in modernity, and that this prevented Weber from appreciating how influential tradition remains. Shils followed Polanyi in depicting, as the means by which the tradition of science gets transmitted, the apprenticeship of the PhD student to a respected master of the craft of research from whom the student learns the traditional skills, leading to his accreditation as a practitioner of scientific research. Weber would have us believe rationalization has attacked tradition in all its forms like an acid corroding metals, whereas Shils paints a complex picture in which traditions such as reason, technology, and languages have gone from strength to strength, while other traditions (e.g., Christianity, family, education) have been weakened by rationalisation and by “progressive” ideals, expansionist legislation, and “scientific and romantic critiques of tradition” (71). Weber seems never to have clearly recognized that the agents of the trend of rationalization—reason, science, and technology—are themselves traditions.

The Weber-Shils relation appears in different guises in chapters of *The Calling*, including Peter Mentzel’s “Nations, Nationality, and Civil Society,” a painstaking analysis of Shils on civil society as permeated with

the “ethic of responsibility” (155). Weber’s celebrated essay “Politics as a Vocation” took the ethic of responsibility to be the vital element of the politician’s role in liberal democracy. Shils agrees with Weber that voluntary association is the hallmark of a modern civil society, the social form that emerged historically among the sectaries of the Protestant Reformation. Civil society is the arena, Mentzel observes, on which most human activity proceeds in liberal-democracy, “self-governing individuals” constituting the liberal order and performing a “watchdog role” over the economy and the activities of politicians (156). Directing our attention to images of nation and nationality in Shils’ writings, Mentzel identifies their essential feature as “a primordial attachment to a bounded” territory together with an appreciation of kinship (165). Shils looks on nations both as mental constructs (or, as he prefers to call them, “self-conscious collectivities”) *and* as objective facts. The idea of such collectivities, Mentzel considers, is imbued with Durkheim’s understanding of the *conscience collective*, the consciousness of common beliefs, sentiments, values, and memories, notwithstanding Shils’ claim he owed Durkheim no intellectual debt.

Philip Altbach discusses Shils as a supporter of the traditional university, the research university that Wilhelm von Humboldt took to be the centre of intellectual life in modern society. An exemplar of von Humboldt’s university, the University of Chicago, provided Shils with a guild environment in which to hone his skills as a scholar and as a teacher. In the 1960s and 70s he offered informed commentary on the development across the United States of the world’s first system of *mass* university education. “The American university assumed world leadership in science and scholarship during this period, with Europe’s pre-eminent role fading” (205). Shils designed the journal *Minerva* to serve as a vehicle for discussing developments in university education and science, and for putting the case for universities to go on receiving government support while maintaining their self-governing autonomy. Shils’ support of the ideal of the meritocratic university, in the tradition of Humboldt and Weber, was at odds with students and academics who push the barrow of affirmative action. So much of what Shils stood for in the university has been eroded in the 21st century, as Altbach appreciates. Universities have been subjected to downsizing and made “accountable,” and—“in the long run more damaging”—the share of funding allocated to *applied* research and the achievement of useful knowledge has risen compared with the proportion of funding for basic research (211).

Whereas Stephen Turner reflects on Shils as being a “widely recognized but misunderstood thinker,” Thomas Schneider believes Shils has been neglected by scholars (48). Some of the factors adduced by Schneider to explain Shils’ neglect are similar to ones I posited earlier to explain why the level of interest in his work is nothing like that in scholars such as Giddens, Beck, and Foucault. Schneider points out that, unlike Talcott Parsons and Robert Merton, Shils established no school, never wanting students to become his disciples. Shils looked on sociology as being part of a scientific programme of human self-understanding. His “Prospect of Sociological Theory” essay of 1961 advocated intensive as well as extensive studies of Western and non-Western societies (the duality of centre and periphery), temporal change (class, power, values), and tradition (56). It was high time, Shils believed, that sociologists returned to the exemplary figures of Weber and Durkheim, tracing out the implications of “man’s being in contact with the sacred or charismatic things in politics, in the legal system, in education and learning, as well as in the churches” (57).

### Further Comments

Shils was a great supporter of, and a most erudite and articulate contributor to, the liberal-conservative tradition of understanding Western society in the second half of the 20th century. In his intellectual qualities

of controlled passion, rigour, independence, and commitment to uncovering the truth, Shils reminds this reviewer of Julien Benda, famed author of *The Treason of the Intellectuals* (1927). The editors of *The Calling*—both Adair-Toteff and the indefatigable Turner—must be congratulated on having conceived of the idea of this book, and the authors are to be applauded for the impressive scholarly chapters they have produced for it. The essayists of *The Calling* are warmly accepting of Shils as a person and admiring of his scholarly work. The overall tone of the work is affirmatory rather than critical, which is no bad thing since analysis, exposition, and comprehension constitute a necessary prelude before informed criticism can get underway. It is a first-rate collection of essays, helping give an outstanding mind its due and providing other scholars with a filip to improve further the understanding and assessment of his work.

As is only to be expected, the book leaves hiatuses for future scholars to fill. T.S. Eliot and Karl Popper are cited often, but (as I suggest above in my comments on Podoksik's essay) the book provides no sustained discussion of their relations with Shils. I would particularly like to see a comparative analysis undertaken of Popper's theory of objective knowledge as a part of his three-worlds ontology and Shils' study of individual and collective forms of self-consciousness. Also, how did Shils manage his relations with Polanyi and Popper after these two formidable, independent thinkers formed an intense disliking of each other in the early 1950s? Did Shils' developing friendship with Polanyi come at the expense of what appears to have been his good working relationship with Popper? Did he throw in his lot with Polanyi? Shils, we recall, acknowledged Eliot's writings as having informed his thinking on tradition. But what aspects of his theory of tradition did he owe to Eliot? In what respects did his and Eliot's understandings of tradition differ? Did they have direct personal dealings with each other? Was Eliot's influence on Shils limited to the subject of tradition or did it extend to other aspects of his thought? "Primary groups" are a feature of Shils' social ontology, being viewed by him as strong social cement. Polanyi's social ontology turns on his distinction of "*spontaneous*" ("dynamic") orders and bureaucratic organizations. A discussion of the similarities and differences of Shils' and Polanyi's types of social entities might prove to be illuminating. More substantive and less exegetical, one asks whether Shils' depiction of science remains valid today. Bryan Turner points out that Shils' essay-collection *Portraits* includes a wistful vein of reflection "on the decline of the university as an autonomous community of scholars and the" bureaucratisation of the modern university (193). This salutary reminder readily transfers across to science and its evolution since World War II. Polanyi was decisively influential on Shils' metascientific thought, and Polanyi's writings on (rather than in) science illuminate a form of science which—as Jerome Ravetz and a number of other scholars argue—was practiced in autonomous, specialist communities until the end of World War II, a form whose days were numbered with the advent of the Manhattan Project ushering in large-scale, capital intensive developments, described by Alvin Weinberg as "big science." Polanyi epitomized the earlier form of science in "The "Republic of Science," the celebrated essay he wrote for the first issue of Shils' journal *Minerva*. "Republican" science, of which Polanyi *qua* scientific researcher had been a part, was explicated in very different ways by the likes of Popper in *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* and by Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Shils' obituary for Polanyi in *Minerva* included a spirited defence of the republic of science along with stern criticism of "the utilitarian attitude towards science" as some sort of munificent cargo cult. The bias toward utilitarian scientific research is stronger these days than it ever has been.

Most of the contributors to *The Calling* respect the rule of good scholarship that requires authors to include page numbers as well as years of publication in their citations. The less detailed method of citing, providing the year of publication without page numbers, has no evidential value. How is the conscientious

reader, wishing to check an author's assertions or interpretations in a book or an article, to proceed if she has no page numbers to guide her? *The Calling* has been well edited: I noticed only two typographical errors ("flowing from" should appear on page 27 instead of "flowing for," and "world" rather than "word" is required on page 131). The index of the book is helpfully detailed.

I understand *The Calling* to be priced at \$120, which puts it well and truly beyond the financial reach of students and of most interested academics. This is a pity, given the intrinsic and historical interest of the essays and their first-rate scholarship. Manchester University Press is to be congratulated on publishing such a fine collection of essays. The press would do the cause of Shils scholarship a further great favour were it able to see its way clear to publish an affordable paperback version in the near future.

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