

QUAESTIONES DISPUTATAE

MICHAEL POLANYI'S
SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY
AND THE FUTURE OF LIBERALISM

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Editor's Introduction

Charles Lowney

It is our privilege to introduce the readers of *Quaestiones Disputatae* to a discussion of Michael Polanyi's social, economic, and political thought. This is not only of historical and philosophical interest, but Polanyi's understanding of the motors of a good liberal society can serve to properly formulate the role of government and the limits of freedom today.¹ Polanyi saw where liberal political systems branched off into disaster or dead ends; he saw the distorting disputes of the "right" and the "left" of his day, and he attempted to guide them—and can guide us—toward more productive and meaningful political conversations. Understanding Polanyi now can warn us where dangers lie in our own social and political—and even environmental—landscape. It can help us realize our common values in a pluralist society, and guide us toward a model of tolerance and dissent that brings progress rather than destructive division.

In the first essay, "The Growth of Thought in Society as a Major Motif in Polanyi's Philosophy," Phil Mullins begins with a short biography of Polanyi (1891-1976), and then shows how the *importance of ideas* and the *growth of thought* permeate both his scientific and social-political writings. Mullins traces the history of the notion of the growth of thought through Polanyi's career. He shows us that Polanyi used his understanding of the growth of knowledge in the scientific tradition and modern society to develop a new model of a good liberal social order. For Polanyi, traditions were not static, but had both conservative and progressive elements. They could undergird "dynamic orders" that grow in their domain under the guidance of ideals, whether it be *Truth* in science, academia, or the press; *Justice* in the law; *Beauty* in the arts; or

¹ To avoid my long-winded narrative, you can go right to the essays, each of which begins with an abstract that will give you a briefer introduction to its theme. I would like to thank our contributors for their hard work, and I especially thank Phil Mullins, Jon Fennell, and Eric Howard, who kindly and carefully edited drafts of my work here.

the *Good* in religious or moral communities. Just as in science, these dynamic orders seek to answer important questions, and with discoveries their knowledge grows.

Liberal social orders are comprised of self-organized dynamic orders and, according to Polanyi, the former should be organized in a way that facilitates the progress of the latter. Freedom allows for the growth of thought, not only at the political level, but at the level of the dynamic systems. As Polanyi distinguishes scientism from science, he also distinguishes self-interested freedom from social freedoms. The primary social freedom that holds society together is the freedom of individuals to follow their conscience and to responsibly advance toward their ideals in the context of their calling, whether that be in science, religion, law, or business. This freedom Polanyi calls “public liberty.” Social and political structures allow various traditions to grow and develop toward higher ideals by allowing individuals to exercise public liberty. Safeguarding and supporting this liberty expresses the root and purpose of liberal social orders for Polanyi.

Next, Eduardo Beira, in “Liberty and Tradition: Michael Polanyi and the Idea of Progress,” writes on a theme similar to that explored by Mullins. He also uses a textual and historical approach, but he shifts our focus to examine more closely the relationship between liberty, tradition, and progress. Beira begins by relaying the significance of Polanyi’s birth into an idyllic period in history, when the hopes inspired by the French Revolution and the aspirations of science were flourishing in Europe. But then came World War I and the rise of totalitarian regimes. Polanyi saw the hopes of his youth dashed as Europe destroyed itself. These experiences provided lifelong motivation for Polanyi. While Polanyi is known primarily as a philosopher of science, who emphasizes emergence in ontology and tacit knowing in epistemology (the idea that knowledge can be “tacit” is Polanyi’s coinage), he actually came to these ideas late, according to Beira, by way of attempting to understand not only *discovery* in science, but how equality, freedom and *progress* take place in the context of traditions. Beira shows how Polanyi criticized ideas held by the Enlightenment—especially its objectivist use of critical reasoning to destroy traditions, and its utopian aspirations—but also how Polanyi held on to the Enlightenment notions of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. After examining Polanyi’s early writings, to show how progress takes place in the dialectic between traditions and the free individuals that comprise

them, Beira shows how Polanyi later, in the late 1940s and into the '60s, placed the notion of social and scientific progress in the wider context of ontological progress on a cosmic scale (via emergence and anthropogenesis). Polanyi also dug deeper into epistemology to understand the tacit dimension of traditions and commitments, and to show these functioned to bring us explicit knowledge. Beira ends by briefly tracing the history of the notion of progress since the Enlightenment. He shows how Polanyi shared some of Kant's aspirations, and how Polanyi's ideas are also compatible with some current conceptions, such as those of Andrew Feenberg, that link progress to liberation, local action, and humility.

We see the importance of the growth of thought and progress, and how these connect with stable and developing traditions. We see how liberal social orders need to preserve both the freedom of individuals and social forms of freedom. Next, Struan Jacobs, in "Polanyi's New Liberalism and the Question of Democracy," moves us from examining these broad themes to looking more specifically at the development of Polanyi's conception of a New Liberalism. Jacobs, too, sees the connection between Polanyi the scientist and Polanyi the social theorist. The idea of "spontaneous ordering," for instance, was found not just in natural science, but also in the economic activities that led to a stable form of wealth. We begin to see more clearly how dynamic orders operate as Jacobs distinguishes between a top-down, "corporate authority"—the kind that Polanyi associated with "central planning" in communist countries—and a more horizontal form of organization that results in a "supervisory authority." Dynamic orders are self-organized domains in which the role of authority is not corporate control, but an oversight that relies on the freedom and commitment of a community of individuals for its proper functioning.

Jacobs also begins to distinguish more clearly the sorts of freedom involved in liberal orders. Polanyi recognized that John Stuart Mill's conception of individual liberty—or "private liberty"—can be in full effect in even totalitarian regimes. Polanyi worked to distinguish his view of "public liberty" from both the sort of social liberty that can call for the involuntary sacrifice of individual freedoms, and from the freedom of an individual to do as he pleases. Polanyi saw that Classical Liberalism's and Neoliberalism's notion of individual freedom can generate extreme "barbarisms" via laissez-faire economic policies. Jacobs shows how Polanyi guides us to

a New Liberalism, in which supervisory control coordinates dynamic orders to help them serve our higher values. It is here that Jacobs raises a very interesting question.

Jacobs notes that although Polanyi emphasizes the ideals of freedom, equality, and justice, and has much to say about liberal social orders, he says very little about democracy. Jacobs thus asks whether Polanyi's vision of a New Liberalism requires a democratic form of government, or if it is possible that other forms of government with strong constitutional traditions can serve the interests of his New Liberalism. It is here that Jacobs compares Polanyi's view of a free society with Popper's notion of an "open society," and he finds that Popper provides a stronger and more systematic defense of democracy than does Polanyi.

Jacobs documents how Polanyi, at least in his examination of history, found thriving pockets of liberal social orders in political orders that were authoritarian. And while Polanyi expressly believed in universal suffrage, he also believed that a democratic society could possibly become totalitarian, as it honored the will of its majority to the detriment of public liberty. Jacobs thus leaves open the question of whether or not Polanyi's New Liberalism is best supported by modern democracies.

While Jacobs is right that Polanyi's arguments supporting democracy are underdeveloped, it seems that stronger arguments for democratic institutions could be developed from Polanyi's work. In fact, it seems that the first part of Jacobs' essay gives us a tacit answer to the question he raises in the second part. Although by historical accident some authoritarian regimes protected liberalism, and some democratic systems destroyed it, given Polanyi's notion of liberalism, we can see that constitutional democratic institutions may better protect the sort of power that is essential for progress. Polanyi's opposition to central control and his advocacy of bottom-up, emergent dynamic orders in liberal society motivate us against dictatorships and oligarchical forms of government, which tend more toward "corporate" rather than "supervisory" authority. Dynamic orders and their progress would be more at risk in corporate political structures, even if that power is limited by a constitution and institutions, since public liberty would exist only at the pleasure of the corporate authority. In contrast, the horizontal power and mutual negotiation toward self-organization that Polanyi prizes would, *prima facie* at least, take place more consistently and more broadly in modern democratic forms of political authority.

Recognizing the insights of the first part of Jacobs' essay thus allows us to see the internal consistency in Polanyi's advocacy of the authority of those "influentials" who are elected by universal suffrage (bottom-up) to their (supervisory) roles.

But democracies, with liberal socio-political orders, can be unstable. Plato pointed out that democracies can easily precipitate the authoritarian rule of dictators, and Ben Franklin warned that we have a democratic republic—"if we can keep it."² This presents a problem that Eric Howard examines in "Polanyi and Rawls on Higher Autonomy as the Basis for a Stable Liberal Society." Freedom is the primary value of a Liberalism, but there is an inherent instability in promoting individual freedom in a political community. How do we achieve stable social cohesion, and political unity, in our modern liberal pluralist society? Here Howard points us to a similarity in the political philosophies of Polanyi and John Rawls: they both criticize the sort of utilitarian and libertarian freedom commonly associated with being free individuals. Howard traces the idea of individual freedom from Mill, and shows how both Rawls and Polanyi find this to be an inadequate basis for a political society. (In fact, both see this sort of utilitarian freedom as consistent with slavery, e.g., if one freely decided to sell one's freedom for certain other benefits, such as security.)

In response to the divisive notion of private liberty, Polanyi develops his notion of public liberty, and Rawls develops the notion of political or rational autonomy, which we exercise from behind a "veil of ignorance" in order to build just political structures and produce just policies. Differences become manifest, however, when we see that public liberty takes place in the space of a commitment to metaphysical ideals within dynamic traditions. Howard shows that Rawls would bristle here and consider Polanyi's public liberty to be the result of a "comprehensive moral doctrine." For Rawls, political autonomy is something that derives from powers and a rationality that can function independently from any particular ethical theory about the good life. Polanyi's public liberty invokes metaphysical principles by invoking transcendent values, while Rawls believes that the political cannot rest on metaphysics.

² I paraphrase a statement attributed to Franklin. It is said that people asked Franklin, as he exited the Constitutional Convention, what form of government the Convention produced. "A republic," he replied, "if you can keep it."

Rawls looks for an overlapping consensus of moral values that are at a higher level (the political) than the various particular comprehensive doctrines (the ethical) we find within a pluralistic liberal society. Polanyi brings about a cohesion that is at one and the same time more particular and even more general than Rawls; particular, since public liberty entails free commitment to the advancement of a dynamic order (such as the institution of science, the press, or law, etc., which Rawls might see as falling at the level of comprehensive doctrines), but general since the commitment is driven by a universal intent that honors transcendent values, such as understanding, truth, or justice.

Howard recognizes that both Rawls and Polanyi have views consistent with a “high liberalism,” which emphasizes a more just distribution of social goods (such as wealth and power), and he recognizes that they both criticize Mill’s individualistic autonomy. But in the end, he questions whether or not Polanyi and Rawls’ views—given their different conceptions of freedom, and the source and role of morality—become “incommensurable.”

In my essay, “Three Freedoms and an Emergentists Hope for Social Progress,” I attempt to present Polanyi’s ideas in a way that might be helpful in overcoming impasses that we seem to be facing in today’s political climate. I try to show how Polanyi’s understanding of emergentism, both in social and moral orders, provides a higher and different middle ground than modern “conservatives” and “liberals” typically stand upon. In the 1940s, Polanyi faced the same sort of tensions that we do today, with capitalist neoliberals on the “right” living in fear of “creeping socialism,” and progressive radical liberals on the “left” chastising the oppressive backwardness of the status quo and pushing for revolutionary change.

I show how Polanyi held views that would align him with both the “right” and the “left” and might provide a better way forward than either. We see him on the right with his emphasis on the wisdom of traditions, the notion of spontaneous order, and his association with F. A. Hayek and neoliberalism against the central control of the economy by the government. But we see him on the left in his understanding of higher-level controls in science and his belief that supervisory government intervention need not lead to the demise of the economy and traditional dynamic orders. Polanyi advocated a governmental role in controlling the monetary system, and in issuing regulations, taxes, and subsidies that reduce harms (such as pollution) and promote social goods.

He believed the economic machinery should be “canalized” to serve our higher values, e.g., in providing funding for higher education. For Polanyi, while trying to control the economy in the top-down manner of the USSR was like “asking a cat to swim the Atlantic Ocean,” allowing the exigencies of the economic system to produce immoral or unjust results would be like letting the tail wag the dog.

I suggest that Polanyi guides us to a “higher middle,” next, I show how emergence and higher-order systems work in order to clarify what this might mean. Higher-order values emerge as discoveries in response to questions about the best way to live and the best way to live together. I relate a Polanyian notion of emergentist morality to Maslow’s Pyramid in which lower needs must be adequately satisfied in order for higher values to emerge and effectively influence behavior. Though higher values (e.g., those surrounding friendship) modify our understanding of the lower values (e.g., those surrounding safety and survival), the higher values also protect what we come to see as important about the lower values. This leads into an application of an emergentist understanding of Polanyi’s notion of freedom. Private liberty in dialectic with social liberty, brings us to the even higher level of public liberty. Here I associate higher-order freedom with Rousseau’s Republicanism and his conception of the General Will. There are dangers to this conception that keep it formal and general, but Polanyi provides a positive role for this will in the general support of free institutions.

Whereas Howard sees an impasse between Polanyi and Rawls, I attempt to show how a Polanyian notion of an *emergent* liberal political order actually has strong similarities with Rawls’ notion of a neutral and freestanding political rationality. Political Liberalism, though emergent from a tradition itself for Polanyi, emerged as a political tradition that allows for the fruitful interaction of many varied particular traditions and their parochial conceptions of the good. In this sense, it is higher-order and “neutral” relative to those conceptions, as Rawls suggests. Rather than merely an “overlapping” consensus, however, Polanyi would see political liberalism as an emergent “joint comprehension” of the various traditions under the umbrella of a liberal society. This also affirms the notion that political rationality, and the autonomy exercised in its name, is “freestanding,” in that it would be irreducible to the comprehensive moral doctrines of the dynamic orders that comprise it.

The transcendent ideals of Truth, Justice, Equality, Freedom, Beauty, Spirituality, etc. to which Polanyi appeals can thus be given content at the highest level of personal responsibility (*à la* Polanyi's public liberty), at the political level (*à la* Rawls), or at the level of particular traditions (*à la* conservatives like Alasdair MacIntyre) or at the level of the individual (*à la* Libertarians). Because of the abstract nature of the higher values that guide us, there is always a danger that comprehensive doctrines will attempt to commandeer political values and steer all by the light of their parochial values in a tyranny of the majority or minority. There is also the danger MacIntyre emphasizes, *viz.*, that the values of particular moral traditions might be hollowed out in the cosmopolitan language of everywhere and nowhere. Though there are dangers, there are also rewards. Ideally, the political nurtures particular traditions with supervisory authority, and though it represents our higher communal values, it does not attempt to censor or oppress (overtly or covertly) the independence and freedom of various dynamic traditions.

I end by asking where Polanyi may stand with regard to the implementation of social programs that would increase the safety net or provide a minimum standard of living. I characterize Polanyi as a "liberal conservative" who would want us to serve our higher values and take part in the political *vita activa*, as Hannah Arendt describes it. As long as we were free *for* something, he would advocate that we be free *from* concern about our lower-level survival needs—and that to the greatest extent compatible with the exigencies of a well-functioning economic system. So, how much socialism is acceptable in a liberal political order for Polanyi becomes a pragmatic, rather than an ideological, question.

Speaking of dangers, however, we have some pressing ones. Polanyi discusses the problem of "moral inversion" as a social and psychological mechanism that brought about the horrors of twentieth century totalitarianisms. This inversion is an especially Modern problem that emerges when utopian ideals and passion meet a scientific skepticism about the reality of higher values. If we cannot rationally justify values, we lose the ability to debate values and their manifestation in public policy. The Modern mind, without a way to convince others of the truth of its own moral convictions, resorts to propaganda and power (rather than reason and persuasion). When one party is adamantly convinced of its own truth, and believes there is no way to convince the other, a situation arises in which moral passion for utopian ends are thought to justify immoral means.

The latent nihilism of the scientific view might then become manifest, and the greatest barbarisms can be effected in the name of social progress. This is what Polanyi saw with the rise of fascist and communist revolutions, but we may have our own shades of inversion today. The moral passion behind the utopian ideals—whether it be to make America great again, or to create an equitable socialist paradise—can lead to drastic actions if deeper, common values are thought to be illusory or allowed to be “temporarily” suspended.

Richard Moodey, in “Confronting or Denying the Minotaur: ‘Moral Inversion’ Today,” examines the concept of moral inversion and shows how current economic attitudes have created another inversion that is destroying our natural environment. (We can see moral inversions expressed in the scientific socio-political philosophies of Marx’s communism, at one end of the spectrum, but also in Ayn Rand’s libertarianism, at the other.) In examining the notion, Moodey sees that consumerism is its own form of inversion. He shows us that while psychopaths feel no empathy, moral inverts do, but they ignore that empathy to follow their moral passion to the destruction of others. He sees the greatest Minotaur of moral inversion today as climate change, which—like the mythical figure—will devour our children.

Moodey tells us that Polanyi offered a prescription for the disease of moral inversion. It was his “fiduciary program,” which restored faith in the existence of higher-order values and again made it rational to have faith in faith. Moodey is pessimistic regarding our ability to forestall climate change disaster, but he hopes that an awareness of this new “scientific Minotaur” and Polanyi’s post-critical solution can make us more resilient and socially cohesive as we face the challenges at hand. He likens Polanyi’s approach to that of Jem Bendel, who lists four abilities that Moodey sees as virtues to help us adapt to radical environmental and lifestyle changes: resilience, relinquishment, restoration, and then, finally, reconciliation and love. Moodey shows how Polanyi leads us through the first three virtues, but also how Polanyi’s fiduciary program neglects the reconciliation and love we may also need to face down this Minotaur together. While activists see the environmental problem, Moodey shows us that they may not realize the extent to which we need to adapt, nor do they see the fiduciary path to a robust resilience. In other words, they, too, may be avoiding rather than confronting the scientific Minotaur and the hubris that has pressed us under a lid of greenhouse gases.

In our final essay, “Michael Polanyi and the Theologico-Political Problem,” Jon Fennell explores some deep and nuanced issues that place the political in a broad historical and philosophical map. He addresses a perennial issue that has had many forms. (Plato called it a quarrel between philosophy and poetry.) It is seen in the tension between reason and politics, and it takes the form of a conflict between reason and faith. Not only does Fennell dive deep and wide historically, he does so with regard to epistemology, bringing to bear the very different standards of what counts as knowledge and as evidence, when science is contrasted with revelation.

Fennell begins by noting that Polanyi endorses a statement by Paul Tillich that can appear very odd to those who are familiar with Polanyi’s post-critical approach. The statement endorses the view that revelation and reason, or orthodoxy and philosophy, *cannot* conflict, because they belong to different “dimensions of reality.” However, Polanyi’s emphasis on tacit knowledge, his fiduciary project that restores faith as the basis of all knowledge, his critique of a modern, critical rationality—all this seems to point to a happier resolution than Paul Tillich’s pronouncement that the religious and the scientific are *so different* that they cannot interact. The statement seems to be a betrayal of the post-critical epistemology that intermixes rather than divides faith and reason. Fennell is thus motivated by a quest to discover in what ways religious belief and revelation are similar to the rational inquiry of philosophy and science and in what ways they are different.

This brings him to the “Theologico-Political Problem” as Leo Strauss presents it.³ Fennell shows us how the oppositions embedded here are destructive when modern rationality enforces demands for evidential grounds that are beyond doubt. This critical demand does not only attack religious faith, however, it ultimately undermines the foundations of philosophy itself—since if one digs deep enough one finds that philosophy *also* cannot meet the requirements of critical rationality (this is the “scandal of philosophy”). Modern rationality thus self-destructs, and we

³ The label of this broad and deep dispute can become somewhat confusing because the *theological and political*, to the extent that they rely on the authority of divine revelation or traditional power, are *both* opposed to *philosophy* and its demand for rational justification. Also, since Strauss saw the *political* vs. *philosophical* opposition as the most fundamental division, this opposition (the Theologico-Political Problem) is held to be even more basic than the oppositions between faith and reason, or revelation and philosophy.

are thrown back into orthodoxies that are reactive, rather than inquiries that are open to new discovery.

Strauss and Fennell guide us on a different path. They go back to go forward; it is only with the modern conception of rationality that the contrast between faith and reason becomes so barren. Strauss looks to the pre-modern rationality of Socrates, and finds a much more productive tension between faith and reason. As Fennell shows, the two approaches are emblematic of different ways of life. They are based on two different fundamental commitments, but there is still a common ground—or a common ungroundedness—that the two share. Both the life of faith and Socratic rationality recognize this ungroundedness, and both have a role for measured doubt, inquiry, and affirmation (“affirmation” as opposed to rational “verification” based on empirical evidence). Socrates’ way of life is stimulated by the foreign revelations of theology that he can then question and explore; and in turn, the doubt that such philosophical questioning may stimulate in the orthodox believer can generate new affirmations of belief.

Fennell thus concludes that Polanyi was wrong to advocate the Tillichian separation of reason and revelation, since both are unified in their search for truth and both can spur each other on toward truth. I, however, do not think Polanyi was wrong here, though his claim might be an exaggeration if one takes it to mean that there can be no crossover or constructive communication between the two approaches.

Fennell’s Straussian approach clearly catches what Polanyi would call the fiduciary basis of *both* endeavors. Fennell sees the ultimate circularity of the two independent justifications for two different ways of life, those of faith or philosophy, that find common ground in their search for truth. But what Polanyi catches that Strauss seems to miss is that two different *sorts* of truth are at stake here and both can be consistently combined in one way of life.

Polanyi’s sees that different sorts of questions—whether existential or empirical—can each bring us to incommensurable interpretive contexts (like that of Law v. Science, in the Polanyi example that Fennell uses) but that they can still both reveal truths about one common reality. In praising Strauss, and focusing on a univocal notion of truth, Fennell seems to neglect how the dynamic tension he sees can be consistent with Polanyi’s notion that there are indeed two very

different contexts of understanding at work here that often appear to be in conflict when they are actually speaking right past each other.

Fennell sees Polanyi's endorsement of Tillich as an illegitimate—or at best infertile—way to make room for faith that concedes too much to modern rationality. While Polanyi's Tillichian solution may look like such a concession, via another Kantian effort to “make room for faith” in full acceptance of the Modern scientific picture, it is not, and the solution is consistent with Polanyi's postcritical approach. Polanyi's “speaking past” comes not from a sharp noumenal-phenomenal divide, but from the different answers one can discover based on the different sorts of questions one can ask. Whereas Kant's view might be considered a desperate attempt to give ground to faith *in spite of all experience*, which science studies, Polanyi's epistemology interweaves faith and reason. The moral, religious and scientific endeavors are all *based on human experience*, but these can produce statements that can be understood differently in the light of different “interpretive frameworks.”

To me, the Straussian solution seems in line with a more “protestant” opposition by which one must make a sharp Kierkegaardian either-or decision and leap irrationally to faith. Though Fennell and Strauss want to see these two sorts of lives as mutually enhancing, the dichotomy here actually produces conflict as one feels torn in two very different directions: one way set by revelation and the other by the purported knowledge of the worldly wise.

Polanyi's post-critical epistemology, however, seems to aim for a more “catholic” solution, by which a strong faith can be consistent with reason. In this view, the truths of revelation will ultimately not conflict with the discoveries of science, and both will complement each other in the end. The majority of the conflict occurs, however—and this seems to be Polanyi's point—where there is no real conflict, i.e., when a pronouncement of faith is mistakenly interpreted as an empirical statement of scientific fact, and vice versa.

Cardinal Avery Dulles (at whose table I first studied Polanyi at Boston College) emphasized how the statements of revelation were responses to deep inquiries. Dogma—such as the Immaculate Conception, Jesus as the Son of God, and the Mystery of the Trinity—are revelations similar to the discoveries of science: they come in response to questions that gestate through generations. When these pronouncements come and are affirmed as revelations from God, they

have the same sort of validation that the discovery of Newton's laws or Einstein's theory of general relativity possess in the context of physics. But it is a mistake to reduce those statements to a literal meaning along the lines of "Snow is white"; when we call God our "father" we do not mean God has human anatomy and is our biological parent.

In a moral or religious inquiry, the sort of questions we ask are different than those asked in science, and we ask them at a different, visceral level of our being. The solution to such deep questions might come as a revelatory pronouncement, a moral principle, or a religious ritual (as I point out in my writing on an emergentist understanding of morality). The language in which we express these answers bears a different sort of meaning in that context. In the framework of science, we seek a different, more literal, knowledge that is more easily confirmed by physically perceptible states of affairs. In morality, there are reasons as well; a tacit background affirms the resultant proclamation. This, just as a tacit background affirms a scientific discovery through validation, even before verification is established.

Traditions and religions can thus possess great tacit wisdom that is completely lost to an explicit scientific investigation. There is indeed, then, a conflict between religious and political orthodoxies and the Modern philosopher who demands that all reasons become explicitly available—and Fennell and Strauss are right that with a better understanding of reason and its limits the conflict can be transformed into a more fecund source of interaction. But I do not think this creative tension abrogates the truth of Polanyi's Tillichian statement. The effort to understand different ways in which religious language harbors literal truths, and in which literal language might hide deep mystery, is consistent with the idea that we can ask very different sorts of questions about our experiential encounters with reality and receive very different sorts of true answers.

One hope an emergentist can have in the midst of conflicting frameworks of understanding is that questions will arise that lead to the discovery of a new comprehensive framework that reconciles currently conflicting views in surprising but satisfying ways. Wading back from Fennell's concerns into shallower—but important—waters, we hope that this encounter with Polanyi's economic, social and political thought will help raise new questions for you as we

mutually endeavor to discover new solutions to the problems that our liberal social order currently faces.