

Tradition & Discovery

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ARTICLES

- “Tradition: Why Shils and Polanyi Abandoned the Action Frame of Reference”.....5**
Richard Moodey
- “Moodey on Shils, Polanyi, and Tradition”.....29**
Phil Mullins
- “Tradition in the Work of Shils and Polanyi: A Few Comments”.....38**
Steven Grosby
- “The Young Shils”.....43**
Stephen Turner
- “Reply to Comments of Grosby, Mullins, and Turner”.....52**
Richard Moodey

REVIEWS

- Murray A. Rae, ed., *Critical Conversations: Michael Polanyi and Christian Theology*.....54**
Ed Payne

JOURNAL AND SOCIETY INFORMATION

- TAD information and Submissions for Publication*.....inside front cover
- Preface*.....1
- News and Notes*.....2
- 2014 Annual Meeting Program*.....4
- Notes on Contributors*.....inside back cover
- Polanyi Society Information*.....back cover

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Submissions for Publication

Articles, meeting notices, and notes likely to be of interest to persons interested in the thought of Michael Polanyi are welcomed. Review suggestions and book reviews should be sent to Walter Gulick while manuscripts, notices, and notes should be sent to Paul Lewis (see addresses above). Manuscripts normally will be sent out for blind review. Authors are expected to provide an electronic copy as an e-mail attachment. Shorter articles (6000 words) are preferred, although longer manuscripts will be considered. Chicago style, with endnotes, is preferred, but APA and MLA will be accepted. Abbreviate frequently cited book titles, particularly books by Polanyi (e.g., *Personal Knowledge* becomes PK). Writers are encouraged to employ simple citations within the text when possible. Because the journal serves English writers across the world, we do not require anybody's "standard English." Consistency and clear writing are expected, however.

The Polanyi Society gratefully acknowledges the support of Mercer University, Macon, GA, for the publication and mailing of *Tradition and Discovery*.

Preface to *TAD* 39:3

This issue of *Tradition and Discovery* focuses on the relationship between Michael Polanyi and his close friend and intellectual ally, Edward Shils. Richard W. Moodey's lead essay examines how the idea of tradition develops in the work of both Polanyi and Shils, noting that the importance of tradition ultimately leads both thinkers to abandon the Action Frame of Reference, which Shils and Parsons developed in the early fifties. In the first of three comments on Moodey's account, Phil Mullins adds historical details about the intimate friendship and cooperation between these two thinkers. Steven Grosby encourages readers to continue reflecting critically on human action in light of the analysis Moodey develops. Stephen Turner supplements Moodey's discussion by providing additional insights about Shils' life. Moodey concludes our mini-symposium with a response to commentators. The issue also includes Ed Payne's review of a book on Polanyi and Christian theology.

In other important business, please note the draft program for the 2013 annual meeting of the Polanyi Society in Baltimore on November 22 and 23. In addition, News and Notes contains information about a conference devoted to the work of William Poteat, which is set to take place at Yale University in June 2014. News and Notes also includes notes of publications that will be of interest.

All new editors leave their marks on journals, so you will see some modest changes in format and placement of materials in this issue. Most noteworthy of these changes is that we now have an editorial board for the journal. Their names, most of whom have appeared in this journal before, are on the inside front cover of this issue. The Board's role will be to help in the never-ending task of reviewing submissions and proofreading galleys; they will, as well, tell me to take a deep breath every now and then. I am especially happy to have Andrew Grosso come on as Associate Editor and to have Walt Gulick continue as Book Review Editor. I also want to thank Chris Withers, of Mercer University's Copy Center, who now prints the journal, and Mrs. Nancy Stubbs, the Administrative Assistant for the Roberts Department of Christianity at Mercer, who is now in charge of mailing *TAD*, which is the second journal that goes out from my department.

While this is the first issue of *TAD* to originate from Mercer, I acknowledge the early and continuing work on this issue by Phil Mullins and Walter Gulick. This will be the case for portions of the next two or three issues of *TAD*. If the transition from St. Joseph, MO to Macon, GA is a smooth one, it is mostly due to Phil's tireless and efficient help.

However, having material in the pipeline for the next couple of issues should not discourage authors. Please consider submitting articles and/or encouraging others to do so. Instructions can be found on the inside front cover.

Paul Lewis

NEWS AND NOTES

Conference to Honor Poteat

Planning is underway for a conference honoring the life and legacy of William Hardman Poteat (1919-2000) to take place June 7, 8, and 9 (Friday through Sunday), 2014, at Yale University. A graduate of Yale's School of Divinity, where his unpublished papers are now archived, Bill Poteat taught religion and philosophy at Duke University from 1960 to 1987, led in introducing the post-critical philosophy of Michael Polanyi to U.S. academia, and challenged in a radical way the self-abstracting ways of thinking and discourse that now prevail.

An online conversation (email group) about Poteat's ideas, open to all, is now in process.

Donations are welcome to help with up-front costs and travel for young scholars to attend the conference. A means of making donations and early registration online will be available on the Polanyi website soon.

Persons interested in joining in the online conversation, learning more about the conference, being put on the mailing list for the conference, donating to, and/or participating in the conference should contact Dale Cannon, co-director with Walter Mead, at can-nodw@wou.edu.

Recent Publications

Yu Zhenhua has recently published a revised and expanded version of his dissertation in Chinese: "The Tacit Dimension of Knowledge."

In addition, his article, "The Expansion of Epistemology: The Metaphysical vs. the Practical Approach," was published in *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, 11 (2012):83–100. DOI 10.1007/s11712-011-9259-5.

Abstract: From the perspective of world philosophy, one phenomenon of the 20th Century is quite intriguing. Certain philosophers in China as well as in the West, finding the traditional conception of epistemology too narrow-minded, argued that its scope should be expanded. The Chinese way of expanding epistemology might be called the metaphysical approach, and the Western way the practical approach. In this article, I will first give an outline of both approaches and then try to demonstrate that a substantial dialogue can be created between them. By focusing on the problem of the articulation of what we know, I will make the metaphysical approach and the practical approach engage each other and thus prove to be mutually complementary.

Peter M. Hopsicker, Associate Professor of Kinesiology at Pennsylvania State University, Altoona, recently published "'The Value of the Inexact': An Apology for Inaccurate Motor Performance," *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*. DOI 10.1080/00948705.2012.725895.

Abstract: Philosophic inquiry into the mental states of elite athletes during skilled motor performance continues to grow. In contrast to the bulk of these works that focus almost exclusively on skillful performance, this paper examines athletic motor behavior from a point of inexactness—or even failure—in athletic performance. Utilizing the works of Michael Polanyi, who believed that both ideas of achievement and failure were equally necessary to understand the behavior of living things and their physical actions, I examine the notion of failure as a framework to scrutinize the cognitive processes occurring during the development and performance of skilled motor behavior. After reviewing Polanyi's conceptions of personal knowing to locate the source of inaccuracy in human activity, I present Polanyi's distinction between two kinds of mistakes and apply each to inaccurate sport performance. I then suggest that mistakes in sport should be reconceptualized

beyond their current negative connotations. Instead, conceptions of mistakes should also include respect for “man’s most distinguished act”—the production of knowledge. From this expanded perspective, the value of inexact motor performance can be found in addition to notions of uncertainty and skill development in what Polanyi calls “metaphysical implication of a groping for reality.” In some final thoughts, I suggest future implications of the value of the inexact on broader sport issues.

John V. Apczynski published “The Impact of Benedict XVI’s Resignation on Papal Politics” in the on-line journal, *e-International Relations* on April 23, 2013. It can be accessed at <http://www.e-ir.info/2013/04/23/the-impact-of-benedict-xvis-resignation-on-papal-politics/>.

Abstract: I apply Polanyi’s insights into the way the scientific community functions to offer a critique of the official Vatican orthodoxy in light of the actual practice of the majority of the Catholic faithful.

Travel Assistance For Younger Scholars Attending Polanyi Society Annual Meeting

For students and other young scholars planning to attend the Polanyi Society Annual Meeting in Baltimore in November 2013 limited travel funding is available. Society members are urged to inform worthy candidates about this assistance. Candidates and anyone who wants to nominate a potential candidate should contact Walter Mead (wbmead@ilstu.edu) who administers the travel fund.

Contributions to the travel fund are, of course, always welcome. Those who wish to contribute should e-mail Walter Mead. Send checks directly to Charles Lowney, the Polanyi Society Treasurer (Department of Philosophy, Baker Hall 213, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, VA 24450). Donations can also be made using the link for the Pay Pal Dona-

tion Form on the membership page on the Polanyi Society web site (<http://polanyisociety.net/register/join-renew.php>).

All donations are eligible for an IRS letter certifying a charitable deduction. Related information about travel funds is available on the Polanyi Society web site (www.polanyisociety.org).

Dues Payment and Address Changes

The Oct. and Feb. issues of *TAD* always include a membership flyer and an addressed envelope to be used to mail annual academic year dues and/or to make donations to the Polanyi Society.

This is because US postage regulations require that **EVERY** copy of *TAD* mailed in the postage class used must weigh exactly the same. Thus, even if you pay your annual dues in October, you will, nevertheless, receive these membership materials in your February copy of *TAD*.

Dues remain \$35 (\$25 for libraries and \$15 students), a bargain in the academic journal world.

Except for those residing outside the USA, members should pay dues with a check. The Society can no longer easily and inexpensively process credit cards.

For those living outside of the U.S., there is a Pay Pal payment option on the Polanyi Society membership web page (<http://polanyisociety.net/register/join-renew.php>).

Dues and donations are handled by the Polanyi Society Treasurer, Charles Lowney (Dept. of Philosophy, Baker Hall 213, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, VA 24450. USA).

Paul Lewis (lewis_pa@mercer.edu) should be contacted directly for *TAD* address changes.

2013 Polanyi Society Annual Meeting Program

This year there will be three sessions of presentations and discussion at the annual meeting of the Polanyi Society. Our sessions, held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, will be in Baltimore on November 22 and 23. Additional information about session locations will be posted on the Polanyi Society web site (polanysisociety.org) once they are assigned by the AAR in the summer or early fall. The papers will also be posted on the web site by the beginning of November.

Session I: Friday afternoon, November 22, 4:00-6:00 p.m.

“Polanyi and Van Til: Two Analyses of the Nature and Function of Presuppositions”
Joshua Benjamins, Hillsdale College

Respondents: Esther Meek, Geneva College
Matt Sandwisch, Baylor University

“Towards a Heuristic Theology: Reimagining the Relationship between Theology and Science with Michael Polanyi and David Brown” *David Stewart, Luther Seminary*

Respondents: Jon Fennell, Hillsdale College
Andrew Grosso, Trinity Episcopal Church, Atchison, KS

Session II: Saturday, November 23, 9-11:30 a.m.

“Bachelard, Polanyi, and the Construction of Objective Belief in Science: Two Realistic Perspectives”
Teresa Castelao-Lawless, Grand Valley State University

Respondents: David Nikkel, University of North Carolina Pembroke
David Rutledge, Furman University

10:00-10:15 Break

“Polanyi, Professionalism, and the Ethical”
Allen R. Dyer, George Washington University Medical Faculty Associates

Respondents: Richard Gelwick, Bangor Theological Seminary
Diane M. Yeager, Georgetown University

11:15-11:30 Business Meeting

Session III: Saturday, November 23, 8:00-10:00 p.m.

Alicia Juarrero, Prince George's Community College.

Dr. Juarrero will examine the connections between Polanyi's thought and her own thought grounded in complexity theory (see her *Dynamics in Action*). She will examine such notions as the interrelation between parts and wholes, boundary conditions and contextual constraints, and a hierarchical understanding of reality, all contributing to an expanded understanding of causality.

Respondents: David Agler, Pennsylvania State University
Donald Crosby, Colorado State University
Kyle Takaki, Independent scholar

Tradition: Why Shils and Polanyi Abandoned the Action Frame of Reference¹

Richard W. Moodey

Key words: Michael Polanyi, Edward Shils, Karl Mannheim, Talcott Parsons, Action Frame of Reference, tradition, religion, science, liberal democracy, ideology, primordial ties.

ABSTRACT

Michael Polanyi began thinking and writing about tradition long before he met Edward Shils in 1946. Polanyi's religious experience in 1913 became part of the background for his thinking about tradition, and tradition entered into his thinking about spontaneous order and moral inversion. Polanyi and Shils both knew Karl Mannheim before they met one another, and had similar criticisms of Mannheim's sociology. Soon after they met, both Polanyi and Shils were briefly enthusiastic about the Action Frame of Reference, which Shils helped create. Neither of them used the Action Frame of Reference in their later work. One of the reasons was its neglect of tradition, and another was that it was simply too complex to be a useful conceptual tool. Polanyi's thinking about tradition did not change much after Personal Knowledge, but Shils continued to modify his thinking about tradition until the final years of his life.

Introduction

Michael Polanyi emphasized tradition in science, but he also asserted the importance of tradition in other domains of activity. In the words of Struan Jacobs, Polanyi regarded a good tradition as a “fiduciary object, evoking a passionate, moral dedication.”² Polanyi's friend, Edward Shils, taught seminars on tradition for twenty-five years, beginning in 1956. In 1981, he brought together the results of those seminars in *Tradition*.³ But his thinking about tradition continued to develop. By including two previously unpublished essays on “collective self-consciousness” in the book containing Shils' sociological autobiography, Steven Grosby has made it possible for us to see how Shils' thinking about tradition continued to develop even in the final years of his life.⁴ In this essay, I argue that the centrality of the notion of tradition in the philosophies and social theories of both men led to their abandonment of the “Action Frame of Reference” (AFR). The AFR is a complex set of terms, definitions, propositions, and figures presented to the social science community in 1951. Shils himself was involved in its creation. He and Talcott Parsons were the co-editors of *Toward a General Theory of Action: Theoretical Foundations for the Social Sciences*,⁵ the book in which the AFR first appeared. Parsons and Shils co-authored “Values, Motives, and Systems of Action,” the second and longest of the book's four parts. But they had little to say about tradition. In *Tradition*, after criticizing Weber for his failure to pay adequate attention to tradition, Shils says that Parsons and he were trying to provide “a more systematic reformulation of Weber's ideas,” and admits that they missed the “opportunity offered for a clarification of traditionality” (TR 8).

Polanyi and Shils focused their attention on the AFR for just a few years in their long careers. Neither of them made the AFR the explicit frame of reference for later work, but for each, thinking about the AFR left residues that were elements within the tacit background for his later thinking. Shils was drawn into the process of articulating the AFR because of his great respect for Talcott Parsons; Polanyi was attracted to the

AFR because of his friendship with Shils.

In his autobiography, Shils says that although he was enthusiastic about the AFR for the “relatively brief period of about three years split equally each side of the middle of the century,” he came to realize that “Professor Parsons’ way was not a way that I could follow” (FSA 52, 86). For a brief time, Shils sympathized with Parsons’ hopes that the AFR would unite the Harvard Department of Social Relations, and then might even unite the social sciences more generally. But he admits that the AFR did not even unite the department Parsons had created, much less the fragmented activities and products we put into the broad category labeled “the social sciences” (FSA 84-86). The lack of an adequate consideration of tradition was not the only reason why Shils and Polanyi abandoned the AFR, but it was a very important reason. Each treated tradition both as an object of inquiry, and as a conceptual tool from which he attended to other objects of inquiry. For both, tradition was an important subsidiary from which they attributed meaning to different focal objects of attention.

Both Polanyi and Shils believed that there are bad traditions as well as good ones. They treated Fascism and Communism as prototypical bad traditions. Immediately after Grosby lists things about which Polanyi and Shils agreed—“the existence of truth and the committed stance that it assumes; the nature of scientific investigation; liberty, tradition, and spontaneous order; the significance of conviviality; and much more,” he adds that they “stood shoulder to shoulder in their opposition to all forms of totalitarianism.”⁶ The main forms of totalitarianism against which they fought were Fascism and Communism, and both of these forms of totalitarian government were based upon traditions Polanyi and Shils judged to be bad.⁷ In *Personal Knowledge*, Polanyi treated the tradition of idealizing detached and impersonal knowing as bad, and sought to articulate an alternative ideal of knowing (PK vii). In *Tradition*, Shils criticized the “antitraditional traditions” generated by the suspicion of tradition fostered by the thinkers of the Enlightenment (TR 235-239). He sought to articulate a sociology that would no longer be antitraditional.

There are five parts to the story I tell. The first is an account of Polanyi’s thinking about tradition from 1913 until he met Shils in 1946. Second comes a more brief account of Shils’ thinking about tradition from 1933 to 1946. The third part is about the Polanyi-Shils friendship from 1946 until both of them abandoned the AFR, around 1952 or 1953. In this part, I describe some aspects of the AFR and explain why Polanyi was attracted to it. In the fourth, very brief part, I focus on Polanyi’s treatment of tradition in *Personal Knowledge*. In part five, I write about developments in Shils’ thinking about tradition. Changes in his notion of tradition continued until his death in 1995. The two previously unpublished essays on collective self-consciousness that Grosby has included in the book containing Shils’ autobiographical reflections make it clear that Shils’ 1981 book on tradition is best seen now as a progress report on the continuing development of his thinking about tradition.

1. Tradition in Polanyi’s Social Theory Before 1946

In 1907, Polanyi’s older brother Karl was expelled from the University of Budapest in 1907 for defending Professor Gyula Pilker, who had been accused of being too sociological, too relativistic, and insufficiently Christian.⁸ In 1908, Karl and his classmate and friend Georg Polya founded the Galileo Circle, with Pilker serving as advisor.⁹ Michael, who was a medical student at the time, participated in this group, but “objected to the ever-increasing tendency on the part of his comrades to view scientific (especially social scientific) research as a weapon in the battle for social and political reform.”¹⁰ It appears that Polanyi was dedicated to the tradition of pure science even as a young medical student. William Scott and Martin Moleski say that, in spite of those disagreements, “Polanyi’s lifelong efforts at social and economic analysis may be

seen as inspired, at least in part, by his participation in the Galileo Circle.”¹¹ In 1913, he read *The Brothers Karamozov*, and he refers to that experience three decades later in a 1944 letter to Karl Mannheim. He wrote that before reading that book he had been “a materialist and an eager disciple of H.G. Wells,” but for ten years after reading Dostoyevsky’s novel, he was “continually striving for religious understanding.” From 1915 to 1920, he was “a completely converted Christian on the lines of Tolstoy’s confession of faith.” Afterwards, he says, his faith in specific Christian doctrines weakened, but adds, “My faith in God has never failed me entirely since 1913.” Polanyi wrote this letter to “clear up one or two personal points” that had arisen in conversations with Mannheim about a collection of Polanyi’s essays that Mannheim wanted to publish in the series called the *International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction* (MPSP 194).¹²

Mannheim was a member of “the Sunday Afternooners,” a group led by Georg Lukács, and in 1915, Polanyi began attending meetings of this group (MPSP 41). At the time, Polanyi was serving as a physician in the Austro-Hungarian Army, but because of illness, he spent a significant amount of time on light military duty in Budapest. This was also the beginning of the five-year period during which he said he was a committed Christian in the manner of Tolstoy. Lukács was not yet a Communist, but it is unlikely that he and Polanyi agreed about religion. After the rise to power in Hungary of Nicholas Horthy, Lukács became a Communist and in 1923 published *History and Class Consciousness*, “arguably the founding text of the Western Marxist tradition.”¹³ Polanyi’s history of criticizing aspects of the Marxist tradition began early in his life.

Polanyi does not use the word “tradition” in his 1944 letter to Mannheim, but I believe that the residues of his youthful religious experiences formed an important part of the background from which he attended to tradition in science and other domains of cultural activities.¹⁴ In *Tradition*, Shils emphasizes the spiritual dimension of Polanyi’s understanding of tradition in science. He says of Polanyi’s position: “The tradition of science is external to any particular scientists. It has the ‘exteriority’ of a social fact, to use a term of Durkheim.” Shils quotes *Science, Faith, and Society* to the effect that for practicing scientists, a scientific tradition “is a spiritual reality which stands over them and compels their allegiance.” He points out that Polanyi called the intergenerational sequence of transmitters and recipients of scientific tradition an “apostolic succession” (TR 116-117; quoting SFS 38,40). Shils’ use of “exteriority,” “social fact,” and “apostolic succession” point to aspects of what *he* meant by “tradition,” as well as to his interpretation of what Polanyi meant.

The notion of tradition is an important part of the background for two of the key ideas in Polanyi’s social theory. Walter Gulick argues that Polanyi was already moving towards a formulation of these two ideas in essays he wrote in 1917 and 1919, as a young man in Budapest.¹⁵ His notion of tradition was a subsidiary from which he attributed meaning to “spontaneous order” and “moral inversion,” whenever he used one of those terms to point to the object of his focal attention.¹⁶ Tradition enters into what Polanyi meant by “spontaneous order,” because, except in the case of economic order, the success of the spontaneous adjustment of actors to one another depends upon their being guided by their commitment to the traditional ideals of the domain within which they are acting. The spontaneous adjustments of scientists to one another, for example, can create order within the scientific community because of the scientists’ commitment to the traditional ideals of science. These ideals are not, and cannot be, scientifically proven. They are transmitted by master researchers to those who are apprenticed to them, who become committed to the ideals at the same time as they learn how follow their masters’ ways of conducting research.

The validity of Polanyi’s notion of “moral inversion” is controversial.¹⁷ My point here is only that Polanyi’s notion of tradition is an important element in the background from which he attributes meaning to

the term “moral inversion.” The morally inverted person rejects traditional moral values *because* they are “merely” traditional, and cannot be proven to be true by *her* version of critical reasoning. But she is not just a skeptic about traditional morality. She rejects traditional moral ideals with passionate feelings of moral self-righteousness. Ayn Rand’s morally self-righteous rejection of altruism provides a convenient example. Moral inversion interferes with spontaneous order in those domains of activity in which commitment to traditional ideals is a prerequisite to successful mutual adjustments of the actors. Moral inversion, however, does not interfere with spontaneous order in the economic domain. Morally inverted economic actors can feel morally righteous about putting self-interested profit-seeking above “unrealistic” moral ideals, and this does not prevent the laws of the market from serving as the invisible hand that orders the economic domain.

The title of Polanyi’s 1919 essay is “New Skepticism,” and the object of the youthful Polanyi’s skepticism was politics, a kind of activity he then regarded as being infected with the “fatal disorder” he would later call “moral inversion.” He wrote the essay in Hungarian, but the words of Endre Nagy’s English translation convey the intensity of his skepticism:

[M]an in politics does not advance toward goals but aims at illusions that seize his imagination . . . Politics is a blind eruption of fear and hope. . . People of reason and imagination must not get involved in politics, that is to say, they must not add to the fatal disorder with their illusions (SEP 30).

In 1919, Polanyi’s hope was not in politics, but in a sociological search for truth:

Our job is exploring the truth; dissecting the confused images of politics and analysing the belief in political concepts. . . For such a job a sociology is needed that acknowledges only those concepts which it can lead back without remainder to actually experienced mental states of human beings, a sociology in which, accordingly, generalizations like ‘development’, ‘class interests’, ‘ideologies’, could only be problems to be analyzed and not solutions (SEP 31).

As well as pointing to the “fatal disorder” of the politically motivated disregard for truth, Polanyi also denied that “development,” “class interests,” and “ideologies” could be useful tools for sociological analysis.¹⁸ His criticism of these words and the generalizations to which they point grew out of his arguments with fellow Hungarians who were inclined to accept the analyses of Karl Marx to a greater extent than he. For Polanyi, a passionate dedication to the search for truth is not just an ideal to be embraced by the scientist or the scholar, but is also the only remedy for the “fatal disorder” of politics. His desire to ground concepts in “actually experienced mental states of human beings” informed his ideal of personal knowing, an ideal that would be more fully articulated almost forty years later in *Personal Knowledge*. Richard Gelwick describes Polanyi as attempting “to catch knowing in action,”¹⁹ and I read this as another way of saying that he attempted to ground his concepts in the actual experiences of people who believe that their job is “exploring the truth.”²⁰ Polanyi’s skepticism about politics would be significantly reduced after he moved to England, where he developed respect for the British political tradition.

Polanyi had written “New Skepticism” during the brief period when Hungary was under Communist rule in the regime of Béla Kun. In 1920, Miklós Horthy came into power in Hungary, and established an anti-Communist regime that was also repressive. Polanyi and Mannheim were among the many scientists and intellectuals who fled from the repressive Horthy regime. Both settled in Germany, Polanyi in Berlin and

Mannheim in Heidelberg, where he studied with Max and Alfred Weber. They did well in their chosen fields. In 1929, Mannheim became professor of sociology at Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt.²¹ Polanyi's satisfaction at his success as a chemist was enhanced by his experiences of convivial relations within a community of scientists. Mary Jo Nye says that this experience of an intellectual community was an important part of what "he later transformed into an idealized vision of the scientific research community" (MPHG 83). An important aspect of this vision of the scientific community is the order that is generated by the mutual adjustment of scientists committed to the scientific tradition. At the same time, as Scott and Moleski note, the "vicissitudes of the German economy" kept his interest in economics active (MPSP 100).

Polanyi visited the Soviet Union in 1928, 1931, and 1932, and these visits helped him to clarify his notion of corporate order as the anti-ideal type for both the organization of science and the organization of an economy. He criticized the Soviet attempts to establish centralized planning of scientific research and economic life (MPSP 160). These visits, however, were not the only basis for his criticisms of Soviet society. While still in Budapest, he had already disagreed with members of the discussion groups who were sympathetic to communism.²² His religious rejection of materialism had begun in 1913, and he had written of his skepticism about politics. He went to the Soviet Union with an existing antipathy to the political control of both scientific and economic activities. He recognized that governments were needed both to facilitate and to regulate scientific and economic activities, but believed that the scope of such regulation should be limited. In 1930, Polanyi organized a series of meetings between natural scientists and economists. These took place at Harnack House at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin. He hoped that the natural scientists would help the economists toward better descriptions and explanations of economic events and processes (MPSP 121-122). The Harnack House meetings illustrate a central theme in the development of Polanyi's social theory: the analogy between the ideal social organization of science and the ideal social organization of economic life. In 1933, both Polanyi and Mannheim fled again from an oppressive government, this time from Nazi Germany to England. They again settled in different places, and did not become reacquainted until 1944.²³

A letter from Polanyi to Hugh O'Neil, written in June of 1935, indicates that he was still trying to think about economic things within the context of society as a whole. He wrote:

My faith in the moral power of Humanity leads me to assume that if they could be led out of blindness, I mean literal blindness: inability to see their vital surroundings, this moral power would rise to the situation it now must fail to grasp... To find, present and develop truth in social matters is the first revelation we require, a revelation which can be gained by a technique of seeing society and cannot be found without it. This is my obsession (MPSP 162).

I interpret this in the light of my belief that the residues of Polanyi's earlier religious experiences, as well as his faith in God, which might have been at times little more than a respectful appreciation of such faith, are important background elements in his thinking about social matters. Just as in his 1919 essay, in this letter Polanyi asserts his "obsession" with truth in social matters. His use of "revelation" has religious connotations, as does his later claim that the search for truth is "the calling of man" (SM 40-71), or as Gelwick has restated it, "The Calling of Being Human."²⁴ In the last paragraph of *Personal Knowledge* (PK 405), Polanyi says that being engaged in trying to make contact with reality is analogous to being a Christian engaged in the worship of God.²⁵ Even though Polanyi was neither a traditional Jew nor a traditional Christian, I am convinced that his notion of a good tradition depended upon the analogy with religious traditions.

J.D. Bernal's *The Social Function of Science* was published in 1939,²⁶ and Polanyi was highly critical both of the scientific planning that was a theme of the book and of Bernal's expressed sympathy for Soviet Communism. Bernal's book and its popular reception convinced him that he had a duty to work out the basis for a free society. In 1941, he collaborated with John Baker and Sir Arthur Tansley in creating the Society for Freedom in Science. The expressed purpose of this society was to counter the popular movement in Britain, of which Bernal was a leader, in favor of scientific planning. Polanyi said that his first meeting at Oxford with Baker and Tansley was influential in his decision to engage in the philosophical investigation of the foundations of the liberal democracy. Scott and Moleski report, "By the spring of 1943, Polanyi had written fifty pieces in defense of the liberal tradition: five of them published, fifteen given as lectures, five incomplete manuscripts for books, and twenty-five fragments and short essays" (MPSP 176-190).

One of these fifty pieces was the 1941 essay, "The Growth of Thought in Society."²⁷ Struan Jacobs²⁸ and Phil Mullins²⁹ treat this essay as a key document in the development of Polanyi's social thought. In it, Polanyi gives a detailed articulation of his two types of social order, spontaneous and corporate. Stephen Turner, however, cautions against attributing too much originality to Polanyi's notion of spontaneous order in science. He says, "the idea of science as a paradigm of spontaneous co-ordination ... was a commonplace of late-nineteenth century continental liberalism that in turn derived from earlier theories of the marketplace."³⁰ Nevertheless, for Polanyi the contrast between spontaneous and "planned" corporate order was central to his sociology of economic life, his sociology of science, and his contrast between "individual liberty" and "public liberty."³¹ Both Mullins and Jacobs point to the difference between the economic domain and other domains. Spontaneous order in the economic domain does not depend upon the actors' commitment to traditional ideals.³²

Polanyi's use of an organic metaphor in writing about the "growth" of science is suggestive in connection with his notion of a tradition. Mullins argues that early in his philosophical career, Polanyi characterized science as a "growing organism of ideas." He liked the Gestalt psychologist Wolfgang Kohler's treatment of embryonic development as a spontaneous order, drawing an analogy between this kind of organic growth and the growth of science and growth in other cultural domains.³³ I connect Polanyi's use of this organic metaphor to what Shils says about Polanyi's emphasis upon the "exteriority" of scientific tradition, "a spiritual reality which stands over" the individual scientists "and compels their allegiance." I interpret Shils as interpreting Polanyi as believing that the spiritual reality of the scientific tradition is something like a non-material "organism" that somehow "stands over" the individual scientists, and grows of its own accord. In his two posthumously published essays on collective self-consciousness, Shils returned, not to his interpretation of Polanyi, but to a struggle with the issues associated with his own conviction that traditions in general are somehow exterior to individuals and stand over them.³⁴

In 1942, Polanyi addressed the Manchester Branch of the Trades Advisory Council of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. "Jewish Problems" was published in 1943,³⁵ and provides an illustration of Polanyi's treating a tradition as bad. It is, however, not the tradition of anti-Semitism that comes in for his harshest criticism, but the Jewish tradition itself. He says that the achievements of Spinoza, Heine, Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Ricardo, Marx, and Disraeli "prove the presence of genius among Jews."

But since all these were baptized Jews, their achievements may also indicate that Jewish talent is most effectively released by baptism. Or at least that Jewish triumphs are bound up with the neglect of distinctive Jewish traditions (SEP 37).

In this essay, he never quite gets around to calling anti-Semitism a “tradition.” He treats it, rather, as the result of a failure of democracy.

Assimilation was sponsored by the modern idea of equal national citizenship. It flourished during the forward march of the new democratic nationalism in the latter half of the 19th century. But as opposition to democracy gathered force, there arose—first in Germany during the economic crisis of the seventies—a new political form of Jew-baiting which became known by the scholarly name of Anti-Semitism (SEP 39).

The name might have been new, but the tradition was not. Polanyi was well aware of the long history of prejudice and discrimination directed toward Jews, but seems to have been reluctant to call it a “tradition.”

Another 1943 essay, “The English and the Continent,” provides evidence for the way in which Polanyi’s appreciation of religion served as background or context for this notion of traditions. In this essay he argued that the difference between politics in England—and probably the United States—and politics on the European continent “is connected with the fact that in England social progress was not on the whole associated with enlightenment and anti-clericalism, but was, on the contrary, very often prompted by religious sentiment.”³⁶ Gulick says that although Michael disagreed with Karl Polanyi’s idealization of Russian Communism, he seems to have agreed with Karl’s idealization of the beliefs and values that generated English governance.³⁷

“Jewish Problems” was one of the essays Mannheim hoped to publish in a collection of Polanyi’s essays.³⁸ In 1944, Polanyi and Mannheim became reacquainted, both by talking and corresponding about this proposed book, and by participating together in Joseph Oldham’s group called “the Moot.” Mannheim was a very active member of the Moot, and he persuaded Oldham to invite Polanyi. At the very first meeting he attended, Polanyi engaged in what one participant called a “ding-dong battle” with Mannheim. He said that Mannheim was “taken by surprise at Polanyi’s demonstration of the intuitive and traditional element of all vital scientific discovery.”³⁹ Mullins and Jacobs describe the relations between Mannheim and Polanyi as basically friendly, even though they disagreed about some things. In contrast, Jefferson Pooley implies that their relations were unfriendly. He includes Polanyi with Friedrich Hayek and Karl Popper as the three central Europeans whose criticisms of Mannheim were important in transforming Shils from being a follower of Mannheim to being a harsh critic.⁴⁰ I don’t doubt that Polanyi’s criticisms contributed to changing Shils’ views, but I do doubt that Polanyi was personally hostile to Mannheim. Pooley says that the crucial years for Shils’ turn against Mannheim were 1942 to 1944, but Shils did not meet Polanyi until 1946.

In this account of Polanyi’s early thinking about tradition, I have contrasted what he said about the economic domain with what he said about other social domains. Polanyi wrote a good bit about economics, especially in the decade between 1935 and 1945. His first publication on economics was a short booklet entitled *USSR Economics—Fundamental Data, System and Spirit* that appeared in 1935 (MPSP 160). His most significant economic work was published in 1945, *Full Employment and Fair Trade*. Paul Roberts and Norman Van Cott say that by integrating Keynesian economics with the economics of the monetary school, Polanyi made a contribution to economic theory that was way ahead of its time.⁴¹ But Polanyi does not say much explicitly about tradition in his economic writings. Capitalism, socialism, and various schools of thought in economics all are traditions, and Polanyi’s notion of tradition is part of the background for his thinking and writing about these. But tradition remains in the deep background in his economic writings.

2. Tradition in Shils' Theory Before 1946

The year 1933, the year Polanyi and Mannheim fled from Germany to England, was the year that the young Edward Shils moved from his undergraduate work at the University of Pennsylvania to Chicago, where he became a graduate assistant to sociologist Louis Wirth. He soon began translating some of Mannheim's German writings into English. Shils admits to having been "exhilarated" by Mannheim's *Ideologie und Utopia*, but in his autobiography he says that he later "came to be at a loss to account for that enchantment" (FSA 33). *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* was published in 1936.⁴² Wirth and Shils are listed as the translators, but it is likely that Shils did most of the actual translation. Shils was the sole translator of Mannheim's *Mensch und Gesellschaft im Zeitalter des Umbaus; Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* was published in 1940.⁴³

In 1936, Shils met Talcott Parsons when Parsons was teaching a summer course at the University of Chicago. Parsons asked Shils to read the manuscript of *The Structure of Social Action*.⁴⁴ Shils says that he "stood in awe" of what Parsons had accomplished in that book (FSA 52, 81). In it, Parsons argued that the positivist and idealist traditions in social science were converging toward a unified frame of reference he called "analytical realism." Shils says that Frank Knight, Robert Park, and Parsons were the only men "who moved in the direction in which I began to move very vaguely in the 1930s" (FSA 81). In his sociological autobiography, written many years later and published posthumously, Shils says that his best work in the 1930s "was hidden in Parsons's essay on social stratification."⁴⁵ The editors of the *American Journal of Sociology* (published at the University of Chicago) had asked Shils to be a pre-publication referee for this essay. Shils' comments ran to about thirty pages, and Shils claims that Parsons modified his article substantially on the basis of those comments. Parsons knew that Shils had written the comments because he recognized the handwriting (FSA 53-4).

When Shils went to London in 1942, he was still enthusiastic about Mannheim's sociology. I think that it is possible that in 1942, he might have said that his translations of Mannheim, rather than his comments on Parsons' article on social stratification, had been his best work in the 1930s. Soon after he arrived in London he visited Mannheim, and for the next two years was a frequent dinner guest of Mannheim and his wife, Julia. During those two years, however, Shils was changing from being a supporter of Mannheim's ideas to being a harsh critic of them.⁴⁶ In his autobiography, he says that in his visits with Mannheim, they did not discuss the sociology of knowledge, but focused more on Mannheim's troubles at the London School of Economics (LSE). He says that Mannheim was always kind and generous towards him and showed him great respect, in spite of his comparative youth, his lack of significant accomplishments in sociology, and his more frequent disagreements with some of Mannheim's ideas (FSA 35-36). At the LSE, Mannheim was very popular with students, but several of his colleagues sought to force him out. F.A. Hayek and Karl Popper (who would later join the faculty) were very critical of Mannheim's ideas in their writings. Morris Ginsberg, the professor of sociology at the LSE, was hostile to him. Mannheim was an obstacle to Ginsberg's efforts to move British sociology away from prescriptions for scientific and economic planning. Mannheim left the LSE in 1945 for a professorship in the sociology of education at the Institute for Education. In 1946, Shils was appointed lecturer in sociology at the LSE, and went from a full-time to a half-time position at the University of Chicago. In 1947, Mannheim died.⁴⁷ Shils reports that when he visited Julia soon after Karl's death, she embraced him and said "Ginsberg killed him!"⁴⁸ In 1948, Shils showed Julia the draft of an article he had written about Mannheim, and she called it "blind violence to somebody to whom you owe so much." She later wrote to her sister that she had been successful in preventing Shils from publishing "an extremely nasty paper on Karl."⁴⁹

When Shils went to London in 1942, he was an employee of the U.S. Office of Strategic Services. In 1943, Morris Janowitz was drafted and then assigned to the London office of the OSS. Janowitz was soon sent to France, where he supervised the interrogation of German prisoners of war. After the war, Janowitz became a graduate student at the University of Chicago, and in 1948, Shils and Janowitz published “Solidarity and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II.”⁵⁰ This essay is widely considered to be a landmark in the study of the dynamics of small groups and in the study of propaganda. In his autobiography, Shils spends three pages discussing this article, but never mentions Janowitz (FSA 63-65). He says that he returned to the University of Chicago in the 1945-1946 academic year. “It was then,” he says, “that I wrote the paper on the *Wehrmacht*” (FSA 63). He does write about Janowitz later in the autobiography, where he says that Janowitz had been his “protégé,” but says of him: “his mind was distorted by jealousy and rivalry and he had nothing fine in his make up, moral or intellectual” (FSA 155). This is Shils’ harshest pronouncement about any of the sociologists at the University of Chicago, but of them all he says, “I had no sense of intellectual or personal affinity with the members of the department” (FSA 155).

Although Shils and Janowitz do not use the word “tradition” in their essay on the *Wehrmacht*, they made a distinction between two bases for solidarity that is similar to a distinction a number of thinkers in England, including Polanyi and Shils, were making in the middle years of the twentieth century. Shils and Janowitz argued that ideology contributed much less to the solidarity of German soldiers than did primary group ties. A set of people Turner describes as being committed to articulating the foundations of liberal democracy argued that ideology contributed little to these foundations. Turner says:

[T]hey rejected the ideological cast of mind, and sought to identify and defend something valuable at the basis of liberal democracy that could not be understood in the Marxian way as an ideology. They did not so much find this thing—which they most frequently called tradition—as find arguments for its ineffability, its irreducibility to explicit doctrines or creeds; for the inadequacy of such notions as norms and values, or for that matter, principles, as a means of characterizing it, and for the peculiar qualities of tacitness and commitment that it possessed.⁵¹

Primary group ties are not, of course, identical to traditions, but the notions are similar in being contrasted with ideology. Primary group ties, what Shils liked to call “primordial ties,” are also important for the transmission of the content of traditions, especially in the master-apprentice relationship. The strong emotions associated with primordial ties make what people learn in them especially significant.⁵²

In 1943, Parsons gave some lectures at the London School of Economics, and Shils arranged a party for him and some of Shils’ friends from the Tavistock Institute. Shils says that Parsons later asked him to collaborate on the project that eventually became TGTA (FSA 81). Shils does not specify just how much later that invitation was, but it was not until the fall of 1949 that he spent a semester at Harvard, working with Parsons and others on developing the AFR. My guess is that Shils did not do much on the project until 1948 or 1949, because he says that he did not follow Parsons’ manner of theorizing “except for that relatively brief period of about three years split equally each side of the middle of the century” (FSA 86).

3. Friendship and the AFR: 1946 to 1953

Louis Swartz,⁵³ Grosby,⁵⁴ Turner,⁵⁵ and Shils himself⁵⁶ comment on the importance to both

Polanyi and Shils of their friendship. In 1946, before Shils left Chicago to take up his duties as a half-time lecturer at the London School of Economics, the nuclear scientist Leo Szilard gave him either Polanyi's phone number or his address.⁵⁷ Shils remembered telephoning Polanyi from a call box in London, but he could not recall just where he first met Polanyi face-to-face. He says that Polanyi was not interested in talking about the international control of atomic weapons, secrecy, Karl Popper, or Karl Mannheim (FSA 78-79).⁵⁸ Polanyi was then in his fifties and Shils in his thirties. Shils respected Polanyi for his scientific accomplishments, and Polanyi respected Shils for his knowledge of social theory. Their early correspondence indicates that each quickly decided that it would be good for him to collaborate with the other.

Before they met personally, Polanyi and Shils were both members of the loose network of people Turner describes as carrying on conversations about liberal democracy and something they usually called "tradition." Turner says that this "was not a group so much as a current of thought within which were a large number of personal relationships." He puts Polanyi close to the center of this network, along with Michael Oakeshott and T.S. Eliot. Somewhat further from the center were Friedrich Hayek, Karl Popper, Isaiah Berlin, J.P. Mayer, Christopher Dawson, and Karl Mannheim.⁵⁹ Mannheim's membership seems to have been especially marginal. Turner says that several of the other members "used Mannheim as a foil for their own arguments." Pooley goes much further, emphasizing the intensity of criticisms of Mannheim by Hayek, Popper, and Polanyi, and how these criticisms caused Shils to turn against Mannheim.⁶⁰

Polanyi invited Shils to lecture at the University of Manchester in the winter of 1946 and 1947, and Shils spoke about the tendency of literary figures to dislike their own societies. At that time, Polanyi courteously disagreed with him, but Shils says that within a few years "the intellectuals' rebellion of moral indignation, of excessive claims and exaggerated hopes, became a major theme of Polanyi's view of the world." After this, when Polanyi disagreed with him, Shils would often say, "Don't be too strong in your disagreement, Michael. In two years, you will say exactly what I am saying having forgotten that you first heard it from me" (FSA 109-110).

Shils says that he and Polanyi were riding in a London taxi in 1947 when he told Polanyi that Mannheim had died. After noting that Polanyi and Mannheim had known one another as young men in Budapest, Shils says of Polanyi:

He was a liberal and a severe critic of social planning. He had very little sympathy with Mannheim—to the point of indifference—while Mannheim was very sensitive to "Michi's" lack of sympathy. When I said to Polanyi, as we were nearing the station, that Karl Mannheim had died, Polanyi made no reply at all. He was probably thinking one of his philosophical conundrums and there was no clear category in his mind for Mannheim.⁶¹

I consider Shils' conjecture as to what Polanyi's was "probably thinking" to be probably mistaken. Polanyi was indeed critical of some of Mannheim's ideas, but I cannot believe that his failure to reply to Shils' announcement was a sign of his personal indifference to Mannheim. I do not know why Polanyi did not reply, but Shils' explanation contradicts my beliefs about Polanyi's moral character. Even after his death, Mannheim remained important to both Polanyi and Shils. Nye says, "Mannheim's sociology of knowledge is the shark cruising beneath the waters of Polanyi's argument" (MPHG 280), and Pooley points to ways that Mannheim remained "a haunting presence" in Shils' thought.⁶²

In 1947, Polanyi was invited to give the Gifford Lectures, which he would eventually transform

into *Personal Knowledge*. In 1948, his position at the University of Manchester was officially changed from Professor of Chemistry to Professor of Social Studies (MPSP 204). In the fall of 1949, Polanyi was struggling to complete his Gifford Lectures, and Shils was on leave from the University of Chicago, spending the semester at Harvard working with Parsons, and other members of the Department of Social Relations, on creating the AFR. The three-year period during which Shils thought he might be able to follow Parsons' way of developing sociological theory was a time in which he was especially close to Polanyi, as well as to Parsons. He had been successful in getting the University of Chicago to offer Polanyi a faculty position. Polanyi accepted the position, and was to begin his duties in Chicago in 1951, but was not able to do so because of difficulties in getting a visa.

In the spring of 1950, Polanyi visited the University of Chicago to give a series of lectures that Shils had arranged, and it is likely that before he returned to England, Shils gave him a copy of the manuscript of "Values, Motives, and Systems of Action." This long essay, written by Parsons and Shils, would become Part Two of TGTA, and it is by far the longest of the four parts. It is an exposition of the terms and propositions Parsons and Shils believed to be at the heart of the AFR.

Shils gave Polanyi the manuscript of "Values, Motives, and Systems of Action," when he was in those years in which he thought he could follow Parsons' way. In "Backstage with the Parsons Circle: Dialogue and Dissent in the Formation of a Theory School,"⁶³ Lawrence Nichols reports on his examination of the records, preserved in the archives at Harvard, of the meetings that took place in the fall of 1949. He points out that there were two weekly seminars, a larger one held on Mondays, and a smaller one on Tuesdays. He calls the members of the Tuesday seminar the "inner circle." All but one of the members of this inner circle contributed essays to TGTA. But even within the inner circle, Nichols says, there were "loyal critics" and "dissenters," as well as "true believers." He considers Parsons, Shils, Edward Tolman, a psychologist from the University of California, and possibly Robert Bales, a Harvard sociologist, to be the true believers. Samuel Stouffer and anthropologists Clyde Kluckhohn and Richard Sheldon were the loyal critics.⁶⁴ They supported the AFR, but were critical of some of its content. The psychologists Henry Murray, Robert Sears, and Gordon Allport were the dissenters. Murray and Sears were reluctant to contribute essays to TGTA, but were finally persuaded to do so.⁶⁵ Shils calls the fall of 1949 as "a happy time for me." He describes his collaboration with Parsons:

We usually met at 9AM in his room in Emerson Hall where we sat at the corner of a rectangular table. We talked and talked, taking as our point of departure, the topic of the previous day's discussion...Then we went back to discussion, going forward from where we had left off before lunch. At about four o'clock, we wrote out the main conclusions of our discussion...After 5:30 we broke off, taking the written results home to ponder on in the evening...There were times when he telephoned at 7:00 AM to tell me delightedly of some good idea which had occurred to him since we had parted.

Once a week or once a fortnight, we conducted a seminar for the professors of the department of social relations (FSA 80-82).

In this account, written many years later, Shils captures some of the excitement he felt during his participation in a project he later came to believe had been an impossible dream.

It is not hard to explain Shils' initial enthusiasm for the AFR. He respected Parsons, both for his

accomplishments and for his commitment to the search for truth. He was Parsons' closest collaborator in articulating the AFR. He must have conveyed some of his enthusiasm to Polanyi, but Polanyi had difficulty with the manuscript Shils had given him. In a letter dated July 20, 1950, Polanyi asked Shils for some readings that would help him understand the manuscript he referred to as "Values, Motives, and Action Systems." Later letters to Shils indicate that Polanyi had overcome whatever difficulties he had been having. In a letter of March 19, 1952, he said that he had picked up the Parsons-Shils book, and that his colleague, anthropologist Max Gluckman wanted to establish the Parsons-Shils type of sociology at the University of Manchester. In a letter of April 30, 1952, he wrote, "I feel very much attracted by the Parsons-Shils outlook of which I believe I could make good use within my own at first sight somewhat incommensurable preoccupations."⁶⁶ Shils would have received this letter after the three years, "split equally each side of the middle of the century," during which he had tried to follow Parsons' way.⁶⁷

Polanyi felt attracted to the AFR because of some of its intrinsic properties. I will comment on four of these: (i) the AFR focused explicitly on frames of reference; (ii) it is realist, rather than positivist or idealist; (iii) the relations among its components summarize much of the accumulated wisdom of the social sciences; and (iv) it treats the economy as a subsystem within the larger social system.

(i) Frames of reference. As a "frame of reference," the AFR is an attempt to articulate the key elements in what Polanyi would later call the *from* side and the *to* side of the *from-to* structure of knowing and doing. Parsons and Shils did not refer to this as a *from-to* relation, but called it the relation between the orientations of "actor-subjects" and the structure of the "objects" to which they are oriented. Centrally important to this frame of reference is what they called the "pattern variable scheme." In their introduction to "Values, Motives, and Systems of Action," they say, "the scheme of five 'pattern variables' of value orientations will be developed as a tool for analysis" for the "interrelations" among "certain elements of the orientation of action and certain elements of the structure of the situation." They say that this scheme is "the most important thread of continuity running through Part II" (TGTA 47-48). It has five dimensions, with two alternatives on each dimension. Parsons and Shils claim that actor-subject's orientation is the result of five selections, in which the actor-subject has selected one alternative on each dimension (TGTA 48). The dimensions and their alternatives are:

1. Universalism or Particularism,
2. Ascription or Achievement,
3. Affectivity or Affective Neutrality,
4. Specificity or Diffuseness, and
5. Self-Orientation or Collectivity-Orientation

The text of "Values, Motives, and Systems of Action" is followed by fifteen figures that summarize the terms, propositions, and relations that had been presented discursively (TGTA 247-275). Thirteen of the figures are elaborations of the pattern variable scheme. Figures 10, 10a, 10b, 10c, and 10d display all thirty-two combinations of the alternatives on the five dimensions (TGTA 258-262). Each combination is a five-dimensional type. An example of one type is the combination: (1) universalism + (2) achievement + (3) affectivity + (4) specificity + (5) self-orientation. Changing the selection on any one of the five dimensions results in a different type of orientation.

The complexity of this typology is one of the main reasons for its failure. A typology consisting of

thirty-two types, each one of which has five dimensions, is too complex and unwieldy to be a useful tool for analysis. When it is combined with the other components of the structure of action, it becomes even more complex. Samuel Stouffer, one of the contributors to *Toward a General Theory of Action*,⁶⁸ brought this up in a meeting of the contributors on January 7, 1950:

[A]s soon as we get into elaborations with 15 or 20 variables interrelated to each other which means thousands of millions of possible combinations theoretically, then I don't think we're really getting very far ... then I wonder whether it serves any orienting function. ... when it comes to breaking it down, Talcott, and getting hundreds of subcells, all on a theoretical level with no empirical referent except illustrative things that you pull out of the hat, I'm not sure how useful that is. That's my bias. I think you have to stay closer to data. (Discussion Group 1, 1950a.)⁶⁹

In his autobiography, Shils says that even Parsons dropped the AFR as articulated in *Toward a General Theory of Action* in favor of his four-function schema:

His heart was in the “boxes,” the “four-fold tables”—an expository device developed by Samuel Stouffer for teaching elementary statistics but which Professor Parsons adopted as a basis of portraying the fundamental features of society (FSA 85).⁷⁰

Shils continued to respect Parsons, but calls his sociological theories “titanic failures” (FSA 86).⁷¹ The AFR did become an *object* of study for a generation of sociologists—and a few other social scientists, but it is far too unwieldy to be a useful conceptual tool.

(ii) The Realism of the AFR. The epistemological and ontological realism of the Parsons-Shils outlook also appealed to Polanyi. The followers of Polanyi disagree about many of the details of his philosophy, but they generally agree that he held (1) that the world exists independently of what we know or say about it, and (2) that we can truly know at least some aspects of that real world.⁷² This is similar to the “analytical realism” Parsons articulated in *The Structure of Social Action*, the book that so impressed the young Shils when he read it in manuscript form in the summer of 1936. Parsons and Shils say that the AFR is a further elaboration of the perspective that informed *The Structure of Social Action* (TGTA 53).

The anthropologist Richard Sheldon dissented from the epistemological realism of Parsons and Shils, who honored his dissent by making his essay, “Some Observations on Theory in the Social Sciences,” the second and final chapter to Part I of TGTA. The occasion for his anti-realistic essay was his objection to the denial that cultural systems are systems of action. The first chapter of Part I, for which all the contributors are listed as co-authors, contains the following sentences:

Apart from embodiment in the orientation systems of concrete actors, culture, though existing as a body of artifacts and as a system of symbols, is not in itself organized as a system of action. Therefore, culture as a system is on a different plane from personalities and social systems.

A footnote states: “Mr. Sheldon dissents from this view. His grounds are stated in Chapter II” (TGTA 7). In his chapter, Sheldon argues that sentences such as these are assertions that about the *natures* of personalities,

social systems, and cultural systems. He denies that scientists ought to make such assertions, because the “general principles that make up a body of science” are “the free creations of the human intellect.” They are “free” because they are unconstrained either by the nature of the phenomena or by the nature of the human mind (TGTA 31-32). He asserts that there is nothing about the phenomena to which the word “culture” refers that provides any basis for saying that culture “is not in itself organized as a system of action” (TGTA 41).

I make just two comments about Sheldon’s argument. The first is that it is self-referentially inconsistent. He asserts, as true, propositions about the general principles of science. But he himself is asserting a general principle of science. The content of what he asserts should deny him the right to assert anything about the nature of the general principles of science every bit as much as they deny the right of Parsons and Shils to assert anything about the nature of culture. The way he asserts *his* propositions indicates that he believes that they are exceptions to what he asserts about *all* the general principles of science. In this comment, I have used “retortion,” the argument from the self-referential inconsistency of an intellectual opponent. Polanyi often used this kind of argument.⁷³

My second comment is that Sheldon does not really come to grips with what Parsons and Shils say is the crucial distinction between social and non-social objects:

The social object, the alter, is seen by ego to have expectations which are complementary to ego’s own. The distinction between those objects which do and those objects which do not have expectations complementary to ego’s is fundamental to the theory of action (TGTA 65).

Sheldon’s objection to the denial that culture is a system of action is an objection to the denial that subject actors (ego) generally see artifacts or symbols as being the kind of objects that have expectations that are complementary to their own. But Sheldon has too much common sense to say explicitly that he usually sees artifacts and symbols as the kind of objects that have expectations complementary to his own. Nowhere in his essay do I find him engaging in the kind of personification of artifacts or symbols that would make them into participants in social interactions.

(iii) The AFR as a Summary of Social Science Wisdom. Although Polanyi read, conversed, and wrote about social things throughout his career, he was aware of his lack of formal education in social science. Shils, in contrast, had that kind of education, and had read broadly in the social sciences. He was also a link between Polanyi and the eminent social scientists who contributed to TGTA. These men brought their diverse educations and experiences to the task of articulating the AFR, and were explicit about trying to create a general theory that would “aid in the codification of our existing concrete knowledge” (TGTA 3). What Polanyi called “the Parsons-Shils outlook” involved defining and relating the main components of the AFR in a way that was informed by a substantial body of social scientific theory and research. Parsons and Shils describe these components in their introduction to “Values, Motives, and Systems of Action” (TGTA 53-60), and summarize their text in Figure 1.⁷⁴

Parsons and Shils underlined some of the terms in Figure 1 to show how the pattern variables are the “the most important thread of continuity.” Even though the words “pattern variable” do not occur in Figure 1, they are tacitly present as the scheme by which they show the identity of the different patterns present in the value aspects of roles and in the patterns present in cultural objects. The thirty-two types of possible patterns are thirty-two metaphorical “threads” that “stitch together” personalities, social systems, and cultural systems.

Understanding Figure 1 (p. 20) requires knowing how Parsons and Shils distinguish between the two kinds of non-social objects:

[C]ultural objects can be internalized and thereby transmitted from one actor to another, while only *possession* of claims to physical objects can be transmitted. This difference rests on the fact that the cultural object is a pattern which is reproducible in the action of another person while it leaves the original actor unaffected. Only in a figurative sense does an actor *have* patterns of value-orientation. In a strict sense he *is*, among other things, a system of such patterns (TGTA 66).

They say that a cultural object is a *pattern* that is present in both symbols and in the value aspects of roles. Because roles are within both personalities and social systems, the same thirty-two patterns are elements in personalities, social systems, and cultural systems. Parsons and Shils say that the box in the center of Figure 1 “shows how social systems and personalities interpenetrate one another whether they are subjects or objects” (TGTA 60). They “interpenetrate” one another because the value aspects of roles are patterns that are within both social systems and personalities.

I interpret what Parsons and Shils meant by their use of “pattern” in terms of my understanding of what Aristotle meant by the Greek words we translate as “form” (*eidōs* and *mōrphē*). Just as, for Aristotle, the same *form* can be in the mind of a sculptor, in the marble statue he has created, and in the mind of the viewer of the completed statue, similarly, in the AFR the same *pattern* can be in the symbols and/or artifacts of the cultural system and in the value aspects of the roles in personalities and social systems.

(iv) The Economy as a Subsystem. The AFR gave Polanyi a possible way of integrating his extensive work in economics with his general social theory. At the end of the “Introduction,” Chapter I of Part One, there is “A Note on the Place of Economic Theory and Political Theory in the General Theory of Action.” The authors acknowledge that economics and political science are “well-established social science disciplines.” Both the economy and the polity are subsystems within the social system, but the authors say that the AFR will have to become more elaborately differentiated for it to be able to integrate economic or political theory. What they say of economic theory, in what follows, they also say of political theory:

Economic theory, then, is the theory of a particular set of processes or of a subsystem within a class of highly differentiated social systems. This subsystem is of very great strategic significance in these societies. Economic theory has its conceptual foundations in the categories of action theory here set forth, but only becomes a distinctive subtheory of the general theory on a considerably more elaborate level of differentiation than that reached here (TGTA 28).

The reason I say that the AFR is only a “possible way” for Polanyi to integrate his work in economics with his general social theory is that economic theory could only become a subtheory of the general theory of action after the general theory would become considerably more elaborate than it was in 1951. By the time Parsons and Smelser published *Economy and Society* in 1956, the frame of reference that informed their work was the “four box” schema, rather than the AFR.⁷⁵ In *Personal Knowledge*, Polanyi treats “Co-operation for a joint material advantage” as “the predominant feature of society as an *economic system*.” He says that co-operation is one of the “four coefficients of societal organization,” along with “the sharing of convictions,” “the sharing of a fellowship,” and “the exercise of authority or coercion” (PK 212; italics omitted). But he does not refer to the AFR or to any of Parsons’ later four boxes analyses.

Fig. 1. COMPONENTS OF THE ACTION FRAME OF REFERENCE (TGTA 247)

THE SUBJECT	THE OBJECT
<p>1. An actor-subject: the actor whose orientation of action is being analyzed. (In an interaction situation, this actor is called “ego.”)</p> <p>The actor-subject is sometimes called simply the “actor” and is always an “action system.” Thus the actor-subject is either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a personality b. a social system 	<p>2. Objects: those objects to which the actor-subject is oriented. These are (i) social objects and (ii) nonsocial objects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Social objects are actors (i.e., action systems) but here they are objects rather than subjects in a given analysis. (In an interaction situation, these actors are called “alters.”) Social objects are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Personalities. b. Social systems.

Personalities and Social systems fit together in the following fashion whether they are subjects or objects:

	Personality A	Personality B	Personality C
Social System 1	Role 1-A* Motivational aspects <u>Value aspects</u>	Role 1-B Motivational aspects <u>Value aspects</u>	Role 1-C Motivational aspects <u>Value aspects</u>
Social System 2	Role 2-A Motivational aspects <u>Value aspects</u>	Role 2-B Motivational aspects <u>Value aspects</u>	Role 2-C Motivational aspects <u>Value aspects</u>
Social System 3	Role 3-A Motivational aspects <u>Value aspects</u>	Role 3-B Motivational aspects <u>Value aspects</u>	Role 3-C Motivational aspects <u>Value aspects</u>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. Nonsocial objects may be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Physical objects b. <u>Cultural objects</u> (i.e., <u>symbols or symbol systems</u>).
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Cultural Systems

Cultural systems are the common values, beliefs, and tastes of the actors (as either subjects or objects) interacting with symbol systems (as objects). Thus the underlined components above show the abstraction of cultural systems from the action frame of reference.

*Each of these roles is a subsystem of orientations. This subsystem can be analyzed with respect to either (i) the personality’s motives, of which the orientations are a function, or (ii) the values which the personality respects in the specific social system. Thus roles are divided into motivational aspects and value aspects.

4. Tradition in *Personal Knowledge*

In section 3, “Tradition,” of Chapter 4, “Skills,” Polanyi begins by saying that crafts must be passed on from master to apprentice, and treats the passing on of the art of scientific research as an example of the transmission of a craft. He then uses the craft of making violins as his next example, and says, “A society which wants to preserve a fund of personal knowledge must submit to tradition” (PK 53). His next example is that of precedents in Common Law, and his final example in this section is the “unspecifiable art” that embodies the “exercise of public liberties” (PK 54). This goes back to the central concern of the network of thinkers in mid-twentieth century England, a network that included both Polanyi and Shils. Tradition is a key concept in Polanyi’s social theory, and, as I have said before, it is a necessary component of spontaneous order in every social and cultural domain except for the spontaneous order created by the “invisible hand” of economic markets.

What Shils said about Polanyi’s notion of tradition is far too narrow. Polanyi emphasized the importance of tradition in every domain of social and cultural life, but Shils repeatedly implied that Polanyi was interested only in scientific traditions. In *Tradition*, the only reference to Polanyi is in connection with tradition in science, and the only work of Polanyi’s Shils cites is *Science, Faith, and Society* (TR 116-117). This is despite the fact that Shils read the pre-publication manuscript of *Personal Knowledge* (PK ix). In his presentation in 1991 at the Centennial Celebration of the Polanyi’s birth, Shils quotes *Science, Faith, and Society* frequently, but never once refers either to *Personal Knowledge* or to *The Study of Man*.⁷⁶ In his autobiography, Shils complains that although Polanyi “stressed the importance of tradition in the growth of scientific knowledge,” he “could not be drawn, at least by me, into any conversation about tradition in general” (FSA 99). I do not know why Shils says that he was unable talk with Polanyi about tradition outside of the domain of science. The comment is especially surprising because they were both involved in the conversations that took place in the network of people who stressed the importance something that they usually called “tradition” as the necessary foundation for liberal democracy.

5. Tradition in Shils’ Later Social Theory

When I first read Shils 1981 book, *Tradition*, it angered me, but my anger had nothing to with what he had written about Polanyi. I felt that Shils had failed to acknowledge the work of men and women with whom I had studied, and whose work on traditions I admired. Robert Redfield had died before I became a student at the University of Chicago in the 1960s, but I had written about him in my master’s thesis.⁷⁷ I studied with McKimm Marriott, and Milton Singer, both of whom used Redfield’s distinction between great traditions and little traditions in their anthropological studies of India. I also studied with the political scientists Lloyd and Suzanne Rudolph, who wrote *The Modernity of Tradition*, also about India.⁷⁸ They were all, as was Shils, on the faculty of the South Asian Studies program at the University of Chicago, and I was a graduate student in sociology in that program. I had taken Shils’ seminar on the Indian intellectual in the spring quarter before I left to do my dissertation research in India. During the course of that seminar, Shils and I often disagreed.⁷⁹ When I read *Tradition*, over fifteen years later, I judged Shils to have violated an important tradition in science and scholarship, the tradition of citing the relevant literature. I believed that it was especially “anti-traditional” for Shils to have failed to cite the work of his colleagues, not only at the University, but also within one of the programs with which he was affiliated. I could not believe that Shils, who is celebrated for his omnivorous reading, did not know about their work.

I have gotten over my anger. For a number of years I have made tradition an important theme in my teaching, and I regularly use Shils' notion of tradition. He writes:

Traditionality is compatible with almost any substantive content. All accomplished patterns of the human mind, all patterns of belief or modes of thinking, all achieved patterns of social relationships, all technical practices, and all physical artifacts or natural objects are susceptible to become objects in a process of transmission; each is capable of becoming a tradition (TR 16).

Of course, Shils had much more to say about tradition—three hundred and six more pages worth. But he never backed away from his treatment of traditions as “objects” that are transmitted from older to younger generations. Because of this, I always criticize his notion of tradition, and turn to Alisdair MacIntyre's notion of tradition as arguments that continue from generation to generation,⁸⁰ and A.N. Whitehead's notion of tradition as a temporally linked series of events.⁸¹ Some contents really are objects that are handed down from generation to generation, but the patterns of which Shils writes are “objects” only metaphorically. Arguments (MacIntyre) and events (Whitehead) are not literally objects, even though it is appropriate to say that an argument or an event can become an “object” of inquiry or of thought.

Polanyi and Shils both say that a tradition is a kind of “apostolic succession.” Whitehead's notion of tradition is especially useful for thinking and writing about “apostolic succession.” The Catholic Church teaches that apostolic succession began with Jesus' commissioning of the twelve apostles. Since then, the Church teaches that there has been an *unbroken* series of consecrations of bishops continuing to the present. These ritual ceremonies are sacramental events, although not listed as one of the traditional seven sacraments. The ritual events are the “actual occasions” upon which God confers supernatural powers to each newly consecrated bishop. One of those powers is the power to ordain priests (ordination is one of the traditional seven sacraments). The ordination of a priest is the actual occasion upon which God gives to the newly ordained priest the power to transform bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ (the sacrament of the Eucharist). The *contents* of the tradition of apostolic succession consist *both* of the series of humanly performed ritual acts of consecration of bishops, *and* of the supernatural powers God is said to bestow upon the new bishops. Apostolic succession was, for both Polanyi and Shils, an important central prototype for their thinking about tradition.⁸² This prototype enters into Shils' interpretation of Polanyi's notion of scientific traditions, their “exteriority” and their way of being, to individual scientists, “a spiritual reality which stands over them and compels their allegiance” (TR 116-117).⁸³

I am not saying that Polanyi and Shils personally believed in the Catholic doctrine of apostolic succession, but they did believe that at least some, if not many, Catholics really do believe that this doctrine is true.⁸⁴ In his essays on collective self-consciousness, Shils wrestled with the significance of what he believed about the beliefs of the participants in a tradition. In these essays, he both draws upon Durkheim's notion of “collective consciousness” and criticizes it. I regard this criticism as especially significant:

It was wrong of Durkheim to fail to see that human beings have really believed in the existence of deities who enunciate or exemplify commandments or norms. He was right in seeing that it is the power of society which gives rise to the attribution of sacredness to it. But he was wrong to be unwilling to accredit the belief among human beings that there are powers which transcend human existence, which are beyond society but which also enter into it, and into the rules which they lay down or which human minds derive from those

powers (i.e., from the powers located in the transcendental realm) (FSA 185-186).

This is just one of several passages in these essays in which Shils goes back and forth between his appreciation for Durkheim's notion of collective consciousness and his criticism of some of the things Durkheim asserts about it.

Shils recognizes that "collective self-consciousness" is "not a notion that is easy to state very exactly." He says that the notion of "group mind" was "laid to rest many years ago." But he also says, "it seems to me that it is indispensable" (FSA 171). "In collective self-consciousness," he asserts "the collectivity is both the knowing subject and the collectively known object" (FSA 173). He cannot refrain from saying that the collectivity is a knowing subject, even as he explains why it cannot really be one:

There is no physical locus in the collectivity, such as a brain or neural system is in the individual, in which such collective consciousness can reside. When I say that collective self-consciousness exists, I also emphasize that it exists in the brains and neural systems of the individuals who make up the collectivity. If this is so, then in what sense can we speak of the collectivity as a knowing subject knowing itself? The collective self-consciousness is an inter-individual structure of consciousness commonly aware of the membership of the collectivity (FSA 173).

The final sentence of that quotation is typical of Shils' attempts to hang on to some "indispensable" remnant of group mind even after he has stated why it is impossible. Even though he says that he "emphasizes" that collective self-consciousness "exists in the brains and neural systems of the individuals," he holds back from saying that it exists *only* in the brains and neural systems of individuals. For if he were to have said "only," he would not have been able to say, as he does two sentences later, that collective self-consciousness is an "inter-individual structure." Shils wanted to say both that it is in the brains of individuals, and that it is somehow "inter-individual," transcending individual brains.⁸⁵

Conclusion

In 1981, Shils' *Tradition* was a progress report on his thinking about the topic, and his two essays on collective self-consciousness are a progress report on his thinking about tradition over the last years of his life. If he were alive and mentally active today, I am sure that he would have still further things to say, things that would result from working out implications of things he and Polanyi had said before. Polanyi's religious awakening in 1913 remained, throughout his life, part of the background from which he thought and wrote about tradition. For Polanyi, and then later for Shils, religious commitment became the prototype for the commitment of a person who genuinely participates in a tradition. Shils comments on what he means by "participation" in ways that I believe support my argument that commitment to a *religious* tradition is the prototype for his thinking about commitment to any tradition (FSA 173). Polanyi appealed to St. Augustine's maxim "*nisi credideris non intelligitis*" (unless you believe, you will not understand) (PK 267). I interpret this in the strong sense of the necessity of believing in something *sacred*, even if the sacred object of that belief is not formally religious. He said that the alternative to the interconnected horrors of the "scientific Minotaur," "nihilism," and "moral inversion" must be "to restore to us once more the power for the deliberate holding of unproven beliefs" (PK 268).

For both Polanyi and Shils, it was the scientific tradition to which they personally attributed this sacred quality. I believe that a major contribution Polanyi made to Shils' thinking about the scientific tradition, and tradition more generally, was making commitment to a religious tradition the prototype for commitment to any tradition. This does not mean that Shils never thought about religion prior to meeting Polanyi in 1946. But an important basis for Shils' respect for Polanyi consisted in Polanyi's achievements as a chemist. I believe that their friendship consolidated Shils' understanding of, and affirmation of, commitment to a religious tradition as the prototype for commitment to any tradition.

Endnotes

¹This is a substantial revision of "Polanyi, Shils, and the Action Frame of Reference," a paper presented at "Connections/Disconnections: Polanyi and Contemporary Concerns and Domains of Inquiry," held at Loyola University, June 8-10, 2012. Thanks to Martin Moleski, S.J. for reading my paper in my absence and to Phil Mullins, Richard Schmitt, and Walt Gulick for helpful comments and suggestions. When I became a graduate student in sociology at the University of Chicago in 1964, I had been a disciple of Polanyi since 1959. As a student at Chicago, I had several conversations with Shils in his office and participated in his seminar on Indian intellectuals. But I never worked closely with him. He brought Polanyi to the University for a series of lectures, and scheduled a two-hour session for graduate students to meet with Polanyi. Only two of us showed up, and the other student did little more than listen as Polanyi and I discussed relations between his work and that of Jean Piaget and the Jesuit philosopher and theologian Bernard Lonergan. After I left Chicago in 1968, I had no further personal contacts with either Shils or Polanyi.

²Struan Jacobs, "Polanyi on Tradition in Liberal Modernity," in Struan Jacobs and Richard Allen (eds.), *Emotion, Reason, and Tradition: Essays in the Social, Political and Economic Thought of Michael Polanyi* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), p. 77. Hereafter ERT.

³*Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. vii. Hereafter TR

⁴Edward Shils, *A Fragment of a Sociological Autobiography*, edited by Steven Grosby (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2006), pp. 52, 86. The essays Grosby included are: "Society, Collective Self-Consciousness and Collective Self-Consciousness" and "Collective Self-Consciousness and Rational Choice." Hereafter I refer to the two essays as well as the autobiography simply as FSA.

⁵Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951; New York; Harper and Row, 1951. Hereinafter TGTA.

⁶"Further Reflections," p. 13. Karl Polanyi was also an important influence on Michael's opposition to these bad traditions. See Lee Congdon, "Between Brothers: Karl and Michael Polanyi on Fascism and Communism" *TAD* 24, 2 (1997-1998): 7-13.

⁷To say that Fascism and Communism were based on ideologies rather than traditions is to use "ideology" as if it were a good theoretical term, and I will argue that both Polanyi and Shils denied that "ideology" is a good theoretical term.

⁸Mary Jo Nye, *Michael Polanyi and His Generation: Origins of the Social Construction of Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 7. Hereafter MPHG.

⁹In "Notes Toward Understanding the Hungarian Roots of Polanyi's Heuristic Philosophy of Religion," *TAD* 32, 3 (2005-2006): 29-30, Richard Gelwick discusses the relation between the thought of Polanyi and George Polya.

¹⁰Lee Congdon, "Polanyi and the Treason of the Intellectuals," *Canadian-American Review of Hungarian Studies* 2 (1975): 81-82, cited in (MPSP 22).

¹¹William Taussig Scott and Martin X. Moleski, *Michael Polanyi: Scientist and Philosopher* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). p 23. Hereafter MPSP.

¹²The book was never published. Mannheim died in 1947, and Polanyi had not completed the introductory essay that was supposed to tie the diverse essays together.

¹³Jefferson Pooley, "Edward Shils' Turn Against Karl Mannheim: The Central European Connection," *American Sociologist* 38 (2007): 369.

¹⁴I must confess that the residues of my youthful religious experiences are part of the background from which I attend to what Polanyi and Shils wrote about tradition, and from which I attribute meaning to the word "tradition." When I was twenty, I joined the Jesuits, and remained in the order until I was almost 30. I first read *Personal Knowledge* in 1959, when I was studying philosophy in a Jesuit seminary.

¹⁵"Michael and Karl Polanyi: Conflict and Convergence," *The Political Science Reviewer: An Annual Review of Scholarship* 37: 17-19, 25-26. Endre Nagy translated both "To the Peacemakers: Views on the Prerequisites of War and Peace in Europe" (1917) and "New Skepticism" (1919), and both essays are in Richard Allen (ed.), *Society, Economics, & Philosophy: Selected Papers, Michael Polanyi* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1997), pp. 15-28. Hereafter SEP.

¹⁶By "attributed meaning" I mean something very similar to what I believe Polanyi meant by "sense-giving" in his "Sense-Giving and Sense-Reading" (KB 181-207).

¹⁷See, for example, Zdzislaw Najder's criticism of the notion in "'Moral Inversion' or Moral Revaluation?" in Thomas Langford and William Poteat (eds.) *Intellect and Hope* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1968), pp. 364-385, and D.M. Yeager's rebuttal of Najder's arguments in "Confronting the Minotaur: Moral Inversion and Polanyi's Moral Philosophy," *TAD* 29, 1 (2002-2003): 22-48.

¹⁸Polanyi's rejection of "ideology" as a useful conceptual tool will persist. A similar rejection will be a unifying theme for the members of a network of thinkers in England in the middle years of the twentieth century. See Steven Turner, *Brains/Practices/Relativism: Social Theory after Cognitive Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 176. Chapter 9 of this book, "The Significance of Shils," is a revised version of a paper of the same name published in *Sociological Theory* 17 (1999): 125-145.

¹⁹Richard Gelwick, *The Way of Discovery: An Introduction to the Thought of Michael Polanyi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 135.

²⁰Polanyi's skepticism about politics was similar to that expressed by Harold Lasswell's in *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* (McGraw-Hill: NY, 1936).

²¹Pooley, p. 369.

²²Gulick, "Michael and Karl Polanyi," pp. 16-17.

²³Phil Mullins and Struan Jacobs, "Michael Polanyi and Karl Mannheim," *TAD* 32, 1 (2005-2006): 29.

²⁴*Polanyiana* 5, 1 (1996): 63-75.

²⁵Mary Jo Nye calls attention to this in "A Response to Theodore L. Brown and Richard Henry Schmitt," *TAD* 38,2 (2011-2012): 33. One of the reasons I became a disciple of Polanyi upon my first reading of *Personal Knowledge* was that when, in 1953, I made a thirty-day Ignatian retreat as a Jesuit novice, the personal resolution I made was always to try to stay in close contact with reality. The last sentences of *Personal Knowledge*, as well as the reference to the Jesuit Teilhard de Chardin (PK 388), whose works I had read, had deep personal significance for me.

²⁶London: Routledge.

²⁷*Economica* 8 (November, 1941) 421-456. Hereafter GT.

²⁸"Michael Polanyi and Spontaneous Order, 1941 to 1951," *TAD* 24, 2 (1997-1998): 14-28; "Polanyi's Analysis of Social Orders" (ERT 100).

²⁹"The Growth of Thought in Society as a Major Motif in Polanyi's Philosophy," presented at "Connections/Disconnections: Polanyi and Contemporary Concerns and Domains of Inquiry," held at Loyola

University, June 8-10, 2012.

³⁰“Polanyi’s Political Theory of Science” (ERT 84-85).

³¹In *Beyond Liberalism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1998), Richard Allen discusses these two notions of liberty at some length. See also his essay, “Some Implications of the Political Aspects of *Personal Knowledge*,” *TAD* 39, 3 (2007-2008): 8-16.

³²Mullins, “Growth of Thought,” p. 4; Jacobs, “Polanyi’s Analysis,” pp. 104-5.

³³“Growth ... as a Major Motif,” pp. 2-3.

³⁴I refer here to the two essays Grosby appended to *A Fragment of a Sociological Autobiography*.

³⁵*The Political Quarterly* 19 (Jan.-Mar., 1943): 33-45.

³⁶*The Political Quarterly* 14 (1943): 372.

³⁷Personal communication. Gulick also reports that, after moving to England, Karl was dismayed at the degree to which English life was still dominated by class distinctions. See also “Michael and Karl Polanyi,” p. 16.

³⁸Phil Mullins and Struan Jacobs, “Michael Polanyi and Karl Mannheim,” *TAD* 32, 1 (2005-2006): 29-30.

³⁹Polanyi said of his participation in the Moot, “These things changed our lives” (MPSP 197).

⁴⁰“Edward Shils’ Turn Against Karl Mannheim.”

⁴¹“Polanyi’s Economics,” *TAD* 25, 3 (1998-99): 26.

⁴²International Library of Psychology, Philosophy and Scientific Method.

⁴³London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

⁴⁴New York: McGraw-Hill, 1937.

⁴⁵Talcott Parsons, “Analytical Approach to the Theory of Social Stratification,” *American Journal of Sociology* 45 (1940): 841-862.

⁴⁶Pooley, pp. 371-374.

⁴⁷Pooley, pp. 366, 371-374.

⁴⁸Shils, “Karl Mannheim,” *American Scholar* 64 (1995): 233.

⁴⁹Pooley, p. 375, citing D. Kettler and V. Meja, *Karl Mannheim and the Crisis of Liberalism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1995), p. 246.

⁵⁰*Public Opinion Quarterly* 12 (1948): 280-315; republished in Edward Shils, *Center and Periphery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 345-383.

⁵¹*Brains/Practices/Relativism*, pp. 176-177.

⁵²See Richard Allen, “Polanyi’s Rehabilitation of Emotion” (ERT 41-54).

⁵³“Michael Polanyi and the Sociology of a Free Society.” *The American Sociologist* 29 (1998):59-70; “Reflections on Shils, Sacred and Civil Ties, and Universities” *TAD* 27, no. 1 (2000-2001), pp. 7-12.

⁵⁴“Further Reflections on Shils and Polanyi,” *TAD* 27, 1 (2000-2001): 13-15.

⁵⁵“Edward Shils 1910-1995.” *TAD* 22, 2 (1995-1996): 5-9.

⁵⁶“On the Tradition of Intellectuals: Authority and Antinomianism According to Michael Polanyi,” *TAD* 22, 2 (1995-1996):10-26. (Based on a presentation at the Centennial Celebration of the birth of Michael Polanyi, April 11-13, 1991, Kent State University.)

⁵⁷Szilard and Polanyi had known one another as young men in Budapest. Tibor Frank reports that in 1922, Polanyi had written a letter of recommendation for Szilard regarding his application for a position at the Institute of Physical Chemistry at the University of Frankfurt. “Cohorting, Networking, Bonding: Michael Polanyi in Exile,” *TAD* 28, 2 (2001-2002): 7.

⁵⁸Phil Mullins, in a personal communication, says that in other contexts Polanyi did discuss these topics. Perhaps he just did not want to discuss them with Shils.

⁵⁹*Brains/Practices/Relativism*, p. 176. In “From Salon to Institute: Convivial Spaces in the Intellectual Life of Michael Polanyi,” *TAD* 32, 3 (2005-2006): 19-22. Ruel Tyson argues that conversations within convivial groups or networks were integral to the development of Polanyi’s thought.

⁶⁰“Edward Shils’ Turn Against Karl Mannheim.”

⁶¹“Karl Mannheim,” *The American Scholar*, Spring 1995, 234.

⁶²Pooley, p. 372.

⁶³Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Montreal Convention Center, Montreal, Quebec, *Canada*, Aug 10, 2006. Available at http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/0/2/9/9/pages102990/p102990-1.php

⁶⁴Because of Sheldon’s radical criticism of the realistic assumptions of the AFR, I would categorize him as a “dissenter” rather than as a “loyal critic.” See “The Realism of the AFR,” below.

⁶⁵Nichols, p. 4.

⁶⁶All three of these letters are in Box 4 of the Shils archive in the Regenstein Library at the University of Chicago. I am indebted to Phil Mullins for sharing his notes on these letters.

⁶⁷In his autobiography, written four decades later, Shils might have shortened the time after the turn of the century during which he still believed that he could follow Parsons’ way. He co-authored, along with Parsons and Bales, *Working Papers in the Theory of Action* (NY: Free Press), published in 1953.

⁶⁸His essay is “An Empirical Study of Technical Problems in Analysis of Role Obligations,” (TGTA 479-496).

⁶⁹Nichols, “Backstage,” p. 6.

⁷⁰Richard Schmitt has pointed out Stouffer was not the first to use two-by-two contingency tables in statistics. I believe Shils was suggesting that it was Stouffer who influenced Parsons to use the “four boxes” approach in his typological analyses. Because of my familiarity with Parsons’ division of the social system into four functionally defined subsystems, I initially thought it would be interesting and fruitful to dig into the possible influence of the AFR on the social theory Polanyi presents in *Personal Knowledge* and *The Study of Man*. I was struck by the similarity between Polanyi’s description of “four coefficients of societal organization” (PK 212) and Parsons’ four subsystems of the social system. I have since concluded that this comparison between Parsons and Polanyi is a dead end. There is not a single reference in *Personal Knowledge* or *The Study of Man* to anything written by Parsons (or Shils, for that matter). Polanyi acknowledges Shils’ reading of the pre-publication manuscript of *Personal Knowledge* (PK ix), but that is the only occurrence of Shils’ name in the book. If Polanyi had believed that either the AFR or the four-function schema had shaped his social theory, he would have acknowledged it. This does not mean, however, that his study of the AFR and his brief enthusiasm for it did not become part of the tacit background for things he said in his later writings.

⁷¹Turner, who often conversed with Shils after 1982, says that too many people think of Shils only as Parsons’ junior partner. “But,” he says, “Shils was never as narrow as this relationship might have suggested, and in any case he soon moved on with respect to the central concerns he shared with Parsons, and moved on in a direction that has proven to be more durable and significant than the failed effort of the early fifties to create a scientific theoretical sociology around a scheme of definitions.” “The Significance of Shils,” p. 170.

⁷²Andy Sanders, “Polanyians on Realism: an Introduction,” *TAD* 26, 3 (1999-2000): 7.

⁷³See Martin Moleski, “The Role of Retortion in the Cognitive Analyses of Loneragan and Polanyi,” in Bartlett, S.J. and Suber, P. (eds.), *Self-Reference: Reflections on Reflexivity* (Amsterdam: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), pp. 218-38.

⁷⁴My Figure 1 includes all of the elements of Parsons and Shils’ Figure 1 (TGTA 247), but with slightly different formatting of the cells in the tables.

⁷⁵NY: Free Press, 1956. Parsons and Smelser discuss the relations between the four box schema and

the AFR in a “Technical Note” (pp. 33-38), but this is the only place in the book that the pattern variable scheme is mentioned.

⁷⁶“On the Tradition of Intellectuals.”

⁷⁷*A Heuristic Structure for the Study of Sociocultural Integration* (Chicago: Unpublished Master’s Thesis, Loyola University, 1961).

⁷⁸Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967.

⁷⁹In spite of our arguments, Shils spent time with me before I left for India on the design of a possible research project on the Jesuit colleges in India. As it turned out, I had no time to pursue the leads he had given me during my summer in India.

⁸⁰*Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), p. 12. See John Flett, “Alisdair MacIntyre’s Tradition-Constituted Enquiry in Polanyian Perspective,” *TAD* 26, 2 (1999-2000): 6-20.

⁸¹*Science and the Modern World* (N.Y.: MacMillan, 1925).

⁸²See George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) for an explanation of central models or prototypes in our use of words to signify cognitive categories.

⁸³In *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), Gregory Bateson laments the failure of so many modern people to understand what he meant by a “sacrament.” I believe that what Polanyi and Shils meant by a (good) “tradition” is very close to what Bateson meant by “sacrament.” I have put this in terms of what Bateson, Polanyi, and Shils meant, rather than in terms of “the meaning” of “sacrament” and “tradition” because I agree with Polanyi that it is people who mean things by words, and that words mean nothing by themselves (“The Personal Mode of Meaning,” PK 252-253).

⁸⁴Very few of the Catholics among my students have been able, in response to my questions, to explain their Church’s doctrine of apostolic succession. When I explain it to them, however, they are not disposed to deny it. This might be a good example of a tacitly held belief.

⁸⁵It is possible that Shils’ conversations with Steven Turner led him to a clearer realization of the impossibility of both “group mind” and of “collective mental objects.” Turner reports that he had a number of conversations with Shils from 1982 until the end of Shils’ life (“The Significance of Shils,” p. 168). When Shils was working on his autobiography and his essays on collective self-consciousness, Turner was working on *The Social Theory of Practices* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), in which he argued against the notions of group mind and shared mental objects.

Moodey on Shils, Polanyi and Tradition

Phil Mullins

Key Words: Michael Polanyi, Edward Shils, tradition.

ABSTRACT

This is a brief response to Richard Moodey's analysis of views of tradition found in the thought of Edward Shils and Michael Polanyi.

I have just been asked by the publisher to give him 200 words for the dust-jacket. Usually he does that himself, but he finds it too difficult in this case. Unfortunately, I find it very difficult myself, too, for I do not know how to approach the public best in such brief terms on such a large matter. On the other hand, I am sure you could write down the most suitable 200 words in little over 200 seconds. Might I ask you to do this?¹

This request came from Michael Polanyi in a letter of August 28, 1957 to Edward Shils (B4, MPF, ESP). The book in question, of course, for which a succinct statement was required was *Personal Knowledge* which came out June 20, 1958. Polanyi's request reflects the depth of his confidence in Edward Shils and that included his sense that Shils was an intellectual whose convictions aligned closely with Polanyi's own postcritical philosophical stance. Dick Moodey's reflections on Polanyi, Shils and the development of each figure's thinking about tradition has brought into the foreground a number of matters concerned with the relationship and cooperation of these figures. I am delighted that he has explored this topic because I think it is an important one. With the possible exception of Marjorie Grene, I suspect that Edward Shils was Polanyi's closest intellectual companion. Certainly, I am a novice when it comes to the extensive body of Shils' writing, but I long have been interested in the link between Shils and Polanyi and in the comments (many in TAD) about this link made by a number of knowledgeable figures including Stephen Turner, Steven Grosby, Louis Swartz, Richard Schmitt, as well as Shils himself. A few years ago my interest was further stimulated by reading much of the extensive correspondence between Shils and Polanyi that is part of the Papers of Edward Shils, material that was not available to Scott and Moleski, but which certainly would have interested them. What follows here are brief comments that amplify a few of the points that Dick Moodey elaborates.

Some Contours of the Friendship

Moodey provides an outline of the long friendship between Polanyi and Shils, stretching for thirty years from 1946 until Polanyi's death; he notes that Swartz, Grosby, Turner and Shils himself have pointed to the importance of this friendship. Their correspondence suggests Polanyi and Shils went out of their way to spend time together in the US, UK and in other settings over the course of thirty years.² Polanyi and Shils enjoyed each other's company and clearly they found conversation stimulating. What Polanyi remarked in an October 26, 1959 letter (B4, MPF,ESP) seems aptly to summarize the sense of things of both men: "I wish you were here to talk about all kinds of things. I still find the world very interesting, particularly in your company." This was an unusually close friendship, but, like any other long friendship, one that had ups and downs. One Polanyi letter in the fifties expresses great relief that what seems to have been a misunderstanding that led to a period of silence (i.e., letters unanswered) had now been overcome.³ Each figure often seems to have tried

diligently to involve the other in current projects he was working on and sometimes—but not always—succeeded.⁴ It was a friendship that seemed to have extended to Magda Polanyi who also corresponded with Shils and very clearly trusted and at times confided in Shils. Magda Polanyi's letters in the early fifties when her spouse had resigned from Manchester and planned to take up an appointment at the University of Chicago but was then denied a visa made clear to Shils that Michael Polanyi was deeply depressed and extraordinarily fragile.⁵ It was a friendship in which Shils often seems to have been a figure relied upon to get important things done and Shils was a gifted organizer. The correspondence makes clear, as Moodey has suggested, that it was Shils who set up Polanyi's first 1950 visit to the University of Chicago and he had a hand in organizing many later short terms appointments through the Committee on Social Thought.⁶ Shils was involved in the project to get Polanyi a permanent appointment at Chicago in 1951 and when all that went awry because Polanyi was unable to get a visa, Shils worked on Polanyi's behalf with the University of Chicago and in trying to apply pressures that would produce a visa for Polanyi.⁷ Shils put together the October 1952 *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* (vol. VIII, no. 7 [October, 1952]) that featured Polanyi as one of many European scientists unjustly excluded from the U.S. by current policies.⁸ Even much later in Polanyi's life in the mid-sixties, when Polanyi was very vexed by continuing problems that emerged when he came to the U.S., Shils tried to help Polanyi correct the errors in old government files on Polanyi which Polanyi believed to be source of his later travel problems.⁹

On Mentoring and Reading and Referencing Each Other's Work

Shils acknowledges Polanyi as one "three elders who have left an imprint on me"¹⁰ but Polanyi also acknowledges Shils as something of a mentor for him in the literature of the social sciences. Dick Moodey's account of Polanyi's interest in the Parsons-Shils action frame of reference illustrates this role. A Polanyi letter of August 4, 1949 indicates appreciation for a copy of a Weber text that Shils had sent which Polanyi said he plunged into immediately: "I was happy to hear from you and very grateful for the copy of Weber's book which you sent me. I got immersed in it straight away and derived some of the instruction which I am sure you thought I was in need of when I ventured into this field without properly exploring its background"(B1, Misc 47-49F, ESP). Polanyi seems early in this friendship to have concluded that he wished to work with Shils: a February 18, 1949 letter to Shils (B4, MPF, ESP) notes, "The more often I meet you, the more I feel that we could probably do good work together, and at any rate I feel much tempted to induce you in this direction." A decade later, in a December 3, 1960 letter to Shils (B4,MPF, ESP), Polanyi remarks, "I know that our minds move on parallel but not identical lines and that is good. It promises a bulky achievement, arrived at on independent grounds."¹¹ At times, Polanyi seems to have regarded Shils' writing as a catalyst for his own writing projects. In a July 15, 1957 letter to Shils (B4, MPF, ESS) which notes that the revision of the final chapter of PK has been completed, Polanyi comments that he must now turn to the Lindsay Lectures which "I have given the absurd title 'The Study of Man' which includes everything I know nothing about. It would help me to focus on some samples of your recent writing. Our thoughts have a way of supplementing each other which could be made more effective by closer co-operation."

It is something of a surprise, as Moodey notes, that Shils does not often quote Polanyi's writing and when he does he seems to prefer SFS.¹² As Louis Swartz suggests, Shils is a parsimonious footnoter, as one might note also is Polanyi.¹³ Nevertheless, the Polanyi-Shils letters make clear that both Shils and Polanyi read and commented on drafts and published versions of many things written by the other. Shils apparently read at least Series I of Polanyi's Gifford Lectures and prepared written comments.¹⁴ Polanyi's January 21, 1957 letter to Shils (B4 MPF, ESP) thanks him for recent feedback provided (when they were together in the

U.S.) on the draft of the PK chapter titled “Conviviality.” Shils makes very clear in his letters that PK is a very important book for him. Writing Polanyi on June 4, 1957 (B5, F10, MPP) which was likely not long after he read the final draft (or a near final draft), Shils comments, “*Personal Knowledge* has become a sort of part of my mental furniture and it radiates and elaborates itself into every sphere of intellectual activity into which I enter.” Later in that fall in an October 23, 1957 letter (B5, F10, MPP), Shils agreed to write the 200 word summary for the PK dust jacket, and again commented on Polanyi and his book:

About your book, I can only repeat to you what I said without rhetorical intention to Magda: It is a grandiose achievement, breathtaking—literally so—in its profundity and daring, and one of the most enriching books I have ever read. . . It is a magnificent work, my dear Michael and I cannot sufficiently praise it or you for having done it.

Polanyi frequently read Shils’ writings also and he often found them helpful not only to stimulate his own writing but to deepen his understanding of common interests, including the interest in tradition that Moodey focuses attention on. In an August 13, 1955 letter to Shils (B4, MPF, ESP), Polanyi thanks Shils for his manuscript which he says he has read carefully:

Your continued study of tradition is of special interest to me. I welcome in particular technical use you make of the term ‘sacred’. Similarly, your use of the word ‘deference’ in your Encyclopedia article on ‘clan’, seems to designate an important feature of society in a straightforward manner which. . . is essentially novel. I congratulate you on this piece of work.

Shils’ Stories About Polanyi

Like Dick Moodey, I distrust some of Shils’ stories about Michael Polanyi because they don’t fit well with other historical details. Of course Shils’ anecdotes about Polanyi and other figures were written down many years after events and are primarily intended succinctly to portray character. Nevertheless, I find that what Shils’ stories imply sometimes misses the mark. In his *A Fragment of a Sociological Autobiography*, Shils suggests that Polanyi was not interested, as was Shils, in the problem of secrecy and that “he [Polanyi] did not want to hear anything about Karl Mannheim or Karl Popper” (*Fragment*, 79). Shils confirms that he met Polanyi in the autumn of 1946 (*Fragment*, 78). Mannheim dies very soon thereafter on January 9, 1947 and Shils in fact tells an odd story (see Moodey’s summary of this anecdote) about informing Polanyi of Mannheim’s death in a taxi ride the day after the death (*Fragment*, 36-37),¹⁵ a story that likely does not accurately represent Polanyi personal relationship with Mannheim. Mannheim is, as Moodey and others have noted, a figure the young Shils worked closely with but eventually sharply criticized and seemed eventually to find a somewhat unsavory character. In 1944 and 1945, Polanyi was working on a book to be published in Mannheim’s Routledge series and there is quite a bit of archival correspondence in the Papers of Michael Polanyi through the fall of 1945 as well as some records of the interaction of Polanyi and Mannheim in J. H. Oldham’s discussion group, the Moot.¹⁶ While it is clearly the case that Polanyi is critical of Mannheim’s emphasis upon planning and his historicism,¹⁷ it is also clear that Polanyi and Mannheim were friends and that they met socially to discuss ideas in 1944 and 1945 and they may also have met in 1946, although Polanyi was apparently too busy to finish up his work on his book for Routledge. If Polanyi did not wish to “hear” anything about Mannheim from Shils, it seems unlikely that this was due to any sort of rift with Mannheim. The case of Popper is similar: by the late forties, Polanyi had become critical of Popper’s views (see, for

example, the Preface to *LL*, which went to press in late 1949). But Polanyi and Popper seem to have been on good terms until after 1952 when Polanyi presented (to the London Philosophy of Science group chaired by Popper) and then published his paper “The Stability of Belief,” making public his sharp criticisms of views emphasizing the centrality of doubt. The Polanyi-Popper correspondence from the late forties shows these figures met from time to time, had some common interests and cooperated.¹⁸

Despite the reported limited interest of Polanyi in the problem of secrecy, Polanyi’s comments on Shils’ writing on the topic—and on Shils himself as a fellow freedom fighter—are certainly not faint praise:

I just finished reading your book on the torment of Secrecy. . . I can see that we have in you a resolute and eloquent leader who can transpose our theory of freedom into a passionate imperative. You have the range of knowledge, the courage and the originality of expression which command respect for your sentiments. I thank you for including me in your dedication. In a way I think it correctly expresses our partnership. You are younger and possess powers which I lack, but as fighters for freedom as something new, something of which we only begin to discern the outlines in the present world, we belong to a very small band. People are ignorant of freedom either because they take it for granted or because they have never known it. In either case they see little purpose in discussing the matter. You have the power to overcome this barrier. I hope we shall soon meet again for new tasks (B4, Feb. 15, 1956, MPF, ESP).

Polanyi’s Interest in Tradition

I agree with Dick Moodey that Shils to some degree misrepresents Polanyi when he suggests that Polanyi focused narrowly on tradition in science. Polanyi did indeed take tradition seriously as a component of science and, as Moodey and Nye have suggested, this likely is rooted in Polanyi’s years as a research scientist at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institutes. But by the late thirties and early forties, Polanyi’s opposition to the planned science movement led him to think more broadly about the character of social order. In “The Growth of Thought in Society”(1941), Polanyi seems already to be pointing to the importance of what he later terms tradition and professional opinion in a wide range of intellectual and cultural dynamic orders of society.¹⁹ The exception is perhaps the dynamic economic order which seems to rely not on tradition and professional opinion but on only competition which Polanyi suggests is possible because money works as a medium (for pricing) that adequately allows ongoing adjustment in the economic order.²⁰ I thus concur with Dick Moodey’s view (which he links to some of Walter Gulick’s suggestions) that Polanyi’s notions about how most dynamic or spontaneous orders operate through mutual adjustment already presupposes the existence and importance of what later is tagged “tradition.” I would add—and I suspect Moodey would agree—that even Polanyi’s early ideas about the way in which tradition underlies the operation of dynamic orders also points to the importance of authority or to those who play authoritative roles in intellectual dynamic orders.

By 1943, three years before he meets Shils, Polanyi was beginning to pull together his account of modern European intellectual history and his account focuses on religion and contrasts the way that ideas and cultural practices (especially political practices) develop in English and Continental history. “The English and the Continent” (1943)²¹ is the first of several articles in the forties that elaborate the contrast:

I believe that the principal differences in recent times between English and Continental politics—and what I shall say of England is, I think, largely true of America also—is connected with the fact that in England social progress was not on the whole associated with enlightenment and anticlericalism, but was, on the contrary, very often prompted by religious sentiment (372).

In Polanyi's account, English traditions and practices have proven sound and sensible, providing social stability and gradual reform, whereas the way in which ideas and practices developed on the Continent ultimately followed out the logical implications of the Enlightenment and have brought nihilism, violence and totalitarianism.²² By 1943 in "The English and the Continent," Polanyi is clearly identifying "tradition" as a central element in both English and Continental societies. In particular, he is interested in the operation of "the living moral tradition in England" (378) and how it was revived in World War II and how the societies of the Continent have an opportunity to revive elements of "their own moral tradition" (381) that is akin to England's tradition. Polanyi regards the liberal civilization (destroyed by World War I and the Russian Revolution and later, the rise of fascism) as a civilization that made gradual but significant reforms by relying on tradition. But all of this collapsed as scientific materialism and totalitarian governments which rely on planning emerged.²³ Shils, of course, may never have read Polanyi's writings (on intellectual history) that predate meeting him in 1946, but certainly some of this emphasizes tradition's importance in society.

Moodey suggests that in the deep background of Polanyi's appreciation for tradition is his early religious experience and possibly his sense of the importance of tradition in religion.²⁴ This is perhaps the case—certainly Polanyi re-applies, as Moodey points out, notions about "the Apostolic succession" and points to the importance of religious traditions in English history. I, nevertheless, think it is important to be very careful about overplaying the religion card. The prominent place that Scott and Moleski (194-195) give to the opening section of Polanyi's April 19, 1944 letter to Mannheim—a section which sets forth the early history of his religious experience (which Moodey picks up)—suggests that this section must have had a special resonance for Bill Scott, the Quaker physicist—perhaps too much resonance. This letter was in fact a lengthy one that was a follow-up to a dinner and conversation at Mannheim's home and it appears to be an effort to provide further clarification on both some questions that Mannheim had posed (some personal, including Polanyi's personal religious history) and topics Polanyi believed had been insufficiently discussed and he apparently wanted some closure on. The letter is the first of three linked letters (two from Polanyi and one from Mannheim, a total of approximately six single-spaced pages) that set forth serious philosophical differences (some identified above in note 17) between these thinkers and also discusses Polanyi's projected book.²⁵ Clearly, Polanyi was a sensitive soul who was deeply interested in and appreciated many dimensions of religion. His discussions of religious doubt, religious frameworks, mysticism, Tillich, the Protestant principle, the ways in which religious faith is akin to (and bound up with and operates like) other kinds of faith in life, his re-validation of religious inquiry, his post-critical anticipation of an era in which myth, symbol and religious ritual are newly respected—my list here does not pretend to be exhaustive—are fascinating and important aspects of Polanyi's thought. I would also be the first to argue that Polanyi's views were importantly shaped by his long involvement in Oldham's discussion groups in which matters concerned with the importance of religion in society were central. Nevertheless, Polanyi's participation in religious communities and his firsthand knowledge of tradition in religion seems quite limited. Long ago, Aaron Milavec illuminatingly contrasted Polanyi's engagement with the scientific tradition in a scientific community with his lack of engagement with religious communities and traditions, despite his interest in such traditions as an intellectual.²⁶ More recently, Tibor Frank has helpfully clarified the several ways Polanyi typified a *fin-de-siècle* Budapest Jew.²⁷

Paul Knepper has shown that Polanyi had a very limited understanding of Judaism and the Jewish tradition, although he was repelled by what he associated with ideas and practices of Eastern Jews.²⁸ Polanyi's negotiations in the mid forties with Mannheim were concerned with the unpublished book "The Autonomy of Science" which was slated to include the 1943 article "Jewish Problems."²⁹ Polanyi wrote to Mannheim that religious Judaism represented something like the opposing, limiting case of tradition quite different than the positive case he was making for tradition in other articles slated for the book: ". . . I think it is also desirable to show that the principles of tradition have their limitations or, let us say, their negative aspects as evident in the Jewish case."³⁰ Finally, perhaps it is important also to remember that Polanyi seems sometimes to associate Roman Catholicism and tradition in Roman Catholicism with what he calls "Specific Authority" rather than "General Authority" and practices of supervision that allow persons to re-appropriate and reform a living tradition.³¹ "General Authority," according to Polanyi, is "a more or less organized expression of the general opinion—scientific, legal, or religious—formed by the margin and interplay of all these individual contributions" but a "Specific Authority" is one that "makes all important reinterpretations and innovations by pronouncements from the centre" (SFS 59). In sum, there is a good bit of evidence that suggests Polanyi's associations for the role of tradition in religion are not all positive and, further, his knowledge of tradition in religion seems very circumscribed. Moodey, however, does not suggest that either Polanyi or Shils assumes an altogether positive role for tradition in their accounts of society.

Endnotes

¹This and other quotations that follow come from the Papers of Edward Shils (ESP), which, like the Papers of Michael Polanyi (MPP) which I also cite, are in the Department of Special Collections of the University of Chicago Library. Thanks go to Steven Grosby, literary executor, for arranging for me to review some of the materials in the Papers of Edward Shils which are still being processed by Special Collections. Citations in parenthesis will include the box (B), folder (F) number or name (MPF is "Michael Polanyi" folder in ESP) and collection (MPP or ESP) as well as the date of correspondence and writer if this is not provided in the discussion. All references to ESP are to boxes in Series III. Since the project of organizing the enormous collection of Shils materials is not yet complete, some of the ways material is presently filed (e.g., there was a large "Michael Polanyi" folder in Box 4 as well as several folders for each of several years) may, I suspect, eventually change.

²This paragraph hazards a few generalizations based on notes taken in my review of the many letters in ESP and the few in MPP.

³"Our meeting in England has gloriously healed the mysterious illness that had befallen our friendship. Glory be to the source of all grace" (Polanyi to Shils, June 15, 1955, B4, MPF, ESP).

⁴For example, when Polanyi was the editorial chair (or had important editorial responsibility) for the short-lived journal *Humanitas* (1946-48), he apparently invited Shils to write an article on liberalism; he refers to this article in a December 23, 1947 letter to Shils (B1, Misc. 47-49 folder, ESP). In a July 17, 1948 letter to Shils (B1, Correspondence 1948, ESP), Polanyi declines Shils' offer to write a response probably for an article in the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* in the period in which Shils was one of the editors. In a September 8, 1947 letter from Shils to Polanyi (B5, F4, MPP), Shils invited Polanyi to write "an article on security and freedom of science."

⁵See in particular Magda Polanyi's October 8, 1951 letter to Shils (B4, MPF, ESP) where she comments, "I don't mind telling you what he said to me before he left for Wales: This American business has robbed me of my home, of my job, of my professional position in England and I don't know how I can go on

living if it can't be straightened out.”

⁶Polanyi's invitation for his first term at Chicago in the spring of 1950 came in Shils' letter to Polanyi in September 7, 1949 (B4, MPF, ESP): “I have been authorized by Chancellor Hutchins of the University to invite you to accept the White professorship at this University for the winter or spring of 1950, if that is possible for you.” Other correspondence in this period from Shils, Polanyi and others at the University of Chicago works out details for this first visit. Later letters testify that Shils has a hand in later Chicago visits. For example, Shils' May 20, 1964 letter to Polanyi (B4, MPF, ESP) proposes a “recurrent presence in Chicago.” It should be noted that Shils also came to Manchester for short term appointments (letters suggest perhaps in 1949 and the summer of 1950 as well as in 1953) and that Polanyi arranged these visits.

⁷Some of the correspondence in the Papers of Edward Shils (letters from Polanyi, Shils and university officials) in 1950 and 1951 concerns the Chicago appointment and the ongoing problem of securing a visa which would allow Polanyi actually to come to Chicago and take the appointment. Scott and Moleski (217-219) also briefly comment on the Chicago appointment and the delay in receiving a visa (which came through only in 1953), which led first to rescheduling the move to Chicago and finally, in November, 1951, to a resignation from the permanent appointment. Much of the narrative in the biography seems to be based on Scott's interview of Shils.

⁸Shils was the special editor of this issue (and a member of the editorial board) which focused on the exclusion of scientists by the two McCarran Acts. Shils wrote an introductory editorial “American's Paper Curtain” (210-216) and Polanyi's case—which Polanyi laid out in detail (223-228) and which was followed by comments on Polanyi's case by John Baker and P. W. Bridgeman (229)—was the first of seven British cases.

⁹Polanyi's long letter of October 7, 1966 to Shils (B4, MPF, ESP) contended his travel problems in the sixties grew out of the fact that the U.S. State Department had only half-heartedly rectified the errors of 1951 by changing Polanyi's classification in his files from “communist” to “defector.” Shils' follow-up letter to Polanyi on October 17, 1966 (B4, MPF, ESP) advised Polanyi that he was taking steps to consult a former U. S. Attorney General, now working for the State Department, who was a former University of Chicago Law professor.

¹⁰Edward Shils, *A Fragment of a Sociological Autobiography: The History of My Pursuit of A Few Ideas*. Steven Grosby, ed. (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2006), 153. Additional references to this work are cited in the text as *Fragment*.

¹¹Shils seems to have shared Polanyi's view. After reading Polanyi's “The Scientific Revolution,” Shils' November 3, 1960 letter to Polanyi (B4, MPF, ESP) proclaims: “It was a breath-taking and exhilarating experience to read it and to think about it. I felt in reading it the strong kinship which binds us, not only personally, but intellectually.”

¹²In *Fragment*, Shils also mentions (80) the particular importance to him of SFS.

¹³Louis H. Swartz (“Reflection on Shils, Sacred and Civil Ties and Universities,” TAD 27:1 [2000-01]: 7-12) discusses documentation in Shils (8).

¹⁴Polanyi's July 23, 1951 letter to Shils (B4, MPF, ESP) asks him to return his Gifford Series I lectures since he needs to work on the Series II lectures. His July 25, 1951 letter to Shils (B4, MPF, ESP) says: “I thank you very much for your letter and look forward gratefully to receiving your detailed comments on my manuscript. Your criticism of the structure and formulation of my text will be as valuable as any material points you might make. I am thinking of publishing the First Series of lectures separately and should like to have your reaction to this project. It would somewhat facilitate the writing of the second part by making it rather more independent of the first.” In MPP (B25, F2) there are eight pages of detailed notes from Shils dated September 1951 that are titled “Comments on Gifford Lectures 1-5.”

¹⁵January 9, 1947, the day Mannheim died, was a Thursday and there was a short obituary note in the

London Times (p. 4) on January 10 and a five-paragraph, unsigned full obituary on January 11 (p. 7); a letter remembering Mannheim from T. S. Eliot was published January 25, 1947 (p. 7). Shils reports (*Fragment*, 36-37) that his cab ride with Polanyi was on Monday and that Mannheim died on the preceding Sunday and he discovered this by looking at the Monday *Times* which he had not read. The Moot had a meeting beginning January 10, 1947 which Mannheim was scheduled to attend and Polanyi almost certainly did attend, according to correspondence in MPP. It seems likely that Polanyi would have learned about Mannheim's death at the Moot meeting.

¹⁶See the discussion of this book and Polanyi's interaction with Mannheim in Phil Mullins and Struan Jacobs, "Michael Polanyi and Karl Mannheim," *Tradition and Discovery* 32:1 (2005-06): 20-43.

¹⁷In Polanyi's April 19, 1944 letter to Mannheim (B4, F11, MPP), which is a follow-up to conversation at a recent dinner, Polanyi comments,

as regards the social analysis of the development of ideas, suffice to say that I reject all social analysis of history which makes social conditions anything more than opportunities for a development of thought. You seem inclined to consider moral judgments on history as ludicrous, believing apparently that thought is not merely conditioned, but determined by a social or technical situation. I cannot tell you how strongly I reject such a view.

Essentially, Polanyi claims Mannheim's views explain away human achievement and the growth of thought and undermine the idea that moral judgments on history are possible. Much later, Polanyi considers in SM the problems of understanding history. Mannheim's views seem to be close to what Polanyi characterizes as an extreme "historicism" which represents the "relativist fallacy" (SM, 88).

¹⁸The history of Polanyi-Popper relations is discussed in Phil Mullins and Struan Jacob, "Michael Polanyi and Karl Popper: The Fraying of a Long-Standing Acquaintance," *Tradition and Discovery* 38:2 (2011-12): 61-93.

¹⁹Polanyi does not use "tradition" in quite the straightforward way in which he does in later writing but he does, in "The Growth of Thought in Society" (*Economica*, New Series 8:32 [November 1941]: 428-456) speak about the "public mental heritage" (438) and its reform and transmission to the next generation. He emphasizes "traditional methods of science" (437). In his more general discussion in the section titled "Machinery of Dynamic Orders," he points to the importance of "traditional standards" (441) as well as "traditional practice" (442) conducted under the guidance of ideals: "Without such traditional standards no creative work and no dynamic order is possible" (441). Nor does Polanyi speak of "professional opinion" in quite the way he later does but he does note that many dynamic orders are organized "in circles of special interest and professional bodies" (441). Polanyi also clearly sees the important role of the "influentials" (441) as gatekeepers of specialized traditions. In dynamic orders "each is governed by a permanent fundamental idea that cannot be expressed precisely, yet which comes into play every time the standards of the day are challenged" (441).

²⁰For Polanyi, money seems to be a medium that in fact allows the economic order to be primarily a competitive order. Money allows pricing to operate in the economic order and thus reduces many of the skillful and personal elements that Polanyi apparently saw as primary in more intellectual, artistic and craft orders. Polanyi's thinking about society emphasizes the complexity of modern societies. They have many dynamic orders; some are highly specialized (e.g., science with its many neighborhoods) and the scale of some orders is small, but others, such as the economic order, are very large; this sort of very broad polycentric order can achieve this scale only by relying upon a medium such as money which "impersonalizes" and promotes differentiation.

²¹*The Political Quarterly* 14 (October-December, 1943): 372-381. The basic argument here is developed and recycled at least twice in 1944 and 1945 before Polanyi met Shils, in “England and the Continent” (*Fortune* 39 [May 1944]: 155-157, 178, 180, 182, and 185) and in “Science and the Modern Crisis,” (*Memoirs and Proceeding of the Manchester Philosophical Society* 87: 6 [June 1945]: 106-117). Some of the things Polanyi says about disaffected intellectuals and literati as representing the logical outcome of the Enlightenment tradition make me distrust Shils’ recollection about a visit to Manchester in the winter of 1946-47 (*Fragments*, 109-110) in which he reports Polanyi simply could not understand or accept Shils’ account (in a public talk) of intellectuals’ rebellion as moral indignation. Shils reports that soon thereafter Polanyi came to agree with Shils’ view but much in these articles suggests Polanyi already shared Shils’ views before he met Shils.

²²Moodey notes that Polanyi’s youthful skepticism about politics is not as strong after his move to England and he comes to appreciate the British political tradition.

²³Particularly Polanyi’s “Science and the Modern Crisis” (*Memoirs and Proceedings of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society*, 87: 6 [June 1945]: 107-116) makes this case. But even some essays from this period that are not so broadly focused on the demise of the liberal tradition make similar points. In one section of “Science—Its Reality and Freedom” (*The Nineteenth Century and After*, 135 [February 1944]: 78-83), Polanyi argues that both Marxist and Fascist governments repudiate “all traditional guides to social action” (80); both Marxism and Fascism offer a “doctrine of social control” (82) which prevents ideas from growing and misjudges the importance of ideals in science and society.

²⁴Moodey comments that “residues” of religious experience serve as a background used to attend to tradition in science and other areas of culture.

²⁵The other letters are Mannheim to Polanyi, April 26, 1944 (B4, F11, MPP) and Polanyi to Mannheim, May 2, 1944 (B4, F11, MPP).

²⁶“Religious Pedagogy From Tender to Twilight Years: Parenting, Mentoring, and Pioneering Discoveries by Religious Masters as Viewed from within Polanyi’s Sociology and Epistemology of Science,” *Tradition and Discovery* 23:2 (1996-97): 15-36

²⁷“The Budapest Roots of Michael Polanyi’s Liberalism,” *Polanyiana* 19:1&2 (2010): 5-24.

²⁸“Polanyi, ‘Jewish Problems’ and Zionism,” *Tradition and Discovery* 32:1 (2005-06): 6-19.

²⁹*The Political Quarterly* 14 (January-March 1943): 33-45.

³⁰Polanyi to Mannheim, May 27, 1944 (B4, 11, MPP). It should be noted that Moodey does discuss Polanyi’s claims about the “baptized Jew.”

³¹Polanyi sometimes poses practices of supervision and comprehensive planning as “alternative methods of ordering human affairs” (see his *The Contempt of Freedom: The Russian Experiment and After* [London: Watts & Co, 1940; reprint, New York: Arno Press] 1975, 39). While supervision relies on and cultivates “guiding principles” (or transcendent values) and the liberty of individuals who re-appropriate and reform tradition, comprehensive planning does not rely upon guiding principles and the liberty of individuals relying on tradition. Polanyi’s discussions make quite clear that he believes “in a Liberal society there is a wide domain of activities in which ideas are cultivated under the supervision of organizations or public authorities” (*Contempt*, 37).

Tradition in the Work of Shils and Polanyi: A Few Comments

Steven Grosby

Key Words: Michael Polanyi, Edward Shils, Tradition, Human Action, Pattern Variables, Methodological Individualism

ABSTRACT

In the aftermath of, and improvement upon, Toward a General Theory of Action, there is to be found a philosophical problem lurking in Polanyi's and Shils' writings on tradition: in what ways the principle of methodological individualism should be qualified so as better to understand human action.

Dick Moodey's article on Edward Shils' and Michael Polanyi's analyses of tradition is a worthy contribution, not only for the historical background provided for both Polanyi's and Shils' intellectual preoccupations and their shared development of those preoccupations but also, and more importantly, for Polanyi's and Shils' accomplishments in advancing our understanding of human action. To reduce the many details of their overlapping efforts in order better to understand the relation between various forms of knowledge, tradition, and society to only one literary expression of those efforts, it is well known that Shils read and commented upon (in what surely must have been in an extraordinarily detailed way, as Shils was wont to do) a draft of *Personal Knowledge*. It seems to me that one can see Shils' hand at various places throughout that underappreciated work, most obviously from pages 208-211. I think, for example, that the stylistically awkward "meanwhile" introducing the last paragraph on page 208 likely indicates Polanyi's incorporation of Shils' comments directly into the manuscript of *Personal Knowledge*.

Moodey rightly points us in the direction of investigating further the different ways that Polanyi and Shils productively complicated our understanding of human action. It is important that he has done so, for the understanding of human action today is all too often mired in an antiquated simplicity precisely because the various ways that Polanyi and Shils complicated and, by so doing, further developed that understanding have been largely ignored. Nonetheless, one ought to undertake that investigation without any hagiographic prejudice; for to do so would be alien to the character of both men and their dedication to the advance of knowledge. We, thus, examine their work critically so as to clarify further the problems before us.

It is clear from Talcott Parsons' and Edward Shils' *Toward a General Theory of Action* (1951: 49) that one motivation for the formulation of the "Action Frame of Reference" and its "Pattern Variables" arose out of dissatisfaction with the "dichotomous classifications" of Ferdinand Tönnies' influential book *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*. The heuristic merit of Tönnies' categories "community" (*Gemeinschaft*) and "society" (*Gesellschaft*) and their respective forms of action of "essential will" (*Wesenwille*, an example of which is the tradition-bound action in a local village) and "arbitrary will" (*Kürwille*, an example of which is the calculation of self-interest in the market-place) is not called into question. However, Parsons and Shils rightly recognized that the contrasts between these categories were too elementary to describe human action adequately. They knew that the categories of social relation, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, and their respective forms of action pervade, or intermingle with, one another, and that they do so, in varying degrees, throughout all periods of

history. Thus, they set out in *Toward a General Theory* to differentiate further those dichotomous categories. In so doing, Parsons and Shils continued the work of Max Weber (1978: 24-26, 215-16), whose types of social action (instrumentally rational, value-rational, affectual, and traditional) and legitimate domination (rational, traditional, and charismatic) also differentiated, thereby properly complicating, Tönnies' dichotomies.

Despite the manifestly clumsy apparatus and obfuscating formulations of *Toward a General Theory*, its attempt, through the formulation of the pattern variables, to complicate, and thereby move beyond, Tönnies' schema was a step forward in our understanding of human action, and it deserves praise. Nonetheless, the place of tradition in human action was not sufficiently addressed. Not doing so was a marked deficiency. All one has to do is to glance at the dichotomies of the pattern variables of *Toward a General Theory* (affectivity— affective neutrality, self-orientation—collectivity-orientation, universalism—particularism, ascription—achievement, and specificity—diffusiveness) and one can see that tradition and the various conceptual problems that tradition implies (about some of which, see below) hover analytically over each of the contrasting categories and the relation between them. Even so, it is not fair to *Toward a General Theory* to say that it altogether ignored tradition as a factor in human action, for it is implied in the analysis of culture (see its Chapter 3). It is, however, fair to say that the abstractness of its analytical framework (and likely more) were obstacles to incorporating properly the place of tradition in human affairs. It is here where Polanyi's and Shils' subsequent intellectual development made an advance.

When Polanyi analyzes the fiduciary (hence, moral) commitment of, for example, a scientist, and the place of (a changing, developing) tradition in that commitment, and when Shils (1975: 111-26) differentiates different types or orientations of human action as personal, primordial, sacred, and civil and then further investigates the bearing of (a changing, developing) tradition on each of them (1981), they, too, are properly complicating Tönnies' categories of action. But they do so in a way that fundamentally fragments the analytical and historicist dichotomy of Tönnies' categories because of the place of tradition in their analyses. For example, the individual's calculation of his or her own advantage in the *gesellschaftliche* market-place rests upon the *gemeinschaftliche* traditions of a usually territorially bounded rule of law and honoring one's contract which, in turn, make the realization of that calculation possible. It should be noted that Polanyi and Shils were not the first to recognize the importance of tradition for many of the activities and social relations in modern life. It is certainly to be found in Weber's *Economy and Society*, in particular in his investigation of the on-going antinomies in religion and law, as can be seen respectively in his insistence that charismatic domination was not only in the past but also appears historically in the most diverse combinations (1978: 1133) and in his observation of the continuation of substantive rationality (e.g., natural law) in law (1978: 865-71). However, while the recognition of the on-going significance of tradition for social relations and individual action is found in Weber's work, he did not generalize upon that recognition. Doing so was the accomplishment of Polanyi and Shils.¹

Now, it may be that students of Polanyi's works take the above mentioned advances in our understanding for granted. However, while doing so, they should also acknowledge that, by and large, the contributions of Polanyi and Shils are ignored today. One can see this avoidance in the fashionable enthrallment with the category "modernity" and more recently "globalization." The objection raised here to this fashionable enthusiasm is not to deny—to resort to one side of the dichotomy of the pattern variables—an increased emphasis in human action on "self-orientation," "universalism," and "achievement." Nonetheless, traditions of varying kinds persist; and one should add, given Polanyi's and Shils' contributions, necessarily so. The recognition of that necessity exposes the complications of properly understanding human action—complications addressed by

Polanyi and Shils. Even though they have advanced our understanding of the role of tradition in human affairs, much work still needs to be done in investigating its place in activities today. After all, one should remember that the classic, but today still compelling, anthropological example of spontaneous order is language and its acquisition. Thus, the task facing us today is to re-focus our attention on better understanding non-market spontaneous orders and the traditions from which they draw or that make them possible, one example of which is the “scientific community” as described so compellingly by Polanyi.

Languages and other spontaneous orders force us to consider again the long-standing philosophical and anthropological problems of understanding what “culture” is and its relation to individual action. Although Moodey does not refer to the problem of culture *per se*, other than references to the unsatisfactorily formulated “cultural systems” in *Toward a General Theory*, the problem is implied in his discussion of tradition in Shils’ later work, specifically Moodey’s mention of the “exteriority” of traditions and individuals as “participants” in tradition. Surely, for example, a language exists outside, exterior to, the mind of any particular individual. What does it mean for it to exist outside the mind of any single individual? We know that a language can be materially embodied in a book; and that, when so materially embodied, it can contribute to its standardization, as when Luther translated the Bible into High German. But obviously this material embodiment of language in a book does not account for the exteriority of language. A language continues, remains “alive” or “animated,” only insofar as it exists in the minds and speech of a number of individuals, that is, the individual participates in the (tradition of) the language; and when he or she does so likely modifies it, even if only imperceptibly. No doubt, language is an obvious example of symbolic “exteriority.” I raise it here so that we do not become diverted from the problems before us of understanding both what culture is and its relation to human action by distracting terms like “group mind.”

As I noted earlier, the problem of culture for human action had been taken up in Chapter 3 of *Toward a General Theory*, although encumbered there by both the vocabulary of the “systems of value-orientation” and a mistaken or, at least misleading, emphasis on “imitation” and “identification” as explanations. Nonetheless, continuities between the analysis of culture in *Toward a General Theory* and Shils’ later work on tradition can be observed. In the former (p.162), the essence of culture is described as the “interpersonal generalization” made possible by symbols (or “symbolization”), while in Shils’ later work, as Moodey notes, culture is described as the “inter-individual structure” of collective self-consciousness. One immediately observes the continuity. But that continuity of “interpersonal generalization” and “inter-individual structure” is not, as Moodey seems to argue, Shils’ attempt to hang on to a remnant of a “group mind.” Shils rightly maintained the principle of methodological individualism, namely, that a collective self-consciousness (a shared understanding of the self, such that there is a “we,” for example, the recognition, with attendant self-classification, that one speaks the same language as another) or, for our purposes here, culture exists only in the brains and activities of individuals. Human action is the action of an individual (although perhaps complicated by occasional “outbreaks” of “contagious enthusiasm” of various kinds, including panic). And yet, the actions of individuals can be and often are co-ordinated; that is, individuals often act, in varying degrees, in concert with one, or in response to, another. Can the latter be adequately accounted for by explanations that are overly atomistic, specifically, as if the orientations of the mind were limited to the individual’s pursuit of only his or her own advantage—a limitation presumably arising from the behavioral impulse to pleasure (Grosby 2009)? Isn’t it the case that when an individual acts in concert with or in response to another individual other considerations or “symbolic properties” are recognized by the actors as they enter into (or are already found within) a social relation, however episodic? How are we to understand those other considerations or “symbolic properties”? Certainly, “objectivations” (a term that Shils took from Hans Freyer’s *Theory of Objective Mind: An Introduction to the*

Philosophy of Culture) or symbols—often expressed through, or the focus of, institutional arrangements, for example, law for a legal system—exist external to the minds of individuals but to which, when recognized, however tacitly, the actions of those individuals are oriented (or even “drawn up into,” as when one looks at the “objectivated mind” of an artist in his or her work of art). One can see the place of both the mind of the individual and “objective mind,” that is, symbol (which may, as in our previous examples of a book or a work of art, or may not, as with custom, be materially embodied), and their relation to one another in human action discussed in *Toward a General Theory* (see p.160; some of the formulations there are likely drawn from Freyer’s *Theory*).

There are thorny methodological and philosophical problems here that are by no means adequately dealt with by recourse to the putative explanations of “imitation,” “identification,” or, as one finds today, “practices”—all of which seem to me to end up avoiding the problems. A more valuable attempt to address the problems can be found in Karl Popper’s *Objective Knowledge*, especially in chapter 3, “Epistemology without a Knowing Subject.” This is not the place to take up these problems, other than to note, as I have stated on other occasions, that it seems to me that while the principle of methodological individualism has to be maintained, it also must be qualified. It will have to suffice here for the problem to have been raised indirectly by Moodey and now explicitly by me. However, I add, as I hope that I have made clear, that it also seems to me that one way to understand the concern common to Polanyi and Shils—the place of tradition in human affairs—was precisely this problem.

I conclude my remarks on Moodey’s stimulating and good paper with two further, but minor observations. The first is that the problems on Shils’ mind that made him so receptive to the thought of Michael Polanyi can be seen in Shils’ earliest writings from the late 1930s on consensus and deference. The problems had also earlier been on Parsons’ mind, as can be seen in his 1938 article “The Role of Ideas in Social Action”; but he did not follow up on them as did Polanyi and Shils. Second, I doubt very much that, as Moodey notes quoting Pooley, the memory of Karl Mannheim remained a haunting presence in Shils’ thought. I never saw any evidence for it. Frank Knight had too much influence on Shils for that to be so; and it may be that Knight’s (1982) ruminations on freedom and liberty were factors that also predisposed Shils to the thought of Polanyi.

Endnote

¹Mention should also be made here of the worthwhile differentiation of Tönnies’ category of *Gemeinschaft* both by Herman Schmalenbach (1977) in his analysis of the *Bund* and by Helmuth Plessner (1999) in *The Limits of Community*.

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The Young Shils

Stephen Turner

Key words: Michael Polanyi, Edward Shils, Karl Mannheim, tradition, ideology, Louis Wirth, University of Chicago

ABSTRACT

Edward Shils began as a sociologist under the close mentorship of Louis Wirth, with whom he collaborated on the translation of Karl Mannheim's Ideology and Utopia. After 1940, however, Shils' career, which had been focused on topics in sociology, notably the class and occupational structure of cities and on German Sociological Theory, took an apparent turn, which in 1946 led him into a relationship with Michael Polanyi, a half-time appointment at the London School of Economics, and a new intellectual direction. Part of the biographical background to this was personal: his relationship with Wirth ended, and with it his expectation of a Ph.D. and his role in the Sociology Department. Yet his new direction had Chicago roots in his work on Mannheim, and his relation to Frank Knight and the planning disputes of the 1930s and 40s.

Richard Moodey's fascinating discussion (2012) needs no addition, but it might be useful to say something about Edward Shils' personal trajectory that adds to his autobiography, and is relevant, though in obscure ways, to his motivations in relation both to Parsons and Polanyi. The story of Shils' relation to Talcott Parsons is still unwritten, and may never be fully understood. Clearly there was a moment of intellectual excitement during the creation of the general theory of action. Shils' own account of their work together captures some of this. But there is a biographical background to Shils' (however brief) enthusiasm that sheds some small light on the relation of Shils and Polanyi and on Shils' unusual and indeed frenetic efforts to connect to the larger intellectual community, represented for him by Polanyi, and on the specific form that this took.

The Illusion

Sociology in the postwar 1940s in the United States was a field on the upswing. The vast new demand for college degrees and graduate education produced by the GI bill allowed scholars who were barely surviving on the margins of academic life during the 1930s and the war to gain secure appointments and thrive. The field itself, its status raised by interdisciplinary wartime research, some of which Shils participated in, and which Parsons benefitted from, was newly confident and hopeful. The generation of students that came into the field at this time were energized by the idea that they were destined to make sociology into a science, as part of the larger development of what were being called the behavioral sciences. Psychology and especially social psychology were the intellectual ballast for this optimism, which represented a change from sociology's close relation to economics in the prewar period.

On the surface, Shils was a full participant in this new mood. He was employed at the University of Chicago, which retained its traditional status in sociology, at least in the world at large. He had co-translated *Ideology and Utopia* (Mannheim [1929] 1936) and translated *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* (Mannheim [1935] 1940). His sometime mentor Louis Wirth was a prominent urban sociologist and played a large role in the founding of the International Sociological Association in the immediate postwar period. Shils' wartime work on primary groups fit the new mode of social psychological thinking. He was an active

presenter to German post-war summer schools for sociology, and a major figure in introducing “American” sociology to the London School of Economics. For Europe and Britain, he was a representative figure. His collaboration with Parsons cemented his reputation in the minds of American sociology students. Although the book itself, *Toward a General Theory of Action* (Parsons and Shils 1951) was something of a failure, even at Harvard, it left a long tail: it is still cited for its definitions of norms and values.

But beneath the surface, the story was quite different. In the 1930s, Shils was a marginal figure in the Department of Sociology at Chicago. Wirth employed him as a research assistant in a project of surveying German sociological theory from 1933 to 1935. This was followed by a year on a grant under the urbanism committee, a year as a Marshall Field fellow, and a year at Columbia as a Research Fellow in Teacher’s College in 1937-38. In 1938 he returned as an Instructor in Social Science in the College of the University of Chicago, meaning that he was not part of the Sociology Department. He was also young. He turned thirty on July 1, 1940.

As Moodey explains, it was Shils’ relationship to Wirth that led to Shils’ collaboration in the translating and in some respects transforming of Mannheim’s *Ideology and Utopia*. This was followed by his solo translation of Mannheim’s *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction*, published in 1940. The relationship was hierarchical and in a sense exploitative, as many relations of student and mentor were at the time and at that University. Alan Sica recalled Shils telling him “bitterly, that Wirth had paid him \$90 to translate *Ideologie und Utopie* during one summer when Shils was otherwise hard up for money, that Wirth wrote the intro to the published translation with Shils’ help, and that even though the book sold very well indeed for decades, Shils never saw a penny of royalties. But he also said that he was so entirely entranced by Mannheim at the time (though later he would badmouth him in characteristic fashion) that he would go to some local diner every day and spend the entire day translating and have a wonderful time of it.”¹ Kettler and Meja note that

Archival evidence also indicates that Shils composed the lecture notes for Wirth’s first course on sociology of knowledge (LWP/66:2 and Shils Interview, 25.8.67. AA). The documentary record is unequivocal. All in Shils’ unmistakable handwriting: analytical reading notes on Mannheim, Grünwald, Plessner, and others; the analytical outline and the bulk of lecture notes for the first offering of Wirth’s Sociology of Knowledge course in 1935 and lectures on intellectuals. Even after his departure from Chicago, Shils collaborated with Wirth on issues arising out of *Ideology and Utopia*. Wirth’s 1937 rejoinder to Robert MacIver’s critique of Mannheim in Atlantic City rests on a detailed memorandum from Shils (LWP/65:4; LWP/67:2; Kettler and Meja 1995: 241-42n7).

Wirth continued to teach this course; in 1946, it was one of his main teaching contributions.

By 1946, Shils was far removed from this relationship. Although he was secure, he was outside the department: an Associate Professor of Sociology in the College, who had taken a half-time position at the LSE. Under the organizational scheme of the University of Chicago, this position in the College was a status outside and independent of the Department of Sociology. He was not among the “graduate officers” of the department. Indeed, matters were worse. His courses were not listed with the department. He was a pariah, for reasons that take some explaining. It is this period in which Shils seems to develop his distinctive intellectual concerns, especially those which come to align him with Michael Polanyi.

Jefferson Pooley has written an extensive discussion of Shils' turn against Karl Mannheim during this period (2007), a turn which was also a turn in the direction of Michael Polanyi, whom he met only at the end of it. Textual evidence of influences is scant during this period, but as Pooley notes, Mannheim was being pilloried in some of the most influential books of the period, such as Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies* (1950), which listed Mannheim among the enemies. David Kettler and Volker Meja, writing from Mannheim's point of view, discuss Shils' earlier defense of Mannheim. What follows is to some extent a contribution to the discussion of the problem of Shils' apparent turn, and what he took from Mannheim in relation to tradition and ideology, but with an emphasis on the obscure problem of his relation to Wirth.

The Newcomb Episode

Shils met Robert Merton in December 1938. They were fellow Philadelphians, similar in ethnic background, but not in class. Shils had gone to Penn; Merton to Temple. They had an arm's length relationship over many years. There is a curious footnote to this: Merton was Karl Polanyi's strong supporter for foundation grants in the 1950s, and professed his profound admiration for *The Great Transformation* (Polanyi 1944) in his private letters to funders on Karl's behalf. Nothing in Merton's published work expressed this enthusiasm. But Merton had a long record of involvement with and support of scientists' movements on the Left and this did leak into print (cf. Turner 2007).

In 1940, Merton was Chair of the Sociology Department at Tulane, as part of an odd practice in the department of appointing and promoting junior scholars who would serve as department chair and enticing them by an elevated rank, in this case Associate Professor. In fact, Merton, who was the same age as Shils, had a quite astonishing record by this time, aided by his publications with Pitirim Sorokin. His own description on his appointment in 1938 listed a book, *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England* and "Some twenty articles published in various American, English, French, and Italian journals in the fields of sociology, history of science and scientific method." He also mentioned "Translations from the Italian: published in various international journals" and "fifty or sixty extensive book reviews."² Shils, in contrast, had a few grant reports, three translations, and four minor articles.

At the time, Tulane had a very prestigious sister institution for women, Sophie Newcomb College. Shils applied. The application is revealing. Shils presents himself as a conventional sociologist. His grant work, beyond his study of German sociological theory for Wirth, was about the occupational structure of cities. His interest, he said, was in researching the middle class in cities, something he could continue in New Orleans. The cover letter, written in January of 1940, promised that he will have the Ph.D. by the end of the year. According to Shils' letter to Merton, Wirth encouraged Shils to apply for the job, and Shils tells Merton that Wirth's "account of New Orleans and the problems which it offers for research made the possibility of going there genuinely attractive."³

Lewis Wirth had been appointed assistant professor at Tulane University in 1928, fresh out of graduate school. He had returned to Chicago, where he had received his Ph.D., in 1931, shortly before Shils himself arrived. Wirth may have believed he had some influence at Tulane, but perhaps he was mistaken. Although he had been well-paid there and had received a prestigious Social Science Research Council grant, he had created a problem for the closely linked School of Social Work by giving a talk on "companionate marriage," a controversial topic of the time (cf. Davis 2008), that was reported in the newspapers and had offended the Catholic charities in this Catholic city. This was significant: Wirth was appointed in the School of Social

Work. The Catholics complained to the administration and threatened to suspend co-operation.⁴ In any case, the position Shils applied for went to a Harvard man with an M.A., Nicholas Demerath, who was appointed as an instructor and would not receive his Ph.D. until 1942.

In 1940, in short, Shils was eager to embark on a conventional career in sociology, in a position at a good women's school, a pattern that was well-established: W. F. Ogburn, F. S. Chapin, and Harry Elmer Barnes, prominent figures of the time, all had started in such schools. Something then happened. It has long been a puzzle as to why Shils never finished a Ph.D., and he brushed off the question in later years. But there was a pivotal event in Shils' life. He explains it in his autobiography in these somewhat guarded terms:

I thought and still think that the disputes centering on Robert Hutchins, of which the polemics of Wirth, Gideonse and Knight against Hutchins were only one, did the University much harm. During the war, I wrote to that effect to a friend who indiscreetly summarized my views to another friend and so the message passed from one person to another to the point where it became, "Edward Shils thinks that Louis is foolish." That is the form in which it came to Wirth. Naturally he was offended. That was a sad ending to a relationship from which I have benefitted and for which I am grateful (2006: 46).

This understates the situation. Shils was completely dependent on Wirth for any sort of future in Sociology. On the (handwritten) vita he sent to Merton, Shils listed two other sociology references from Chicago: Ernest Burgess and Earl Johnson. Johnson was powerless, and not even a part of the department (he spent his career running the interdisciplinary MA for the Division of Social Science); Burgess was not close to Shils, and Shils later had harsh words for him. The promised Ph.D. never materialized.

The break with Wirth must have been brutal, but it was private. After Wirth's death, the department, desperate to catch up to Columbia and Harvard, and in need of a theorist, discussed Shils. A memo referred to the need to knock down barriers. As Hughes explained,

By knocking down the barriers I mean fuller use of the university's resources outside the department. One of the first things I did last fall was to speak to Ed Shils about listing his courses in our department. They were so listed. I am glad that the department is minded to have us pursue this collaboration further and have, in accordance with the recent motion, written to Shils on the point.⁵

This is revealing on many levels, but one point is obvious: Shils had no friends in the department, or this situation would not have gone on for over a decade.

Wirth had stood in his way not only as an enemy, but as someone with almost identical interests. Wirth is, of course, remembered as an Urban Sociologist. But this was not how he saw himself. Herbert Blumer recounts a "personal conversation" about Wirth's own aspirations just before his death in 1952. He spoke to Herbert Blumer:

Even though he had already attained the highest eminence in the field of sociology, a brilliant future still lay ahead of Dr. Wirth. In a personal conversation a few days before his death he had indicated his intention to restrict the broad range of his interests and to focus his

efforts more centrally on the development of systematic social theory (Blumer 1952: 69).

Elsewhere he confirmed this primary interest in theory, and added that

My second interest is in what is known as the sociology of knowledge. This is a field which is misnamed and with the misnaming of which, unfortunately, I have had something to do. It should rather be called the sociology of intellectual life. You may recall that I translated and wrote a rather extensive introduction to Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia* and thus introduced this work to the English-speaking public. I have written very little in this field myself, aside from an article or two, but I have underway a monograph on the sociology of science which I hope will have some value. I have also directed a number of Doctors' theses in this field, such as one on the sociology of art and another one on the sociology of literature which begin to open these fields to empirical inquiry (Odum [1951] 1969: 231).

Shils was erased from this recollection. But it is notable that Wirth taught a seminar in Sociology of Knowledge during the 1940s.⁶ Shils later taught his NEH Seminar on the topic under the title "Sociology of Intellectuals."⁷ Their professed interests, as distinct from what Wirth was best known for and published on, were very close.

Ideology and Tradition

In 1941, Shils published a short paper on Mannheim's *Man and Society*, which he had translated. The paper appeared in an odd place: *The Journal of Liberal Religion*. But it appeared in the pages following another paper that was very consequential, Robert Merton's "Karl Mannheim and the Sociology of Knowledge." Despite Merton's somewhat oily praise of Mannheim, the text as a whole was a devastating hatchet job, showing Merton at his most destructive and erudite best. Merton focused on the problem of reflection, of just how ideas were supposed to reflect social position, and on the idea of total ideologies, that is to say the encompassing worldviews that were supposed to characterize groups.

Merton showed that the notion of reflection was incoherent. He lists Mannheim's usages:

- . . . follow inevitably and unwittingly from certain *causal determinants* (G, p. 54).
- . . . *bound up with and grow out of* a certain social reality (G, p. 72).
- . . . *in harmony with it*. The same estrangement goes on with reference to knowledge. . . (G, p. 76).
- . . . rooted in a definite *Weltanschauung* and has progressed *in close connection with* definite political interests (G, p. 148).
- . . . outlook *in accordance with the structural relationship* of the groups representing it (G, p. 199).
- . . . transformed *in close conjunction with* social forces. It is *never by accident* that they appear at given moments in the social process (G, p. 223; Merton [1941] 1968: 553; italics added by Merton).

These are either empty metaphors or unprovable hypotheses: Mannheim would have liked to show that there were causal determinants, but the best he could do was describe the vague connections Merton highlights in italics. But it is the concept of total ideology that is Merton's main target, for it is unclear where its application

ends, or why it would end. Why should science be exempt? Why should Mannheim's own theory be exempt? What we might call the liberal theory of ideology, to which Shils (and Polanyi) later adhered, made a sharp distinction between ideological and non-ideological thinking. For them there could be an end to ideology—not so for the Mannheimian notion of total ideology.

What was Shils thinking at the time? We can glean some clues from the paper that came in the next pages. Shils is explicitly not writing a critique of Mannheim, and the text he is discussing is not primarily about ideology. Nevertheless, Shils' treatment gives us some clues to his attitude toward Mannheim at this crucial point, and about how Shils was thinking about the larger problem of ideology. The framework is one that Shils, Merton, and Polanyi all shared: the problem of planning.⁸ And by this time the crucial arguments are already present: there was no need to wait for Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* of 1944. As Shils says,

Observation of the totalitarian regimes has led to the view, widely held, that planning and dictatorship are identical, that planning necessarily involves dictatorial power, and furthermore that the expansion of governmental control over private economic activity must end ultimately not only in the loss of entrepreneurial liberties but of all other significant liberties as well. (1941: 151)

Shils characterizes Mannheim as seeking to refute this argument. And although Shils praises the book for its seriousness and depth, his comments indicate, in a gentler but quite explicit way, that he thinks this book is marred by the same kinds of problems that Merton points out: that crucial issues are passed over blithely, as when Shils notes that "He is rather light-heartedly optimistic about the possibilities of parliamentary control over bureaucratic experts" (1941: 152).

The praise is in any case often double-edged: he begins the review by commenting that "Mannheim places himself in the line which proceeds directly from the French 18th and the English 19th centuries" (1941: 148), but does so in the language of social science. The fact that Hayek was at the same time writing on the abuse of reason is revealing: by this time there was something naive and even sinister about promoting planning in the name of rationality (Ebenstein 2001: 107-108). When Shils comes to the shortcomings of the book, he says they are

numerous: the formulations are seldom free from ambiguity; the propositions remain too frequently on the level of generality and are accompanied neither by the corroborative evidence which is available in many cases nor by illustrations which would heighten the plausibility of those propositions which are still in the hypothetical stage (1941: 153).

This is to say in a mild way what Merton said in a brutal way about *Ideology and Utopia*.

The Bridge to Ideology and Tradition

Shils, in short, had all the material he needed to repudiate Mannheim before he went to England. That he was further influenced by the more radical attacks of Popper, Hayek, and ultimately Michael Polanyi, there can be little doubt. But, armed with his knowledge of the thought of Frank Knight, himself an active polemicist, Shils was already deeply engaged with the issues that divided these thinkers. Indeed, Knight is cited in Shils' paper on *Man and Society*. Nevertheless, there is an open question about the extent to which Shils and even

Michael Polanyi himself was influenced by Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*, an issue Moodey captures nicely by quoting the comment by Nye, that "Mannheim's sociology of knowledge is the shark cruising beneath the waters of Polanyi's argument" (Nye 2011: 280).

With Shils, the issue is superficially clear: his later writing on ideology pointedly did not use Mannheim's categories, and endorsed a "liberal" conception that contrasted ideological to non-ideological thinking (Shils 1968). When the mass ideological parties lost their grip in the 1950s with the end of the classic proletariat, that was "the end of ideology" of that kind. Even writers on the Left at the time, such as Otto Kirchheimer, understood this when they complained about the interest-based parties that took over in the 1950s: they were nostalgic for the coherence and attachment of the unifying all-encompassing parties of the 1920s, and regarded the new parties as alienating (Kirchheimer 1961: xxix; Turner 2011). What was missed was precisely the kind of ideological party of the past, which was tied to a vast set of workers' institutions that promoted this viewpoint.

Mannheim's conception was more encompassing, because he wished to apply it to liberalism, which lacked these institutions and disclaimed such ideas as a party line, and to conservatism, which lacked even the kind of articulation of ideas found in liberalism. But his terms are confusing, and there are multiple notions to be found there. The translators intended to clean some of this up, and to some extent they did, but Mannheim wished the book to be understood as a kind of open-ended experiment rather than a closed argument, so he resisted. The net result was confusion.

Some of the confusion is with Mannheim's terms. What he calls utopias are what nowadays would be called ideologies. Utopian elements are ideas and values that arise in social groups and organize experience, but at the same time represent a wish that goes beyond experience, and potentially lead to demands that burst through the existing order. What Mannheim calls ideology, in contrast, works like this: "Thought becomes illuminated when a concrete situation is penetrated, not merely through acting and doing, but also through the thinking which must go with them" (Mannheim [1929] 1936: 128). Mannheim's emphasis was on the social location of thought, but he pairs this with the term "concreteness."

This is the novelty in our approach, also in the field of logic and in the analysis of concrete human thinking. The point of departure of the "sociology of knowledge" is the "connectedness to existence (*Seinsverbundenheit*)," the "situational determination" (*Situationsgebundenheit*) of thinking—and not "thinking in general" (Mannheim *Mensch und Gesellschaft* (1935: 164-5, cited in Kettler & Meja 1995: 194-95).

Curiously, this passage disappears from Shils' translation of *Man and Society* (Kettler & Meja 1995: 195).

The term "concrete human thinking" is a tip off. An ideology, as Mannheim used the term, was associated with something very concrete—with a form of activity, or in current terms, a practice. He confused the issue by borrowing quasi-Marxist language suggesting some sort of *Überbau* relation. He confused it more by borrowing neo-Kantian language and introducing the notion of total ideology, which as Merton noted seems to have no limits, and to apply to thinking in general.

Polanyi opposed what he saw as an ideological, or as Mannheim would perhaps have said, utopian understanding of science. Bernal and the Left saw science as technology: their "wish" was for society to be

organized scientifically, meaning planned, which they believed they could easily do. This was a wish with great attractive power, as Polanyi saw. But it represented for him a misunderstanding of science. And here there is a certain convergence with Mannheim: Polanyi thought that science needed instead to be understood as a concrete activity together with the thinking that goes with it, to use Mannheim's phrase.

Whether Polanyi read Mannheim's book, or read it this way, we do not know. But in this mish-mash we do find ideas that stay both with Shils and Polanyi: the interest in concrete acting and doing and the thinking that goes with them, and the critique of ideological thinking. This is in some sense the core of the notion of tradition and it is Polanyi's startling and radical application of the term to the activity of science itself. This is a weak reed on which to construct an argument. But in fact there were many strands that connect these thinkers within the ferment of the time. This ferment, which as the example of Knight shows, was already bubbling in Chicago in the late 1930s, produced the great texts of Hayek, Popper, Oakeshott, Eliot, and the rest in the 40s. Shils, academically orphaned, was well-prepared for this moment and seized it.

Endnotes

¹Personal Communication, March 22, 2013.

²Merton File, Biographical Record, University News Bureau, Louisiana Research Collection, University Archives, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

³Edward Shils to Robert Merton, January 18, 1940, Merton RK Collection, Box 79, Folder 4, Columbia University Rare Books & Manuscript Library.

⁴Tulane University Archives, Louisiana Research Collection, University Archives, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

⁵Everett Hughes, Chairman, March 14, 1953. Memorandum to Department of Sociology, p. 2. Philip W. Hauser papers, Box 14, Folder 11, Department of Special Collections, The Joseph Regenstein Library, The University of Chicago.

⁶Kettler and Meja make a point of the difference between a sociology of intellectuals and one of knowledge, and criticize Wirth for opting for the weaker formulation (1995: 234-35). But this was Shils' choice as well, and this was not unconnected to his view of ideology. Intellectuals for him had a special role in relation to the central ideals of society that led to their antinomianism. And as Moody notes, this was a point that Polanyi came to accept.

⁷Scope Note, Louis Wirth Papers, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

⁸Merton, crucially, is on the other side: he was to write at the same time that the fulfillment of science was possible only under Communism, a claim he later deleted (Turner 2007).

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Reply to Comments of Grosby, Mullins, and Turner on Polanyi, Shils, and Tradition

Richard W. Moodey

Key Words: Michael Polanyi, Edward Shils, Steven Grosby, Phil Mullins, Steven Turner, complexity, tradition, religion card, orphan card.

ABSTRACT

This is a brief response to selected points made by the commentators on my essay.

“The child is father to the man.” This famous line from Wordsworth’s “My Heart Leaps Up,” perhaps modified for contemporary readers to “The child is parent to the adult,” points to one dimension of the valuable complexity Steven Grosby discusses. Stephen Turner also alludes to this aspect of complexity when he points out that events in the life of the young Shils are useful in “obscure ways” in helping us to understand the life and thought of the older man. And when Phil Mullins warns against overplaying the religion card, he is correctly pointing to the obscurity of the connection between the young Polanyi’s five-year period of being a “completely converted Christian” and his mature thinking.

Polanyi was acutely aware of the complexity and obscurity of the relations between his earlier life and his later thought. In “The Personal Mode of Meaning,” he admitted that he was unable to make *all* of his tacit assumptions explicit. He knew, in a general way, that the residues of his earlier experiences were “the matrix”—the metaphorical mother—of all his later intellectual activities, and that this matrix was subject to continual modifications. “All my amendments to these original terms,” he wrote, “will remain embedded in the system of my previous beliefs. Worse still, I cannot precisely say what these beliefs are” (PK 252). He was probably more aware than most people of the parental relationships between his earlier experiences and his later thinking, but even for him the precise nature of those relations were obscure. If they were hidden from him, how much more deeply are they hidden from us.

But there is a dialectical tension here. It is indeed a mistake to overplay the religion card in trying to understand Polanyi’s mature mind, and equally a mistake to overplay the “orphan card” in trying understand the later life and thought of Shils. But it is also a mistake to fail to recognize that these are cards that we must play. They are among the subsidiaries *from* which an interpreter attends *to* the meanings of their texts. Each sentence and paragraph they wrote was the result of thinking that had a *from-to* structure, and we who seek to understand the things they wrote are less able than they were to make the tacit dimensions of their thinking fully explicit. The obscurity of the ways that the child is father to the man is a necessary consequence of the tacit character of the subsidiaries *from* which a writer attends *to* a focal object.

The obscurity is not total. If it were, all attempts to understand the thinking of Polanyi, Shils, Tönnies or Augustine would be futile. Nye’s metaphor is useful: there are sharks in these waters. Grosby is probably right to say that the memory of Mannheim was not really a “haunting presence” in Shils’ later life, but I have to think that Shils’ memory of his early enthusiasm for Mannheim was one of the sharks that was

cruising beneath the surface of his thinking. Similarly, I have to think that Polanyi's period of enthusiasm for Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy was some kind of fish, if not necessarily a shark, swimming beneath the surface of his later thinking. Not every creature swimming beneath the surface of a person's thinking is a shark. The sharks are the ones the thinker tries to keep at a distance.

It is not just the child who is father to the man, or the young woman who is mother to the old woman. "Father," "mother," "grandfather," and "grandmother" are words that point to the intergenerational dimension of cognitive parenthood. Texts are not simply "handed down" from generation to generation. Reading them results in new conceptions in the fertile minds of the readers. Each reader attributes meaning to these texts, partly on the basis of the constraints imposed by membership in a speech community, and partly on the basis of the matrix of tacit beliefs that reside in his or her unique personal background. Arguing about what the writers of these texts meant to say is not an exercise in futility. These conversations are what keep traditions alive.

REVIEWS

Murray A. Rae, Editor, *Critical Conversations: Michael Polanyi and Christian Theology*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012. Pp. x + 189. ISBN 978-1-61097-727-2. \$23.00 pb.

Polanyi's interest in Christianity and the interest of many Polanyians in Christianity is intriguing, although some have found it disconcerting. Polanyi surprises many with his references to Augustine, St. Paul, the Christian scheme of Fall and Redemption, etc. Rae's collection of essays adds to a considerable literature on Polanyi's ideas in relation to Christianity. But Christianity is not one dimensional, as the essays here clearly demonstrate. The nine authors, many familiar to Polanyians, discuss an array of topics, and my brief comments, which often use the authors' words, mention only a few elements of these interesting essays.

In "Knowledge in Science and Religion: A Polanyian Perspective," Tony Clark suggests, "In *Meaning*, Polanyi argues against the rigid distinctions that ... separate the arts and the sciences, and science and religion" (19). While Polanyi's epistemology was especially influenced by his work in the sciences, it can readily be applied to all other areas of scholarly endeavor. In its focus on persons, it has a certain integrating function among all fields of study. Each field has a "body of beliefs and practices" and "a community of faith." Clark continues, "... in radical discontinuity with an Enlightenment view, Polanyi shows that the kinds of knowledge that are established in science stand in substantial continuity with the kinds of knowledge established in religion" (31). Having presented this continuity, he concludes, "... this

essay leaves open vast and pressing questions about the truth claims of different religious communities" (32) for future discussions—a challenge to future authors.

R. T. Allen shows, in "The Dialectic of Assimilation and Adaptation Revisited," how our tacit and innate knowledge, from childhood forward, is assimilated and adapted to new experiences: "We are all, and necessarily so, tacit metaphysicians and epistemologists, forming, employing, and adapting tacit ontologies, and standards for knowing" (35, fn3). In this light, Allen reviews the impersonal approaches found in Scholasticism with its dependence upon the Greeks and the "rekindling" of this dependence in the Renaissance followed by the Enlightenment (53-54). In contrast to this impersonal approach, the Apostle John and Augustine see "love" to be the essence of God that needs application "in detail" to philosophy, psychology, and other disciplines. But "Christian philosophy and theology has too often assimilated itself to, instead of adapting, an inadequate philosophy" (48). Allen's thesis is that "knowing is an expression of love [which] has the corollary that, *ceteris paribus*, ignorance is the result of lack of love and error that of hatred" (53). Allen's thinking seems, in my view, to have much in common with Esther Meek's affirmations in *Loving to Know*.

Alan Torrance's "Society, Skepticism, and the Problem of Moral Inversion," as its title suggests, is an effort to sort out Polanyi's sometimes confusing discussions of "moral inversion" and political order and build on these discussions. Torrance suggests connections between Polanyi's

ideas and ideas in Reformed epistemologists and Barth. He notes the implications of Polanyi's affirmation of a stratified universe for his social philosophy. Torrance tries to address the sharp criticisms of Polanyi's claims about "moral inversion" by Zdzislaw Najder (in his essay in *Intellect and Hope*), an effort that would be much stronger if he considered D. M. Yeager's essay on moral inversion and Najder's misreading (TAD 29:1). Finally, Torrance turns to questions about Christian revelation and the political order.

In "The Theological Promise of Michael Polanyi's Project," Lincoln Harvey first accuses "modern Western society" of tacitly embracing an "atheistic character" (57) as is reflected, for example, in assumptions of figures like James Watson (of DNA double-helix fame), who regards human beings as "little more than sacks of water and chemicals fizzing around" (57). Such an account is problematic, "not only because the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ actually exists, but also because the pre-existing definition of God places an unbearable burden upon the scientists' shoulders" (58). Scientists like Watson are too ready to play God. Harvey debunks the "view-from-nowhere" (63) just as Polanyi critiques scientific objectivism. However, Polanyi's realistic epistemology also affirms "the reality of an *objective truth*" which "stands independent of our knowing it" (65). We make contact with reality and truth is known over time. Polanyi's stance differs sharply from not only objectivists, but also from relativists for whom there is "an unavoidable *pollution* of our motives" (65). Thus Harvey argues Polanyi's ideas have important theological promise and his notions about fragile epistemic progress fit with a Christian view that human knowledge is part of divine creation.

Peter Forster's "Michael Polanyi and Karl

Barth: A Creative Congruence?" suggests tacit powers can be used "to illustrate and shape our knowledge of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ" (102). Concerning Scripture, it "sets boundary conditions for the possibility of human expression at the lower level," and "the meaning of the words of Scripture *in their purpose as Scripture* would be given from the higher level of God's revelation of Himself" (103). Concerning anthropology, both Polanyi and Barth summon man as a rational creature "to responsible choice" (105). This shortest of chapters (15 pages) contrasts starkly with the voluminous writings of Barth and is a thought-provoking essay for Barth fans.

"Truth and Dialogue: Polanyi, Gadamer, and Theological Hermeneutics," by the late David J. Kettle, the longest chapter here (34 pages), contrasts our "Cartesian habits of imagination" (treated in his essay in TAD 27:1, 22-32) with Gadamer's "horizons of questionableness." For more on Kettle's thought, see Meek's recent book review in TAD (39:1, 74-76) treating Kettle's posthumously published *Western Culture in Gospel Context: Towards the Conversion of the West: Theological Bearings for Mission and Spirituality*.

"Science Meets Violence: An Anthropological Comparison of the Thought of Michael Polanyi and René Girard" by Bruce Hamill explores the compatibility of Polanyi's thought, which links science and religion and has "often been regarded as a savior of theological epistemology," with René Girard's thought which has "reopened discussion on atonement and the theology of the cross" (141).

Paul Weston's "Michael Polanyi and the Writings of Lesslie Newbigin" provides a careful

analysis of Newbigin, showing his use of Polanyi and traditional ideas of Christian revelation, with particular interest in Newbigin's later missiology. Newbigin, following Polanyi, challenges those with religious faith to realize that there is "a reality which is not in my mind but 'out there.' And the proof of this is my willingness to publish and test it in all relevant situations" (173). Religious claims are made with universal intent; they must be tested for a correspondence to reality, just as scientific claims must be tested by a public community. "[I]t follows that truth—which Polanyi defines as contact with an independent and hidden reality that manifests itself in the future in indeterminate and unexpected ways—is not the property solely of the empirical sciences."¹ Such reality suggests that only one religious interpretation can be true. Thus, religions should compete convivially in the public arena to demonstrate, as we move towards the future, which one is the Polanyian truth. Each religion must garner its most passionate and focal knowledge to establish itself as this truth. This heuristic process seems to preclude a strong claim today that many religions are "true" in different ways. Newbigin's adaptation of Polanyi in my interpretation brings a new challenge to this modern notion of the validity of religious pluralism. Moreover, Newbigin concludes, based on Polanyi's philosophy, that religions have as much claim to "truth" as does science. Christians and churches should gain confidence that their claims to truth are as valid as the scientists' (173). That is, Christian belief cannot be treated only as a "personal" decision, but must be promulgated with universal intent (175).

On one hand, this book does not explore very directly what I believe is the major issue for Christian Polanyians, namely the nature and extent of the authority of the Scriptures. Are the Scriptures the very word of God—written, inerrant

and infallible when properly understood and the ultimate authority for every area to which they speak? Or are they one authority among many? I do not see a place or category in Polanyi's work that allows a fixed, infallible authority, and this will be a problem for some Christians. On the other hand, this book, far more than I anticipated, shows confluences between Christian theology and aspects of Polanyi's thought. For any Christian who is a student of Polanyi, this book is a must-read. For those who are students of other authors discussed in this book, the authors' "Christian take" is of interest. For other Polanyians, this book certainly broadens *and deepens* the Polanyian conversation about modern epistemology and culture.

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¹Mark T. Mitchell, *Michael Polanyi: The Art of Knowing*, (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006): 100.

Notes on Contributors

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Richard W. Moodey received his Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Chicago, and has taught at Loyola University of Chicago, Allegheny College (Meadville, PA), and Gannon University (Erie, PA). He is currently a professor emeritus from Allegheny, and a visiting professor at Gannon, where he is serving as the interim chair of the Department of Criminal Justice and Social Work.

Phil Mullins is Professor Emeritus at Missouri Western State University and is also Editor Emeritus of *TAD*. He has written essays connecting Polanyi or Polanyian ideas with other thinkers, including H. Richard Niebuhr, Marjorie Grene, Harry Prosch, and Charles Sanders Peirce. He is particularly interested in the historical development of Polanyi's philosophical perspective.

Franklin E. (Ed) Payne, M.D. graduated from Mercer University (B.S.) in 1965 and the Medical College of Georgia (M.D.) in 1969, where he also did Family Medicine training 1973-1975. He served on the faculty for 25 years at the same medical school where he retired as Associate Professor of Family Medicine in 2000. In 1980, he began writing in medical ethics, co-founding a journal, two newsletters, and a website (www.bmei.org).

Stephen Turner is Distinguished University Professor of Philosophy at the University of South Florida. He has written extensively on Polanyi, most recently a review essay on Nye's *Michael Polanyi and His Generation*, "Polanyi Defanged," in *Social Studies of Science* 42:6 (December 2012): 945-953. He was a participant in Edward Shils' NEH Summer Seminar on the Sociology of Intellectuals and has written on Shils as well.

WWW Polanyi Resources

The Polanyi Society web site (polanysisociety.org/ or polanysisociety.com/) provides information about Polanyi Society membership and meetings. The site also contains the following: (1) digital archives containing all issues of *Tradition and Discovery* and its predecessor publications of the Polanyi Society going back to 1972; (2) indices listing *Tradition and Discovery* authors, reviews and reviewers; (3) the history of Polanyi Society publications; (4) information on *Appraisal* and *Polanyiana*, two sister journals with special interest in Michael Polanyi's thought; (5) a link to the "Guide to the Papers of Michael Polanyi," which provides an orientation to archival material housed in the Special Collections Research Center of the University of Chicago Library, Chicago, IL 60637; (6) photographs of Polanyi; (7) links to a number of Polanyi essays (available on the Polanyi Society web site and other sites), Polanyi's Duke Lectures (1964), as well as audio files for Polanyi's McEnerney Lectures (1962), and Polanyi's conversation with Carl Rogers (1966).

Electronic Discussion List

The Polanyi Society supports an electronic discussion group that explores implications of the thought of Michael Polanyi. Anyone interested can join. To join yourself, go to the following address: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/polanyi_list/join. If you have difficulty, send an e-mail to James van Pelt (james.vanpelt@yale.edu) and someone will see that you are added to the list.

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