

The Calling of Person and Tradition: Clues to a Post-Critical Science of Administration

Michael Polanyi and the Post-Critical Turn

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The logic of tacit knowing emphasizes that knowledge is personal - not individual in an existentialist manner. A *person*, in such a world, is never absolutely free but must submit to a background. A *person*, therefore, is the responsible expression of relationships - to other persons, to situation, and to *tradition*.

Tradition, as described by Michael Polanyi, is self-modifying, for a person who submits to *tradition* puts it into practice. Yet, by interpreting it to rely on it, that person necessarily modifies it; *tradition*, like *person*, is dynamic and alive.

By tacitly relying on a background to focus on a comprehensive foreground, both *person* and *tradition* demonstrate the heuristic power of tacit knowing and the mutual adjustment of individual initiative.

In public administration, such a post-critical understanding of persons, and their relationships with each other and the world around them, may be seen in the writing of a number of scholars. As examples of an understanding of tradition as self-modifying, this paper highlights authors who find the spontaneous order of a traditional approach in intellectual networks, generally; who point to the constitutional tradition as a source of legitimacy for public administration in the United States; who find common law reasoning useful to support administrative discretion and to inform administrative decision making more broadly; and who find the constitutional tradition supportive of a civil, rather than a purposive, association of the state. Likewise, the harmonious particularity of personhood may be seen in the applied phenomenology of several scholars, in the reflective work of others, and in the indeterminate possibilities evident in administrative conservatorship where *persons* act responsibly on behalf of an administrative *tradition*.

In *The Desire of the Nations*, Oliver O'Donovan begins his discussion of the "suspicions" that led to the modernist separation of politics from theology by quoting Kant, who wrote, "I can actually think of a moral politician, i.e. one who so interprets the principles of political prudence that they can be coherent with morality, but I cannot think of a political moralist, i.e. one who forges a morality to suit a statesman's advantage" (Kant - Perpetual Peace, AA VIII.372 as quoted in O'Donovan, 1996, p. 6). O'Donovan points out that there are "two sides to Kant's objection to the political moralist" (p. 6). On the one hand, "it is a forgery" that "serves the convenience of the political order when a true morality would dictate its terms to the politicians" and on the other hand, it suggests that "the political order itself should not be treated with too much solemnity" (O'Donovan, p. 6). Writing more precisely of theology in relation to politics, O'Donovan suggests that the first of these suspicions is of "the corruption of morality or theology by politicians" while the second may be seen as "the corruption of politics by theologians" (p. 8). Kant, O'Donovan argues, was concerned both with the subordination of morality to politics and with the elevation of politics to a normalizing, prescriptive role, for it is only "when subordinated to morality" that the contingency and therefore arbitrariness of political claims "carry weight with us" (pp. 6-7).

The final creation of a political moralist, then, is a "fake" morality, or a pseudo-politics. Set in a critical, modernist context a Kantian suspicion of such political morality can only be resolved by separating its two components, by separating politics from morality. Unfortunately, as Michael Polanyi pointed out half a century ago, the adoption of such reasoning results in the very evil that it sets out to undermine. Unyoked from subordination to morality, claiming the capacity to perceive fresh knowledge and create new technology and institutions *ex nihilo*, while yet energized by a Christian passion for utopia, post-Enlightenment European individuals

uncovered the meaninglessness of their new power even as their societies embraced its absolute authority. The end result, wrote Polanyi, was a *moral inversion*, "a condition in which high moral purpose operates only as the hidden force of an openly declared inhumanity" (Polanyi, 1960/1969, p. 16).

After World War II, the West thought it had moved past such disastrous philosophies by rejecting the totalitarianism of Hitler and Stalin. However, it continued to use morality by subordinating it to political purpose, and such "spurious" moral inversion, evident throughout present-day society, is unstable. Indeed, in recent years politicians have gone beyond clandestinely "forging a pseudo-morality" (O'Donovan, 1996, p. 6): such a political morality has been unmasked and is now being promoted openly, without shame. Societal tolerance of immorality may seem almost endless, but as Polanyi suggested, "it is dangerous to rely on it that men will continue indefinitely to pursue their moral ideals within a system of thought which denies reality to them" (1958/1962, p. 234). Such an "objectivist masquerade" is only feasible so long as moral convictions "remain comparatively peaceable" (p. 234) - so long as traditional morality remains in the background. When "a *real* substitution of human appetites and human passions for reason and the ideals of man" comes into being, utopian moral passions are left hanging without a home (Polanyi, 1951/1998, p. 126), and "man masked as a beast turns into a Minotaur" (Polanyi, 1958/1962. p. 235).

The emptiness of pseudo-morality brought to light by O'Donovan also sheds light on the traditional nature of true morality for, as I will argue in this paper, one must first *submit to* a tradition to modify it. In contrast, a pseudo-morality that is a mere tool of politics can be truly successful only in a world of arbitrary absolutes, independent of traditional dependencies - a world in which individuals become the absolute masters of their own morality. Ironically,

absolute individualism does not bring true freedom. Instead, it undermines our personhood that is grounded in community and conviviality. Taught by Modernity that reality is fixed and certain, we have imagined liberty to be the right and privilege of each individual, independent of every other. The possibility that traditional morality - that traditions of any type - might have authority to restrict liberty, is rejected. Without the restraint built into the traditions of morality or politics, the only recourse to preventing absolute rule by political moralists is to attempt the separation of the two domains, to separate politics and morality. However, any attempt to separate the contingent from the normative must, in the end, make the contingent normative and again lead to moral inversion. It is this latter path that American public administration has often followed in its pursuit of quality service and a sense of legitimacy. However, as I will point out, there are some who have rather drawn attention to the importance of tradition.

As support for my argument for the importance of tradition as guide to responsible action, I will also argue that we must move past individualism to personhood. In a Hobbesian world, an individual, who is scientifically defined in terms of universal laws, is free to the extent that there is an "absence of external Impediments" (Hobbes, 1999, p. 134). A person, on the other hand, is defined by his or her relationships within a dynamically ordered system and is given freedom *to act responsibly on behalf of a community*. Within public administration scholarship, a description of such responsible, relational persons may be seen in administrative conservatorship, which consists in "the willingness of *administrative elites*, out of traditional loyalty and moral principles, to preserve authority and distribution of power with regard to the propriety of an *institution's* existence, its functional niche, and its collective institutional goals" (Terry, 1995, p. 26). Such bureaucratic leaders are not independent individuals acting objectively and impersonally out of self interest, but are themselves members of communities, of

institutions that may be seen as "responsive, adaptive organism[s]" (Selznick, 1957, p. 5) that are "products of interaction and adaptation" (p. 22). For a *person*, for an administrative conservator, relationships are neither utilitarian nor optional but are the source of purpose and being.

Traditions and persons are structured in a similar manner. They are both intentional, anchored in a background from which or through which we may focus on their function, their meaning, their appearance, or their being. Both traditions and persons, then, are purposive, and both acceptance of personhood and submission to tradition necessarily result in responsible action. Furthermore, neither a person nor a tradition is absolute or absolutely independent, for both are defined by the relationships that limit them. Yet neither are traditions nor persons solely dependent on their associations and interconnections, for both are self-modifying; submission to their relational context results in action that redefines that context and the tradition or person formed therein. Both traditions and persons are known through practice.

Tradition and Community in an Indeterminate World

A free society, wrote Michael Polanyi and Harry Prosch, "is not simply an "open" one, a society in which anything goes" (1975, p. 196). Specifically, "[i]t cannot be a free society by being open on matters such as these, that is, by being neutral with respect to truth and falsehood, justice and injustice, honesty and fraud" (p. 197). Advocating an "open" society "is a very serious mistake" they asserted, for a wholly open society "would be a wholly vacuous one - one which could never actually exist, since it could never have any reason for existing" (p. 184). Instead, "a free society *rests upon a traditional framework*" (p. 184), upon public liberties that enable moral associations constrained and directed *by tradition to freedom for* responsible relationship. Such a society is one "in which men, being engaged in various activities whose ends are considered worthy of respect, are allowed the freedom to pursue these ends" (p. 196).

Underlying this vision of a society characterized by tradition, freedom, and responsibility is Polanyi's understanding of reality as knowable but indeterminate. "Real is that which is expected to reveal itself indeterminately in the future," he argued (1946/1964, p. 10). For example, what makes a stone real is not its physical presence but its possibilities - to be picked up, to be used in a wall, or to be the object on which I stub my toe. Moreover, because of its indeterminate nature we can never know reality *absolutely*, and "an explicit statement can bear on reality only by virtue of the tacit coefficient associated with it" (p. 10). Consequently, argued Polanyi, all knowledge is personal and "is an intellectual commitment, and as such inherently hazardous" (1958/1962, p. viii). Therefore, "into every act of knowing there enters a passionate contribution of the person knowing what is being known" (p. viii). Fully aware that her knowledge commitment may be mistaken, the person acts responsibly in reaction to a calling "to fulfil the universal obligations" (p. 323) which she has embraced.

It is this heuristic tension, of a hidden, but discoverable reality, that incites passion in the explorer, in the person seeking to understand. However, without a community that may recognize and affirm the promise of a discovery and the values expressed in heuristic passion, discovery becomes wasted effort, for once a discovery has been made, it must be shared; "[i]n order to be satisfied, our intellectual passions must find response" (Polanyi, 1958/1962, p. 150). The discoverer "has committed himself to a new vision of reality, he has separated himself from others who still think on the old lines" (p. 150), and the tension resulting from that rift can not be resolved through formal rules of language and logic because the two parties now speak incommensurate languages. Having embraced a new vision, the discoverer, turned speaker, faces a logical gap that, spurred on by the prospect of response, calls him to cross it "by converting everybody to his way of seeing things" (p. 150). This passion for affirmation by

another is a persuasive passion that can only be satisfied through endorsement by a representative of the community.

"I cannot speak," wrote Polanyi, "without implying a reference to a consensus" (1958/1962, p. 209). However, not any consensus will suffice, for "[a]rticulate systems which foster and satisfy an intellectual passion, can survive only with the support of a society which respects the values affirmed by these passions" (Polanyi, 1958/1962, p. 203). A community which supports discovery must share the values of the explorer, and a community which supports the persuasive passion of communication must share common meanings. As Polanyi pointed out, "[s]ince the advancement and dissemination of knowledge ... forms part of cultural life, the tacit coefficients by which these articulate systems are understood and accredited ... are also coefficients of a cultural life shared by a community" (Polanyi, p. 203). To use science as an example, the premisses of shared meanings "cannot be explicitly formulated, and can be found authentically manifested only in the *practice* of science, as maintained by the *tradition* of science" (Polanyi, 1946/1964, p. 85, italics added), for "this tacit sharing of knowing underlies every single act of articulate communication" (Polanyi, 1958/1962, p. 203). Since "practical wisdom is more truly embodied in action" (p. 54) and personal knowledge, such as the methods and practice of science, "can be passed on only by example from master to apprentice" (p. 53), "[a] society which wants to preserve a fund of personal knowledge must submit to tradition" (Polanyi, p. 53).

It seems clear, then, that tradition is not simply a set of rules and procedures handed down from some absolute authority. Rather, the premisses of a tradition "are transmitted to us from the past, but they are our own interpretations of the past, at which we have arrived within the context of our own immediate problems" (Polanyi, 1958/1962, p. 160). Such a tradition is

therefore never fixed and absolute, but is constantly in flux as each member of the community interprets it and contributes to its maintenance as well as its ongoing development. Scientific opinion, for example, "represents only a temporary and imperfect embodiment of the traditional standards of science" (Polanyi, 1946/1964, p. 53). Tradition, as enforced by a community, is the tacit background that conditions the possibilities of discovery, of communication, and of action. Yet that very community, and the individuals of which it is comprised, personalize tradition and prevent it from ever becoming a set of fixed rules and absolute principles. The indeterminate possibilities evident in tradition are limited by a community, not to restrict them, but to affirm them and give them meaning.

To the tacit nature of tradition and its potential for self-modification must be added its dependence on fiduciary responsibility. This feature may already be seen in the need for submission which is not the blind submission of a bureaucrat enforced by fixed procedures but a responsible reliance on the authority of tradition, on its heuristic power and its orderliness. Acceptance of tradition may be likened to the embrace of tacit knowledge, which may only be grasped by "the person pouring himself into" its particulars (Polanyi, 1959a, p. 62). This act of submission to tradition recognizes that "each person can know directly very little of truth" (p. 68), but "even so, a valid choice can be made" (p. 62), for submission to tradition is the acceptance of the personal nature of knowledge and is therefore a responsible act. Tacit assent of traditional values is "elevated to the seat of responsible judgment" (Polanyi, 1958/1962, p. 312), and a responsible decision is reached "in the knowledge that we have overruled by it conceivable alternatives, for reasons that are not fully specifiable" (p. 312). Tradition cannot be comprehended explicitly and impersonally; it can only be received through responsible action, by first submitting to and relying on its authority.

Tradition, then, as necessary as it is to both discovery and communication, can never be defined absolutely, for it is known tacitly and responsibly, through practice. Taking an example from the tradition of science, we define facts as those items that seem to us to be factual, but our understanding of “factual” is determined *prior to* our *definition* of facts. Indeed, “we believe in certain explicit presuppositions of factuality only because we have discovered that they are implied in our belief in the existence of facts” (Polanyi, 1958/1962, p. 162). In a similar fashion, we know the premises of any tradition subsidiarily as we rely on them for an awareness of the object of our focus, on which they bear. A tradition is constantly being changed by the community that, or individual who, submits to it. This creative renewal always implies an appeal “from a tradition as it *is* to a tradition as it *ought to be*” (Polanyi, 1946/1964, p. 56). Contrary to common misconceptions, tradition is a living thing, not a static set of rules and habits. Each appeal to its authority not only defers to, but also modifies that authority in subtle but significant ways. This tension between what is established as, and the change that comes from responsible use of a tradition and its premises, may be seen in the way Public Administration trains new scholars and develops and implements new ideas; in the manner in which the Constitution has become the defining foundation for our administrative practice; in the way our legal system decides cases; and in the way our political system makes decisions.

Tradition and Apprenticeship in Public Administration

The tension that is evident in the process of discovery and in communication, between heuristic possibilities and the orderliness that gives them meaning, is also evident in the process by which a tradition is handed down from one generation to the next and by which membership in a community comes to be. In a scientific community, for example, membership is not inherited but earned. The first step to such membership is to learn the language and conventions

of the community, much as an immigrant must learn the language and conventions of a newly adopted country. The second step is to learn to recognize the community's "uncertainties and its eternally provisional nature," while gaining "a glimpse of the dormant implications which may yet emerge from the established doctrine" (Polanyi, 1946/1964, p. 43). It is not enough to be able to translate explicit meanings of individual words or to memorize rules or rituals. Someone intent on becoming a member of such a community must learn the informal, implied meanings of its rules and rituals, must begin to learn its methodology and experience it in practice, and must be "impelled to imitate" (p. 44) its expert guides. Having developed both an explicit and a tacit understanding, the third step to membership in the community is the achievement of independence. Polanyi argued that such independence is usually achieved "only through close personal association with the intimate views and practice of a distinguished master" (1946.1964, p. 43). Neither memorized rules and rituals nor tacit knowledge of the potential of science are enough. An apprentice must learn to live *independently* before being granted authoritative freedom.

Science, wrote Polanyi, "can exist and continue to exist only because its premisses can be embodied in a tradition which can be held in common by a community" (1946/1964, p. 56). Indeed, "[t]his is true also of all complex creative activities which are carried on beyond the lifetime of individuals" (p. 56). A participant in such a dynamically ordered community voluntarily chooses to accept and support the tradition that governs the community that is so ordered. That tradition, together with the individual's personal background and experience, as well as the traditions embodied in a larger culture or other entities of which she is a part, culminates in a calling to responsibility that she can accept or reject. It is acceptance of that calling, the commitment to rely on a community and its tradition, that binds the individual to the

community and gives its members confidence that they may also rely on her to act in accordance with the tradition that supports it. The members of such a traditional community, having submitted to the standards and premises of the tradition, having embraced its rules and rituals and methodology, are granted freedom by the community to act responsibly on its behalf. Such a community is not centrally organized, but is ordered spontaneously with each individual mutually adjusting his or her efforts to those of his or her community neighbors. The end is a dynamic network of responsible community members, a "sociointellectual framework" that Timothy Dahlstrom has suggested is useful for understanding intellectual networks in general, for it "provides a broad platform from which to develop theory and practice" (Dahlstrom, 2013, p. 578).

Recognizing that Polanyi's use of science is as a *model* of dynamic order, Dahlstrom freely interchanges the terms "scientist" and "intellectual" and "researcher" in his writing "to broaden the conceptual landscape" (Dahlstrom, 2013, p. 580). What he develops is an image of intellectuals as "members of an organization that is closely knit intellectually ... but loosely knit socially" (p. 580). Intellectuals in general, like scientists in particular, enjoy an "intellectual liberty" that "consists of the right to choose one's own problem to study, to conduct research free from any outside control, and to teach one's subject in light of one's own opinions" (p. 581). Yet, while "a well-connected and well-informed network is necessary," it "stands in contrast to transaction-based or power-based networks" which "may not require any sense or development of a true community" (p. 581). In an intellectual network the mutual adjustment of independent initiatives "leads to a joint result that is unpremeditated by any of those who bring it about" (p. 581). Indeed, its "emergent character dissuades planning and control" and "any attempt to organize this self-coordination under a central authority would eliminate independent initiatives

and thus reduce their joint effectiveness and paralyze their cooperation" (p. 581).

Intellectual networks, such as the network of scholars supporting the domain of public administration, grant freedom to individuals who have submitted to a tradition. What links intellectuals together into a network or community is their reliance on traditional standards that are often known only tacitly as individuals look through them or from them to the object of their attention. It is their reliance on the premises of the intellectual tradition that gives their work legitimacy, but they act freely in a manner that challenges and often modifies the very premises and standards to which they submit. Polanyi emphasized that knowing and discovery, communication and judgment all become meaningful in the midst of a tension between conservative impulses and disruptive ones. Boundaries are defined, only to be re-imagined by application of new principles; gaps are recognized, only to be creatively hurdled.

What may be seen, then, is that the process of apprenticeship into an intellectual community and tradition is conservative, demanding long hours of training in the presence of a master. That training results in a faith in, a reliance on the premises of the tradition as held by the community, but its goal is independence of the individual to transcend the constraints that make independence possible. The end result is a community of individuals who are committed to the tradition and thus bound together into a comprehensive entity, a community that is dynamically ordered by the mutual adjustment of individual initiatives and disciplined by the mutual authority of the community as a whole. However, because the premises of a traditional domain "are tacitly observed in the practice of [its] pursuits and in the acceptance of their results as true" (Polanyi, 1958/1962, p. 161), the practice of a tradition can not be transmitted from one generation to the next by memorizing fixed facts and reliable rules but must be handed down by a process of apprenticeship. The intellectual network that supports the practice of public

administration must not only submit to that tradition but must practice it, acting responsibly to subvert and even revolutionize it. As the west-African word, "sankofa." suggests, public administration, being traditional, must look to the past to move toward the future (Seeman, 2010). It is the *tradition* of public administration that gives it legitimacy.

Tradition and the Constitutional Legitimacy of Public Administration

The legitimacy that is realized by submitting to a tradition was the subject of John Rohr's *To Run a Constitution* (1986). Against the argument that the framers of the Constitution were "implacable foes of the wide-ranging activities of modern government" (p. 7), Rohr sought to "at least neutralize" and even enlist them "in support of the modern administrative state" (p. 7) by seeking to "legitimate the administrative state in terms of constitutional principle" (Rohr, 1986, p. ix). He drew on the work of Hannah Arendt to explain and justify the Constitution as "the symbol of the founding of the Republic" (Rohr, p. 7); the Constitution, as the founding document representing the founding as a whole, was and is authoritative, for "'foundings' are normative" (p. 7). Rohr, like Polanyi, recognized that tradition is anchored in the past but its primary function is to guide a community or society into the future. In light of its importance in augmenting the foundational status of the Constitution, as a source of administrative legitimacy he strategically chose "to emphasize the constitutional *tradition* rather than the text of the Constitution" (1986, p. 172, italics added). Rather than rely on the specific words of the framers, including those supporting arguments for and against specific aspects of the Constitution, he "found compelling the image of the Constitution as the conclusion of the great public argument of one hundred and fifty years of colonial experience and the premise of the great public argument of the next two centuries" (p. 173). This image "put the Constitution at the center of American political experience" and defined that experience, including the development of the administrative state,

as an ongoing "civilized public argument" (p. 173).

For Rohr, the constitutional tradition was a continuing, active process, not a static set of rules and procedures, and it was such a dynamic tradition that gave public administration legitimacy *as part of that tradition*:

Because the founding was in argument, it was only fitting that the development of American politics should be in argument as well. And because the administrative state is part of American politics ... it, too, should be part of the argument that is a projection in time of the act of founding. (Rohr, 1986, p. 180)

While humbly admitting that careful readers might "find my work defective" (p. 178), he nevertheless professed that "my argument is grounded in the *fact* that the founding period is normative for American politics" (Rohr, 1993, p. 246), for a rejection of that fact would force one to "enter the public argument on any topic with an insurmountable disadvantage" (p. 246). The tradition of the founding of the United States is a tradition that is both greater than and defined by the founding, itself, just as the founding is both greater than and defined by the Constitution. Within that context Rohr could, himself, humbly respond with confident universal intent that the Constitutional tradition is indeed normative for public administration and is the central source of its legitimacy.

Tradition and Common Law Reasoning in Public Administration

That the legitimacy of a tradition is enforced each time someone submits to and relies on its premises is also evident in the practice of Common Law. "Common Law is founded on precedent," wrote Polanyi, and this practice "recognizes the principle of all traditionalism that practical wisdom is more truly embodied in action than expressed in rules of action" (Polanyi, 1958/1962, p. 54). Specifically, "precedent is constituted by *the decision* of a court, irrespective of its interpretation" (p. 54, italics added). It is *practice* that defines a tradition, rather than its theoretical definition or interpretation, and it is *practice*, under the authority of tradition, that

gives Common Law its legitimacy. Subject to common-law reasoning, precedent is *established* by the action and opinion of judges even as they *rely on* it to decide new cases. Thus, we find judges consulting tradition (represented by precedent) even as they consciously or unconsciously bring about its change by their own practice. Common-law reasoning, then, demonstrates a mutual adjustment of individual judges to each other using consultation as a mechanism of communication and coordination. The practice of common-law reasoning may be seen as an art, guided by traditional values, principles, and rules. Importantly, while common-law reasoning can never be "exercised according to its explicit rules," those same rules can be "of great assistance ... if observed subsidiarily within the context of its skilful performance" (Polanyi, 1958/1962, p. 162). In other words, it is the skill of its practitioners that makes possible the exercise of the law and any other domain that would use such a traditional practice. Indeed, "*the aim of a skilful performance is achieved by the observance of a set of rules which are not known as such to the person following them*" (p. 49). Common-law reasoning looks to traditional rules and traditional values that are useful to the extent that they are applied subsidiarily "within the framework of personal judgment" (p. 31).

Michael Spicer has noted the importance of common law reasoning as a possible model for ethical reasoning in public administration. He has argued that "common-law reasoning in the exercise of administrative discretion" (Spicer, 1995, p. 90) is consistent with an "anti-rationalist" view that stresses the limits of human reason and the importance of looking to past experience in determining action. In advancing his argument, he particularly noted Polanyi's explanation of Common Law's requirement that judges (as administrators) "draw upon the knowledge both explicit and implicit in past decision making, to interpret this in light of current social values and conditions, and then to contribute their own knowledge in the form of precedents for future

decisions" (pp. 91-92).

The example of common-law reasoning or "reasoning by example" (Spicer, 1995, p. 90; Spicer and Terry, 1996, p. 44) was also noted by Spicer and Larry Terry in suggesting guidelines for the administrative interpretation of statutes. They argued specifically that "public administrators need guidance to enhance their effectiveness and overall performance" (Spicer and Terry, p. 40) in carrying out the "greater discretionary authority and power in the realm of statutory interpretation" (p. 39) granted by the Supreme Court decision in *Chevron U.S.A. v. Natural Resources Defense Council*. They concluded that "textual, intentionalist, and public values approaches may provide valuable guidance in certain instances" (p. 45), but each of these approaches exhibits deficiencies, and "common-law reasoning can provide an additional valuable approach to statutory interpretation that is consistent with our constitutional heritage" (p. 45). Spicer and Terry argued that the practice by administrators of reasoning by example can, among other things, check "the arbitrary use of discretionary power by public administrators;" provide "greater predictability in administrative actions for citizens;" and enable administrators "to combine the knowledge and experience explicitly or implicitly contained in past decisions with their knowledge of current circumstances" (pp. 44-45). "[T]his approach to statutory interpretations is consistent with the perspective of the founders" (p. 45), they continued and, it seems, may be considered part of the constitutional tradition that Rohr had highlighted and that legitimizes the administrative state.

Tradition, the State, and Public Administration

The tension between what is established as and the change that comes from responsible use of a tradition, may also be seen in the way we understand the state and the way political decisions are made. Spicer has argued that the understanding of the state "which undergirds

much of public administration, is one of purposive association" (Spicer, 1997, p. 90), an understanding "in which individuals see themselves as bound together for the pursuit of a particular coherent set of common substantive ends" (p. 91). Within such an association, a formal set of specifically instrumental rules may develop, rules that "serve to elicit and to facilitate individual actions in pursuit of the common purposes of the state" (Spicer, 2001, p. 15). Such an association "is characteristically one that has been consciously designed, or at least consciously adapted, by some individual or group of individuals to attain a particular set of substantive purposes deemed to be desirable" (p. 15). Such a planned order is characterized by "a distinctly teleocratic tone" (p. 59) and depends on "a powerful administrative apparatus" (p. 70) that can only be controlled by political power that is "sufficiently centralized" (p. 70). In addition, a purposive state requires "sufficient knowledge about the effects of its policies on the actions of its subjects so that it can identify what those policies should be" (Spicer, p. 71). However, "a vision of purposive association does not really describe the type of political association in which we live" (p. 71). On the contrary, argued Spicer, "for most of our history, our political practice has reflected a vision of the state as something more akin to a 'civil association'" (p. 71).

In contrast to a purposive association, a civil association "is a form of political association in which men and women see themselves as essentially free to seek their own interests and values but recognize certain rules of conduct that serve to limit their individual spheres of action" (Spicer, 1997, p. 96). By limiting individual spheres of action, these rules of conduct also "limit conflict between individuals and groups" (Spicer, 2001, p. 21). In a purposive association, "the activities of individuals in the state must be organized around the pursuit of a coherent set of substantive ends" (Spicer, p. 22), but in a civil association,

"individual or group actions are seen as directed toward achieving their own particular substantive ends" (p. 22). If a purposive association may be understood as a "purpose-based order," a civil association "is more accurately defined as a rule-based order" (Spicer, p. 22).

In a civil association, "much of the information or knowledge that men and women use in deciding on what actions they will undertake is inevitably dispersed" (Spicer, 2001, p. 84). Consequently, within our political system, wrote Spicer, "[i]nstead of there being a single locus of power, power is fragmented. It is dispersed throughout our constitutional system" (p. 80). Polanyi wrote similarly about "General" and "Specific" authority: "the former leaves the decisions for interpreting traditional rules in the hands of numerous independent individuals while the latter centralizes such decisions at headquarters" (Polanyi, 1946/1964, p. 59). Importantly, general or mutual authority lays down "general presuppositions" while specific or centralized authority imposes "*conclusions*" (Polanyi, 1946/1964, p. 57). Spicer emphasized that a civil association is, indeed, dependent on rules, but these are not, to quote Michael Oakeshott, "instrumental rules whose desirability lies in their propensity to promote, or at least not to hinder, the pursuit of the purpose" (1991, p. 451). Instead, they are "noninstrumental rules of conduct" (Spicer, 2001, p. 71), the purpose of which "is not to secure the achievement of any particular set of substantive purposes" (p. 71). The dynamic freedom of individuals, mutually adjusting their efforts within a community, results in a distributed authority, a fragmented power based on traditional rules and general presuppositions rather than on instrumental rules that impose conclusions.

Within a dynamically ordered civil association, then, the role of government "becomes largely that of elucidating, protecting, and enforcing rules of conduct" (Spicer, 2001, p. 72). In Polanyian terms, it acts in a manner similar to that demonstrated by the hierarchy of

"influentials" in an intellectual network like science, who are "entrusted by the whole of society with the cultivation of certain ideals, in which the rest of the people take part at various stages of interest" (Polanyi, 1941, p. 442). "We have here" wrote Polanyi, "a system of indirect representation, at each stage of which people less experienced and interested in a particular field confide in others, more intimately concerned with it" (p. 442). Indeed, the members of an intellectual network like science "are speaking with one voice because they are informed by the same tradition," a tradition that "represents only a temporary and imperfect embodiment of the traditional standards" (Polanyi, 1946/1964, pp. 52, 53). Like science, civil association is anchored in general rules of conduct, customary standards, and daily practices that together make up the tradition that forms and defines the association.

Furthermore, in a manner similar to Rohr's argument for a constitutional tradition, Spicer has suggested that it was from "historical practices" that "the idea of the state as a civil association began to take on a much clearer form" (Spicer, 2001, p. 77). Indeed, the concept of civil association emerges from "an ordinary or practical type of knowledge often based on experience and practice rather than on scientific analysis" (Spicer, p. 84). Unlike the strict instrumental rules so important to the enforcing of a centrally defined and implemented purpose, the standards and presuppositions of a tradition are never fixed statically in place, but are revealed only in their particular expression through the practice of those who submit themselves to that tradition. As a result, "[t]he social scientist who seeks to make predictions about the effects of public policies on the interrelated actions of individuals in particular situations must do so in the absence of much, if not most, of the knowledge that those individuals themselves use in deciding their actions in those situations" (p. 85). In Polanyian terms, social scientists who depend solely on explicit knowledge and a positivist method ignore the tacit knowledge of real

people in real situations.

Aligning himself with Rohr and other constitutionalists, Spicer suggested that the Constitution stands at the center of the tradition guiding American public administration:

The founders' Constitution, with its various devices for checking power, can be seen here, therefore, as providing agreed-on rules of association for individuals and groups as they seek to achieve their own interests or particularistic visions of the public good within the political process. (Spicer, 2001, p. 79)

The general "rules of association" set out in the Constitution "place boundaries on the conduct of individuals and groups within the process of policy formulation and implementation" (Spicer, p. 79). They limit the power of any particular individual or group, thereby reinforcing the general or mutual nature of authority. Furthermore, because the Constitution "reflects so strongly a vision of civil association," it becomes difficult for anyone "to use public administration as an instrument by which they might consistently carry out a coherent set of substantive state ends" (Spicer, p. 83). Moreover, the civil association supported by the Constitution is "essentially the same one that has been handed down to us through the centuries as part of our own Anglo-American tradition of political practice" (Spicer, p. 77). As Rohr also argued, the Constitution itself emerged from a tradition and is evidence of the dynamic nature of tradition, dependent as it is on the interpretation of those who subscribe to and commit themselves to its premises.

Spicer did not claim that civil association should replace all vestiges of purposive association. On the contrary, the vision of a purposive association has been "[o]ne of the most powerful visions of the state to shape Western political thought, discourse, and action since the Middle Ages" (Spicer, 2001, p. 14). However, "a particular set of political and constitutional traditions," that we have inherited, and "the severe fragmentation of political culture" (Spicer, p. 89), that we are experiencing, make "the pursuit of such a teleocratic vision of governance and administration ... impractical" (p. 126). In practice, traditional values and our fragmented

political culture place constraints on our ability to realize an efficient planned order and an effective purposive state. Both purposive and civil associations have a place in the thought of public administration. However, public administration *in practice* is largely characterized by civil association, by dynamic order anchored in tradition.

Tradition, Formal Organizations, and the Individual

Public administration, then, may be seen to demonstrate a reliance on and responsible embrace of a traditional approach to administration. Known tacitly through practice and subject to modification when relied on as background or foundation for knowing or doing, traditions are characterized, as Polanyi made clear, by a tension between what "*is*" and what "*ought to be*". On the one hand, those who seek to maintain a tradition by trusting and relying on it, find that they are stamping it with their own particular interpretation and thereby modifying what they hope to preserve. On the other hand, those who strive to subvert a tradition by altering it, find that they can do so only by first submitting to it. As I suggested above, such a tension is manifest in the practice of public administration when it relies on apprenticeship to train new practitioners and scholars, for doing so enforces rules and standards only to foster change. It is also evident when public administrators and administrationists rely on the constitutional tradition that brought into being the Constitution which has become so foundational to American public life. Furthermore, it is conspicuous in the functioning of the courts, particularly in the application of Common Law, and may be useful to public administrators if they depend on past example in decision making and judgment. Finally, it is apparent in the reliance of the American state on traditional rules that make possible a civil association.

Nevertheless, a second powerful force in American public administration has been the tendency to play down the importance of a traditional approach to administration. For example,

in 1945 Herbert Simon acknowledged that "[a]dministrative organizations cannot perhaps claim the same importance as repositories of the fundamental human values as that possessed by older traditional institutions like the family," but "formal organization is rapidly assuming a role of broader significance than it has ever before possessed," for "administrative organizations are usually constructed and modified with a deliberation and freedom from tradition which - though far from complete - gives them great adaptability to meet new needs with new arrangements (Simon, 1957/1945, pp. 101-102). During the same period of time, the importance of a public administration tradition - or the lack thereof - was also noted by Dwight Waldo in his examination of the administrative state. There he noted that "the lack of a strong tradition of administrative action" (1948, p. 8) was one of the factors contributing to a proliferation of private efforts to provide public services, and that our "institutional framework" was at least partly responsible for retarding "the advance of effective administration and the rise of a tradition of government service by the 'best'" (p. 8). Furthermore, the undermining of a moral tradition by "the acids of modernity" (p. 15) has resulted in the adoption of "absolutist positions" and "the moral imperatives of 'the facts';" in "'dogmas of administrative reform,' propounded with solemnity and earnestness in the name of Science;" and in principles "made to do duty for higher law" (p. 16).

In advocating a better engineered, more scientific, and more bureaucratic administrative state¹, American public administration has emphasized a determinate world that can be known explicitly and absolutely. In such a world, reality is fixed and certain, and individuals are ultimately meaningful in terms of their independent physical presence that may be known impersonally and objectively. In such a context, freedom depends on isolation from others, and communities, organizations, and the state are fundamentally possible only by negotiation and

¹ These three specific attributes are taken from Mary Schmidt's 1993 article, "Grout".

compromise between their members. In a negotiated community, a formal organization, or a modern state, the individual, then, gives up absolute freedom and, therefore, independent presence and meaning as the price for corporate benefits. This picture is at odds with that of a traditional institution within which each member contributes to the continuing existence of the tradition by relying on it to act responsibly for its ongoing success. In contrast to the fixed world of impersonally known, independent individuals, a person subject to a tradition is characterized by a rich, relational life in which liberty takes on a new meaning.

A Dynamic Person and Harmonious Particularity

"Many writers have observed," wrote Polanyi and Prosch, "that, to some degree, we shape all knowledge by the way we know it" (1975, p. 194). "Stated in this bald way," they continued "knowledge would appear to be subject to the whims of the observer" (p. 194). However, the knower is always controlled by calling: "His acts are personal judgments exercised responsibly with a view to a reality with which he is seeking to establish contact" (p. 194):

Any conclusion, whether given as a surmise or claimed as a certainty, represents a commitment of the person who arrives at it. Whether or not it *is* the truth can be hazarded only by another, equally responsible commitment. There is no explicit or automatic way to avoid this necessity. (Polanyi and Prosch, p. 194)

A *person* claiming to know truth is not free in an absolute sense. She can discover or create or even act only within the context of "impersonal requirements" and in response to a calling to responsibility. In this sense, she is not simply an individual; a person exists in relationship, in community subject to tradition.

Thomas Pfau (2017) has attempted to describe this distinction between a person as individual and as relational entity by drawing attention to "the Trinitarian framework" embraced by the Christian church. The Trinity acts as "the archetype of the ideal, organic community wherein the identity of the persons comprising that unity is inseparable from their relations, even

as it is neither transferentially projected upon nor mimetically derived from the other persons in that community" (Pfau, 2017, p. 14). In other words, Pfau was arguing that "the human person is the expression or manifestation of an all-encompassing order, rather than a subject capable of unilaterally fashioning an account of its inner constitution and its relatedness to other human beings" (p. 14).

In comparison, for the individual (or "self") "no apparent normative dimension intrudes on the various rights claims and subjective preferences" which modern political philosophy "takes to be the very essence of human flourishing" (Pfau, pp. 14-15). The result of looking at people as autonomous individuals is that "otherwise isolated and hermetic individuals" are furnished with "a strictly elective and opportunistic template of socialization" (p. 15). Compare this picture of a "society of individuals" to the "communion of human persons" (Pfau, p. 15) evident in Polanyi's writings. For Polanyi, a person can never exist in isolation from the community that gives him or her meaning. Nor can s/he be isolated from the tradition which calls him or her to act, to be, or to know. A tradition supported by a community, as Polanyi described, may be recognized in the "all-encompassing order" of which, wrote Pfau, "the human person is the expression or manifestation" (p. 14). Consequently, the "mystery of human personhood" expresses "an unfathomable reality *in* which all human beings or individuals already find themselves, *from* which their discursive and social practices necessarily proceed and *to* which, ideally, their reasoning ought to return them" (Pfau, p. 15).

Murray Jardine has also found a Trinitarian framework helpful to understand the deep implications, for political philosophy, of Polanyi's thinking, anchored as it is in the concept of personal knowledge. Drawing on the work of Colin Gunton, Jardine (2013) has argued that a Christian failure to truly embrace the plurality of the Trinity resulted in an emphasis on the

"unity" of God and nature and set the stage for modernism's emphasis on instrumental human agency. To clarify this point, Gunton compared the vision of "the world in terms of unity" evident in the philosophy of Parmenides to the understanding of "the world in terms of plurality" evident in the philosophy of Heraclitus (Jardine, 2013, p. 183). In the former, "the many are simply functions of the one" while in the latter, "the many are prior to the one" (p. 183). Importantly, Gunton was not arguing that the Heraclitian view is of "reality as pluralistic and therefore conflictual," but that "plurality can be harmonious" (p. 183) - with the Trinitarian framework serving as a model. In such a framework, particularity is not subsumed by unity but is celebrated through relationship. "Politically, then," wrote Jardine, "a truly trinitarian (sic) theology would imply that humans attempt to work out and put in practice a truly relational approach to each other and the natural world" (p. 184). Such an approach would imply that, as Polanyi argued, "true freedom is possible only within the context of community" and "would result in a new understanding of the human relation to nature, one that could mean a new, noninstrumental type of technology" (Jardine, p. 184).

In addition to drawing on the Trinitarian framework of particularity within and enhanced by community, Jardine turned to the work of philosopher, William Poteat. What he found helpful was Poteat's suggestion that "Western thought since the Middle Ages has been characterized by a kind of 'parallax' created by the incoherent mixture" of Hebrew and Greek models of reality (Jardine, 2013, p. 182). The Hebrew model of reality, "drawn primarily from oral/aural experience" (p. 181), was "the speech act, as conceived by an oral culture" (p. 182). In contrast, the Greek model of reality, "drawn primarily from visual experience" (p. 181), was "the rhythms of the natural world ... as conceived by a literate culture" (p. 182). When the two models were brought together in the Middle Ages, "the full development of the implications of

the Hebraic worldview was thwarted by the use of Greek philosophical concepts" (Jardine, p. 182). More specifically, while the oral/aural logic of the Hebraic picture of reality can "allow for the coexistence of necessity and contingency" because of "its basis in the dynamism of the speech act," (p. 182), the "visual logic developed by the Greek philosophers" concluded that "a necessary relation cannot coexist with contingency" because its concern is for "eternal relations between static entities" (p. 182). In other words, "the static, impersonal concepts of Greek metaphysics could not allow Western philosophy and theology to make sense of the dynamic, personal picture of reality actually at the core of Christianity" (p. 182). The explosion of new discovery at the end of the Middle Ages made Western culture more aware of the contingency of reality, but a visual understanding of static necessity left modernity "unable to conceptualize any necessary limits on that contingency" (p. 182), limits that, Polanyi recognized, are requisite to give such contingency meaning.

The "absolute contingency of a world created by arbitrary will" (Jardine, 2013, p. 182) is an apt description of the conditions leading to moral inversion as Polanyi described it - the result of a world of instrumentally oriented individuals that leads to nihilism. In contrast, an oral/aural world of persons, formed over time by traditional relationships over which they have sway only by submitting to them, in which knowing and doing rely on indeterminate subsidiary particulars pointing to comprehensive entities that manifest their reality in unexpected ways, is *necessarily* contingent. For Polanyi, then, it is contingency rather than arbitrary certainty that is necessary, much as it is for a "speech act, as conceived by an oral culture" (Jardine, p. 182). Note that Jardine was not arguing for the elimination of a visual, literate culture. Yet, he did recommend the examination of "a literate culture more thoroughly informed by the Hebraic model" (p. 182). The project that he seemed to embrace was "to convey a sense of the world being ordered

temporally, as it would be understood from an oral/aural paradigm, rather than being ordered atemporally, as it would be seen from a visual standpoint" (Jardine, p. 183).

Both a Trinitarian framework and an oral/aural model of reality draw attention to the dynamics of personhood and particularity, or more specifically, "particularity that is harmonious" (Jardine, 2013, p. 185). A dynamic personhood is evident in the logic of tacit knowing where "the triad of knower, context, and known could be seen as a harmonious particularity" (p. 185). Likewise, by recognizing the relational nature of the person, apparent in harmonious particularity, the "inevitable reduction of object to subject or vice versa" (p. 185) may be avoided. In addition, "a (tacit) Trinitarian approach" that shows harmony through particularity is clearly evident in descriptions of spontaneous order, public liberty, and a free society rooted in tradition, where individual persons and institutions work harmoniously through "the system of overlapping competences," through "the creative tension between tradition and innovation," and through "the free actions of particular individuals" (Jardine, p. 185).

The Person, Harmonious Particularity, and Public Administration

This emphasis on the person and on personal knowledge, particularly in light of its shared emphasis on the fiduciary structure so evident in tradition, prompts us to see the world in a new light. A person who is more than simply a "self" or individual, who is a whole expressing harmonious particularity, is a temporal being, forever submitting to tradition while simultaneously seeking to subvert and modify it and to thereby discover new aspects of, and bring change to, reality. "Reliance on" and "commitment to" are two sides of a fiduciary program, a system of action that reveals its subsidiary particulars - its procedures, its standards, its assumptions - in their bearing on the action or perception or idea to which they point. Yet, such a program is a whole that is not simply directional, for it includes those subsidiaries as a

"from" which bear on a "to" through the action of a person. Such a program turns an individual into a person, a single-dimensional image into an ineffable three-dimensional reality expressing unspecifiable future possibilities.

Within the public administration literature, the meaningful action of a responsible person may be seen in the phenomenological work of Nicholas Zingale. In his 2007 survey of environmental managers, for example, he arrived at general conclusions by surveying *persons* rather than isolated individuals. This distinction can be seen in both the types of questions asked and in the effort made "to stimulate the subjects to not only discuss what they know about their job, but to get a sense of how they know it" (Zingale, p. 60). A similar sensitivity to the person may be seen in Zingale and Justin Piccorelli's 2016 study of the cable car system in San Francisco. In this latter study, the centrality of persons, in Pfau's or Jardine's sense, was particularly evident in the interconnectedness of the conductors, the grip operators, the repair technicians, and the powerhouse workers. Zingale and Piccorelli specifically noted the manner in which "[t]he cable connects each employee to the others" (2016, p. 360) and thereby "sheds light on a link that has really always been there between individuals within any organization and their connectedness to society" (p. 361). Indeed, "[l]ike the cable car operators, public administrators are nested in a much larger environment, some of which they can control, most of which they cannot" (Zingale and Piccorelli, p. 362).

Camilla Stivers' examination of the possibility of hope "in Dark Times" (2008b), also throws light on the importance of person in studying public administration. Writing in a personal style that she identified as "meditation" (p. 238), Stivers demonstrated particularity in public administration by focusing attention on a single culture (the Crow) and within that people, the speech and dream and actions of a single person (Plenty Coups). The particularity that she used

in her writing, however, was not isolated particularity, but the harmonious particularity of the individual within the people and of the culture within a broader philosophical framework. In other words, both people and individual may be considered "person" as Pfau, Jardine, and Polanyi make plain: person in community, subject to, advocate for, and in defiance of tradition.

In stating that

When the buffalo went away the hearts of my people fell to the ground, and they could not lift them up again. After this nothing happened. (Lear, 2006, p. 2, as quoted in Stivers, p. 230)

Plenty Coups, as a person himself, was recognizing the interrelatedness of his people, physical elements such as the buffalo, cultural elements like the hunt and warfare, and the importance of meaning. A people who are isolated from their cultural, physical, and corporate relationships, become less than person, and thereby meaningless; for the Crow, "the way of life that gave meaning to the idea of counting coup is gone" (Stivers, p. 231).

Hope, albeit a dark hope, came to the Crow in the midst of the collapse of the "pillars of their world" (Stivers, 2008b, p. 232) when they corporately acknowledged the enigmatic and indeterminate nature of the future, while relying on their traditions in the midst of change. As Stivers put it,

Plenty Coups and the Crow people do not have faith in a better future. What they have is belief in the importance of paying attention to dreams. Therefore they are willing to risk everything to heed the advice they received from outside the limits of ordinary existence. (Stivers, p. 235)

While, in the dream of Plenty Coups, the Crow were given "a direction, but not a destination" (p. 234), such an uncertain and incomplete future could be accepted because they recognized that a person is more than an individual. In writing of Havel's description of a greengrocer's rebellion against the system, Stivers pointed out that "[t]he truth in him is a living truth, one that he creates and sustains in the process of acting" (p. 234). The same may be said of Plenty Coups and the

Crow as a people: the living truth of the dream, and their future, would be created and sustained through action. Hope is a temporal concept and is realized in recognizing that the identity of persons is linked to and dependent on - yet not derived from - their situation and tradition; it is "inseparable from their relations" (Pfau, 2017, p. 14). Having submitted to their tradition in which dreams were central, the Crow could responsibly turn to action, confident that the individual is not isolated in independence, but is a person in harmonious relationship with other individuals, with institutional structures, and with an indeterminate situation over which they have little or no control.

As yet another example, Mary Schmidt's 1993 examination of the failure of the Teton River Dam may be interpreted as suggesting that science, engineering, and bureaucracy had become isolated in a positivist world, divorced from a self-modifying tradition and from person as harmonious particularity. In contrast, her call for acceptance of "alternative kinds of knowledge" of "specific phenomena" attained through "direct, bodily involvement" and "synthesis of data" from "several senses," "a feel for the hole," "several individuals," or "over time" (Schmidt, 1993, p. 530), was a call for an understanding of person and of institutions more dependent on a dynamic tradition as supported and enforced by community. Embrace of Schmidt's suggestions would result in responsible action rooted in tradition and the harmonious particularity of personhood.

Public Liberty and Administrative Conservatorship

One of the ways Polanyi described the forward looking aspect of the fiduciary foundation of traditions, was to compare "public liberty" to the private freedom espoused by philosophers like Hobbes and Locke. In a traditional context, freedom is neither a negative freedom that seeks to eliminate obligation nor a positive freedom that grants license to any action. Instead, true

liberty is granted to someone who has submitted to a tradition to act responsibly on behalf of the granting community. An apprentice scientist is granted freedom to choose his own problem and pursue its solution *because* he has learned how to apply its explicit premises and their tacit expression by relying on and submitting to them. However, the freedom so granted is not a personal freedom without boundaries, but a responsible, public liberty granted by the community for the benefit of the community and the tradition that sustains it. Anchored in tradition and called to responsible action, a public liberty is therefore a moral freedom, for it provides "traditional limits on our freedoms, that is, for our values and our morals" (Polanyi and Prosch, 1975, p. 183). In the exercise of public liberty, self-centeredness gives way to consideration of the community as a whole. Indeed, it is the neglect of public liberties that leads to moral inversion and totalitarianism. Within a totalitarian state, liberty "can mean only a private freedom to act unsocially, or at least irresponsibly" (Polanyi, 1941, p. 439); because totalitarianism "must reject the rival claims of individuals to act independently for the benefit of society" (p. 438), it can conceive of liberty only as an absolute and a-moral freedom that is unconstrained by responsibility. Even in a liberal society, if unschooled in the unspecifiable art of public liberty, a commitment to political freedom will fail. Thus, the results were disastrous when "the doctrines of political freedom spread from England in the eighteenth century to France and thence throughout the world, while the unspecifiable art of exercising public liberty, being communicable only by tradition, was not transmitted with it" (Polanyi, 1958/1962, p. 54). An a-moral liberty is a dangerous freedom, for it leads to moral inversion.

Within a moral context, however, meaning emerges from freedom that is constrained, from dynamic order and from public liberty, from possibilities straining against and restricted by boundaries, from heuristic power restrained by orderliness. Objectivism, in rejecting

contingency and freedom, controls and restricts itself into meaninglessness while subjectivism imagines possibility without restraint and finds that a world of absolute freedom is without substance or purpose. Public liberty, on the other hand, embraces freedom, but grants it only in the context of a tradition and a commitment to the community that embraces and enforces it. It is not an impersonal object or a formal organization, defined by external rules and specific purpose, but is a tradition that has been embraced and internalized, an internally defined order that is enforced through practice by its elements. It is a moral order that calls its members to responsible action.

The concept which most closely parallels public liberty within public administration is the idea of "administrative conservatorship" as described by Larry Terry. Noting that "the topic of *bureaucratic leadership* is conspicuously absent" from conversations about "more effective leadership" in the United States at the end of the 20th Century (1995, p. 2), Terry pointed his finger at a combination of factors. In particular, he argued, "fear of bureaucracy, the myopia created by Progressive Era reforms and scientific management, and the unintended consequences of scholarly attempts to reconcile bureaucracy with democracy" (p. 3) all led to a disregard for and an undermining of leadership in bureaucracy. This was accomplished by reducing bureaucratic authority and freedom; by emphasizing scientific methods, the use of experts, and centralization; and by separating democratic and bureaucratic responsibilities or by casting administrators "in a passive role of referees" or as "a blank slate" (p. 15). In the end, the responsible, independent initiative that is evident in true leadership was compromised.

In contrast to the weak role of bureaucratic leadership encouraged by fear, myopia, and a misunderstanding of the relationship of bureaucracy to democracy, Terry concluded that public bureaucracy is indeed *legitimate* "in the American political system" (1995, p. 23). More

specifically, he argued that (1) public bureaucracies are compatible with constitutional principles; (2) public administrators have "a moral obligation" to preserve and sustain constitutional principles; (3) public administrators occupy "a subordinate yet autonomous role" that includes the checking of political power; (4) public bureaucracies "serve as a representative institution that participates in and ensures reasoned deliberations on public policy issues"; (5) the exercise of combined executive, legislative, and judicial powers by public administrators "in a subordinate capacity is consistent with the framers' relaxed interpretation of the separation-of-powers doctrine"; and (6) public bureaucracies help in forming "the character of citizens by contributing to the ongoing process of making the American regime what it is" (Terry, pp. 23, 24). Consequently, Terry argued that, "*the primary function of bureaucratic leaders is to protect and maintain administrative institutions in a manner that promotes or is consistent with constitutional processes, values, and beliefs*" (p. 24).

Taken together, the six legitimating conclusions that led to Terry's central argument may be seen as the description of public administrators submitting to a tradition by relying on it to act responsibly on behalf of society. Bureaucratic leadership is granted public liberty on behalf of American society. Terry characterized this leadership role as "administrative conservatorship" (1995, p. 25; 1990, p. 396). Such leadership consists in "the willingness of *administrative elites*, out of traditional loyalty and moral principles, to preserve authority and distribution of power with regard to the propriety of an *institution's* existence, its functional niche, and its collective institutional goals" (Terry, 1995, p. 26). According to Terry, public administrators, as administrative conservators, are responsible for "preservation of *institutional integrity*" (1995, p. 26); for identifying and maintaining an institution's "distinctive competence" (p. 27). Administrative conservatorship is a moral responsibility that is grounded in and "consistent with

our constitutional tradition" (Terry, 1990, p. 396). It is reliant on the independent initiative of a cadre of responsible leaders who can only be formed as leaders through a process of apprenticeship, thereby submitting to a tradition while humbly accepting the responsibility for its reformation through practice.

Conclusion

Michael Polanyi characterized his philosophy of personal knowledge as a "post-critical philosophy" for it eschewed the critical foundations of Modernism by anchoring itself in tradition and community, in discovery of a hidden reality, and in tacitly known personal knowledge. A public administration anchored in responsible relationship, harmonious particularity, and indeterminate possibility, then, may be seen as post-critical. In such a post-critical administration, the person becomes central. Yet such a person is not an isolated individual in the tradition of Hobbes, but a being set in community and demonstrating harmonious particularity. We are called to submit to the context in which we find ourselves; called "to lose ourselves in the performance of an obligation which we accept" (Polanyi, 1958/1962, p. 324). Indeed, it is only "by submitting to one's own sense of responsibility" (Polanyi, 1959a, p. 62) to a "hidden reality" that is "already there, ready to be discovered" (p. 35); it is only by making a responsible claim with universal intent in the context of "a pre-existent task" (p. 36) with "straining" clues "pointing towards the true solution" (p. 62); it is only as a person dependent on a self-modifying tradition, sensitive to the present situation, and cognizant of the possibilities of an indeterminate future; that "the correct solution" (p. 36) can be discovered, or "a valid choice can be made" (p. 62).

Acceptance of the person as more than an isolated and independent individual leads naturally to a reliance on tradition, to trust in the mutual authority of a community of responsible

individuals, to the acceptance of an indeterminate and hidden reality, and to the recognition of personal knowledge adhering to the logic of tacit knowing. Formed by tension between possibility and constraint, a person becomes known in action, for reality revealed in indeterminate future manifestations is always forward-facing, always moving from what is to what may yet be. Furthermore, because the "obligation which we accept" is a commitment to act responsibly on behalf of others, it is a moral obligation and a moral commitment. By relying on a tradition, we are submitting to the morality evident therein, and by mutually adjusting our individual efforts to those of our neighbors, we are responsibly accepting their moral authority over us. In a post-critical administrative state true corruption of morality by politicians becomes problematic because modification of a moral tradition is possible only by those who trust it and rely on it by submitting to it. Likewise, the elevation of politics to a normalizing, prescriptive role subjects it to modification, through practice, by those who submit to it. As noted at the beginning of this paper, political claims "carry weight" - are given legitimacy - by subordinating them to morality. Therefore, acceptance of the indeterminate possibilities of politics grounded in morality, of the harmonious particularity of personhood, and of the responsible relationships evident in a tradition, undermines the critical foundation of moral inversion and enables a public administration that grants freedom to its members to act responsibly on behalf of the public administration community and society as a whole.

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