# Tradition in a Free Society: The Fideism of Michael Polanyi and the Rationalism of Karl Popper

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ABSTRACT Key Words: tradition, knowledge, science, freedom, rationalism.
*Michael Polanyi and Karl Popper offer contrasting accounts of social tradition. Popper is steeped in the heritage of the Enlightenment, while Polanyi interweaves religious and diverse secular strands of thought. Explaining the liberal tradition, Polanyi features tacit knowledge of rules, standards, applications and interpretations being transmitted by "craftsmen" to "apprentices." Each generation adopts the liberal tradition on "faith," commits to creatively developing its art of knowledge-in-practice, and is drawn to the spiritual reality of ideal ends. Of particular interest to Popper is the rationality of social traditions. Likened by him to scientific theories, Popper's traditions are criticizable and improvable, assisting agents to understand, and act in, the world as stable and predictable. Polanyi's is the more informative rendering of tradition. Polanyi delves deeply into important areas where Popper only scratches their surface: the tacit dimension, transmission by way of apprenticeship, the meaning of tradition for those who participate in it, and the extent of its authority over them.*

Michael Polanyi (1891-1976) and Karl Popper (1902-1993) each produced an important analysis of the nature and role of traditions in free societies.[1] Polanyi sheds light on the non-rational dimension of the liberal tradition, overarching tradition of his free society, emphasizing its underlying faith commitment, and its embodiment of unformulated knowledge. Popper's analysis of tradition, steeped in the heritage of the Enlightenment,[2] depicts the rationalist tradition as pivotally important in the life of the "open society." Popper's highlights of human history include "those periods" in which people "attempted to look upon human affairs rationally."[3] Popper's account of tradition resembles that of Polanyi in its inclusion of faith commitments (fideism), but Popper features rational criticism as an instrument for assessing traditions. This article analyzes Polanyi and Popper's theories of tradition, arguing that Polanyi's theory, while not without its problems, is the deeper and more nuanced of the two in that it discloses dimensions, and explains complexities, of tradition that Popper's theory glosses over or ignores.

The principal source for the discussion of Popper's theory is his article "Towards a Rational Theory of Tradition" (1949/1972), complementing ideas he discussed in his *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945). Polanyi expressed his theory in various writings, including *Science, Faith and Society* (1946), *The Logic of Liberty* (1951), "On Liberalism and Liberty" (1955), and *Personal Knowledge* (1958). Popper's stated aim in his article is to outline a theory of tradition, showing that traditions can be objects of rational assessment and discrimination. Tradition, for Popper's agent, exists objectively, and is criticizable on account of this, whereas Polanyi's agent embodies, and lives in ("indwells"), her tradition, making it difficult for her to criticize.[4]

## The Context Of Polanyi's Image Of Liberal Tradition

The reader will be put in a better position to understand Polanyi's theory of the liberal tradition by being acquainted with its theoretical context. Polanyi views the free society in fiduciary terms, as an inclusive

"spontaneous order" with citizens dedicated to principles, of which the most general affirms thought as an "independent force" with a superior standing to secular interests of government, class, and self.[5] In what may have been intended by him as a criticism of Popper's theory, Polanyi wrote that "private individualism is no important pillar of public liberty. A free society is not an Open Society, but one fully dedicated to a distinctive set of beliefs."[6] In 1951, Polanyi observed that "freedom of thought" and of conduct are deprived of their purpose, and eventually of their existence, when "reason and morality" cease being accepted "as a force in their own right."[7] Citizens of Polanyi's free society recognize truth, justice, beauty as transcendent ideal ends. They are ends whose existence and value cannot be proven, their reality (which is spiritual) having to be accepted on faith, as the presupposition of a tradition of belief and practice.[8] Attempts at rationally establishing ideal ends, and at showing that they should be sought are, for Polanyi, inimical in leading to skepticism about, and eventual renunciation of, the ends. Knowledge of the ideals is sought for its own sake, not for practical benefits that might ensue. Representing "a true end in itself," Polanyi's liberal society is freely believed in and committed to, its ideal ends being explored by free agents.[9]

The authority of the government is restricted in its scope, permitting citizens ample opportunity to exercise independence in their pursuits. The motive force of these independent efforts is an obligation that agents put themselves under to seek the ideals, exercising the distinctive freedom –"public liberty"- of Polanyi's society.[10] Public liberty Polanyi distinguishes from "private liberty." Private (personal) freedom is, Polanyi explains, "the desire to be left alone," having no defined purpose since "that would limit the freedom which is wanted." This is "irresponsible" freedom, being understood as "a personal right of the individual."[11] Public liberty exists in "spontaneous" or "dynamic" orders (e.g. scientific research, common law, academic scholarship), agents having independence to act on their own "initiative[,] …judgment" and "conviction," serving the ideals of their spontaneous order and of the free society.[12] Truth, justice and the other ideal ends are, Polanyi explains, intensively cultivated in these "spontaneous orders" of cultural activity. Motivated by their love of truth, scientists and scholars increase knowledge of the ideal of truth, the creativity and works of accomplished artists reveal more of the ideal of beauty, justice is disclosed in legal improvements (e.g. "humanization of the criminal law and of the prison system"), and our grasp of the ethical ideals of good and right becomes firmer in light of morally enlightened reforms.[13] Independent initiatives and judgments in the service of a common ideal in systems of spontaneous coordination form the most salient feature of Polanyi's free society. Polanyi envisages the knowledge of traditional ideals, intensively achieved through free cultural activities in diverse fields, as expressing varieties of excellence that diffuse through the free society, affecting the sensibilities, aspirations and activities of its citizens.[14]

An inclusive free society is, for Polanyi, greater than the sum of its spontaneous cultural orders of trained specialists. Polanyi's explanation of this point bears quoting at length:

> to comply with a code of morality, custom and law, is to live by it in a far more comprehensive sense than is involved in observing certain scientific and artistic standards. Moral rules are therefore an instrument of civic power in the hands of those who administer moral culture, and morality is allied to custom and law. Men form a society to the extent to which their lives are ordered by the same morality, custom and law, which jointly constitute the morés of their society. We recognize here an important division in the administration of social lore. For we see that while some systems of social lore are cultivated for the sake of our intellectual life as individuals, others are cultivated by the act of ordering our lives socially in accordance with them. The first is a social fostering of essentially individual thought, the second an

administration of society in accordance with essentially civic thought."[15]

The Polanyian free society has its formulated understanding of, and formulated limits on, freedom, these formulations being found in constitutional law, rights, statute laws, maxims, theories, principles, and the teachings and ideas of its revered figures.[16] Formulations of freedom, Polanyi regards as constituting the free society's lore of freedom, its articulate heritage.[17] Lore by itself, Polanyi impresses on us, cannot engender (but may endanger) free conduct.[18]

## Freedom Embodied In A Tradition of Knowledge-In-Practice

The liberal tradition of a free society, Polanyi distinguishes from the society's lore of freedom. Each free society has produced its own distinctive variant of the tradition. In Polanyi's typification of it, the free society depends on its citizens respecting the lore, and on them willingly participating in the tradition, of freedom. Liberal lore, as formulated understandings, experiences and records of freedom, is explicitly presented to members of each new generation as they grow up in, and learn to enact, the tradition.

With elements that include presuppositions, habitudes, maxims, values and standards, Polanyi's tradition of freedom accustoms its adherents to think and act along certain lines. The tradition is actualized by enactments of it, which are freedom realized.[19] Enactments of the liberal tradition represent, for Polanyi, the ground of the explicit dimension (lore) of society's freedom and of its free institutions. Enactments of the tradition provide experience that informs the interpretation, elaboration, and revision of lore. Polanyian lore and tradition are complementary.

In *Personal Knowledge*, Polanyi illustrates these two dimensions of freedom with the following historical example:

> In the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries British public life developed a political art [tradition] and a political doctrine [lore]. The art which embodied the exercise of public liberties was naturally unspecifiable, the doctrines of political liberty were maxims of this art which could be properly understood only by those skilled in the art … When the French Revolutionaries acted on this doctrine, which was meaningless without a knowledge of its application in practice, Burke opposed them by a traditionalist conception of a free society.[20]

For Polanyi, freedom is stabilized by the "traditional practice [of,] and [mute] wisdom" regarding, freedom. Having a presuppositional faith "in the power of thought" and committed to cultivating thought, citizens of the free society imbue freedom with significance and value.[21] Polanyi envisages the express interpretation and understanding of freedom as accompanying, and distilling the practice and wisdom of, the tradition of freedom.

For Polanyi, freedom exists in concrete form in the ways that agents in a free society discuss matters and conduct themselves. Freedom in its traditional dimension is the skilled art by which individuals act independently and responsibly, relying on the resources of the tradition and lore to inform their initiatives as they act within guidelines set down by the law.[22] Polanyi views the adherent of the tradition of freedom – the "art of conducting free activities" – as participating in it in virtue of his possessing a type of "practical wisdom."[23] Enactments of the tradition represent a flow of filiations, exemplifying and sustaining free thought and free conduct. The adherent, Polanyi suggests, knows how to exercise freedom based on his dedication to "premises,"

including fundamental assumptions of "fairness," "tolerance" and truth.[24] As envisaged by Polanyi, agents in, and of, the tradition give effect to a supposition that, possessing reason and conscience, people avail themselves of "the ordinary practice of objectivity in establishing facts and of fairness in passing judgment in individual cases" for the purpose of conciliating their disagreements.[25] Emotionally attached to the tradition, the Polanyian liberal exercises freedom according to "unspoken rules of freedom," values, and standards for allocating value.[26] No description that an agent gives of these elements can capture the tradition's inherited complex content. Polanyi explains, "the love of truth and confidence in their fellows' truthfulness are not effectively embraced by people in the form of a theory." This love and confidence do not "even form the articles of any professed faith, but are embodied mainly in the practice of an art – the art of free discussion – of which they form the premisses."[27] Engaged in the traditional art of freedom, Polanyi's liberal exercises unspecifiable skills in making informed intuitive judgments, discriminations and deliberated choices. The agent draws on his experience and discernment in seeking to conform his conduct to the requirements of lore and to the tradition's rules and standards. Using the "tacit knowledge" that he has acquired of these things from having assimilated and acted in the tradition of freedom, he judges which laws and rules are relevant in particular situations, the actions they permit and those they disallow. The agent knows how to comply with, and how to apply, many laws and informal rules of liberal life. He is aware of the language of numerous laws and other explicit elements of liberal lore, but his interpretation of these, and of the unformulated rules of tradition, relies on tacit knowledge. For Polanyi, liberal lore and liberal tradition come together, complement and affect each other, through the conduct of individual agents and the discussions they have with one another.[28]

In his attempts at realizing the values, and measuring up to the standards of value, of the liberal tradition, the agent wrestles with problems, each of which is in some respects unprecedented. He, interprets, extends and applies the tradition in his personally nuanced way; Polanyi views this as contributing to the creative renewal of the liberal tradition.[29] The effort involved at living up to standards is, for Polanyi, particularly apparent when agents have conflicting demands to reconcile: "Everywhere in the world there are people who are trusted by their fellowmen [sic.] to tell the truth or to be fair; there are consciences touched by compassion, struggling against the ties of comfort or the callousness born of harsh custom. Our lives are full of such conflicts. Wherever these contacts are made with spiritual obligations, there is an opportunity for asserting liberty …A nation whose citizens are sensitive to the claims of conscience and are not afraid to follow them, is a free nation."[30]

Being largely unformulatable and the object of tacit knowledge, tradition can, in Polanyi's account, be passed on only by way of example, directly and personally by adepts to neophytes. This is the liberal tradition's mode of transmission. Seeds of the tradition are sown in the minds of the young, germinating as inclinations to think, feel and act along particular lines. For Polanyi, the young become indentured as "apprentices" to masters, these "elders" being accomplished in the practice of the tradition, their words and deeds providing the young with exemplars to emulate.[31] Listening to the language of freedom being spoken, and observing the ways in which free citizens act in various situations, the young - assimilating and imitating – become the next generation of participants in, contributors to, and custodians of, the primary tradition of a free society. Polanyi explains that, as a part of the knowledge-in-practice they develop in their apprenticeship, agents form a personal appreciation of how to exercise freedom according to the "unspoken rules of freedom," applying this practical knowledge as they participate in the life of the liberal society.[32]

Polanyi understands the tradition of freedom to "correlate" with an authority.[33] As with other traditions of practice, that of freedom has authority over its adherents, being valued by them. Practitioners of freedom conform to requirements of the tradition, believing it to be right for them to so do. From the time he began learning

the tradition of freedom, the agent has submitted to its authority. Invoking St. Augustine's words of the fourth century A.D., "*nisi credideritis, non intelligitis*," Polanyi writes that the "learner …must believe before he can know."[34] The young person has to commit himself to a lore and tradition in order to learn them; emotional commitment is the motive force that sustains his learning.[35] In this context ,Polanyi implies a distinction between the liberal tradition as a mediate object of submission and – the immediate object - significant others who embody the tradition.[36] The significant others include parents, relatives, teachers and clergy who have the "confidence" of, and whose authority is accepted by, the young.[37] As explained by Polanyi, the youthful apprentice submits through a tacit act of personal "surrender" to being habituated to the practice of liberty, accepting that the superior knowledge of practitioners of the tradition-in-practice is a valid source for his own "standards" and "deeds."[38]

Polanyi describes the act of "surrender" to the liberal tradition as "a-critical," rather than "uncritical."[39] An adherent cannot criticize the tradition, having accepted its ideas, values and standards on faith. Explains Polanyi, "no intelligence, however critical or original, can operate outside …a fiduciary framework," and "we cannot look at our standards in the process of using them."[40] Moreover, unformulated tacit knowledge – important as a dimension of the liberal tradition – is not an object of awareness nor one of critical examination.

Arguing that critical intelligence can be exercised only within, but not on, "a fiduciary framework," Polanyi denies neither the possibility nor desirability of lore that has been formulated within a framework being critically assessed.[41] And it is possible to criticize frameworks other than, but on the basis of, one's own, says Polanyi. Submission to authority ("dogmatic orthodoxy") can, according to Polanyi, "be kept in check both internally and externally;" a system of belief evolving as its formulated propositions are challenged.[42] In regard to science, Polanyi makes the point that discoveries may be encouraged by a sense that "the existing framework of science" is incomplete or else "by the opposite feeling that there is far more implied in …[the framework] than has yet been realized."[43] There is, for Polanyi, no criterion on which agents can decide as to when critical doubt may prove to be beneficial to science, as there is none in respect of liberalism. New discoveries and solutions impact on traditions, being a source of new or revised ideals, standards, and rules.

In a free society, as viewed by Polanyi, freedom possesses "political and moral authority." [44] What he has in mind here is, not the abstract idea of freedom nor explicit rules of the political constitution but, the tradition of freedom, and more particularly its tacit knowledge, enabling free citizens to participate in the "practice of freedom," assign meaning to formulated "liberal principles," and to interpret the constitution. [45] "All forms of freedom, such as self-government, the rule of law, and tolerance of religious and irreligious convictions, are sustained by …[the] authority" of this tradition of knowledge-in-practice.[46] So long as members of a free society willingly participate in the liberal tradition, "free institutions" can function, there being "no power [that] can enforce such spontaneous collaboration."[47]

## Popper's Understanding Of Tradition

Popper underlines the importance of tradition in social life when he implicitly agrees with Hegel and Hegelians (probably the one and only occasion on which he does agree with them) that we greatly depend on "our social heritage."[48] Popper's traditions are uniformities of agents' "attitudes, …or aims or values, or tastes," or actions, that are "handed on."[49] Any one, or any combination, of these types of "handed on" uniformities may constitute a tradition for Popper. His understanding of tradition is broad, including what some commentators might prefer to describe as customs or as personal habits, as for example "wear[ing] my watch on my left wrist."[50] Popper's traditions are distinguishable between three kinds: traditions predominantly of practice ("acting under

the influence of a tradition"[51]), predominantly of thought (e.g., philosophy), or composites of these two (e.g., the tradition of science).

The inner core of many, and of perhaps most, Popperian traditions consists in agents' subjective states and dispositions as generative mechanisms of social actions, the dispositions and their corresponding actions being fostered by the present generation of adherents in the next generation. Popper posits that "traditions are perhaps more closely bound up with persons and their likes and dislikes, their hopes and fears, than are institutions."[52] Typically he sees traditions as existing on a level between individuals and institutions. Popper's examples of traditions include "the burning interest in scientific research, or the scientist's critical attitude, or the attitude of tolerance, or the intolerance of the traditionalist – or for that matter, of the rationalist."[53]

Popper's traditions are social in the sense that numbers of people behave conformably to one another, or else share an attitude, taste, or value, contributing to what he describes as the "atmosphere" of a social institution (e.g. a factory, orchestra, scientific research) or society. They are also social in respect of their being spread and transmitted by "imitation."[54]

Rationalism, highly prominent in Popper's account, is first and foremost an attitude-tradition, diffusing by way of its adherents' speech and actions, disposing them to support democracy and humanitarian values.[55] At the heart of Popper's rationalist tradition is the "critical attitude;" science being the purest exemplification of this attitudinal tradition.[56] The scientific tradition is constituted for Popper by "first order theories [that are] handed on," accompanied by a "second order" critical attitude.[57] Through its critical attitude, the scientific tradition disposes adherents to act in given ways: performing experiments, clearly formulating theories and arguments, being honest, seeking the truth, etc.

## Rationality Of Traditions

Popper observes that "anti-rationalist" social and political theorists deny that tradition is susceptible to rational explanation, and they insist that tradition has to be accepted "as something just given."[58] Popper looks on Edmund Burke as the most important exponent of the idea that tradition represents an "irrational power" in social life, and rationalists, so far as Popper is concerned, have never properly countered Burke's interpretation.[59] He notes that rationalists have been dismissive of tradition, characterizing their attitude as: "'I am not interested in tradition. I want to judge everything on its own merits; I want to find out its merits and demerits, and I want to do this quite independently of any tradition. I want to judge it with my own brain, and not with the brains of other people who lived long ago.'"[60] It has not dawned on these rationalists, Popper suggests, that they themselves belong to a tradition – triumphalist Enlightenment rationalism – by which they are disposed to adopt this haughty attitude to tradition. A more recent expression of the "anti-rationalist reaction" Popper found expressed in Michael Oakeshott's "Rationalism in Politics" (1947). The fact that Oakeshott's "powerful" critique awaited a proper answer helped motivate Popper to investigate the subject of tradition.

One begins to see from the foregoing remarks that adherents' relations to traditions differ markedly between the account given by Popper and that by Polanyi. Relation to a tradition is a key feature for Popper. Popper distinguishes between "two main attitudes" that agents can adopt toward a tradition. An agent may accept a tradition uncritically, and will do so unavoidably if she happens to be unaware that she follows it, in which case the tradition amounts to a "taboo."[61] In this vein, Popper refers to "prejudices" being held unconsciously.[62] (Another possibility is that agents may reject a tradition uncritically, including those

rationalists whom I described above as adopting a "haughty" attitude to traditions.) Popper's rationalists have a critical attitude toward their tradition. "Rational," "critical," and "scientific" are indiscriminately interchanged by Popper in his "Toward a Rational Theory of Tradition" article. Popper describes rationalists as prepared "to challenge and to criticize everything", meaning they "will not submit blindly to any tradition" of which they are aware.[63] Popper's rationalists appreciate that they need to be conversant with traditions before critically considering them. This includes the rationalist and the evaluation of his own tradition. According to Popper, having made a faith commitment to rationalism, the rationalist uses reasoned argument to test the tradition.[64] In due course, the rationalist will accept or reject all, or else some ("in a compromise"), of the rationalist tradition on the basis of his critical assessment of it in relation to its expected effects and, should it be decided this is the best thing to do in the circumstances, he will set about finding or inventing a superior tradition.[65]

For him to count his theory of tradition as rational – construction of such a theory being the express object of his article - Popper requires that it serve the major purpose of theoretical social science which is, in his understanding, to explain why consequences of actions that are unintended and unwanted "cannot be eliminated," the explanation to be given in individualist terms (actions, relations, beliefs, etc. of individuals).[66] It is, Popper elaborates, "especially, the task of the social sciences to analyse …the existence and the functioning of" social objects with reference to people's actions and the unintended social consequences of those actions.[67] There are two problems that Popper intends his theory of tradition to solve.

Problem 1: Applying his view of social science to social traditions, Popper identifies among "the problems" to be solved by a rational theory of tradition that of explaining how traditions originate, develop and, particularly, "how …they persist - as the (possibly unintended) consequences" of actions.[68]

Problem 2: Popper considers that the principal problem for a rational theory of tradition to solve is explaining whether tradition has a "function …in social life" and, if so, what it is.[69] This suggests Popper's primary interest lies in presenting, not so much a rational theory of tradition (a theory relying on experience, argument, criticism) as, a theory of tradition as rational, showing it has a rational role to play (function) in social life. Answering this question, Popper would go some way toward answering his first problem, explaining how traditions "persist." Popper illuminates the social function of traditions by analogizing them to theories in natural science.

Pertinent to what is being distinguished here as Problem 1, Popper says that traditions may originate from "imitation." Popper notices that people (particularly "primitive peoples and children) …cling to" uniformities in conduct and in the form of received ideas (myths). Popper sees people as fastening on to uniformities because they fear change and/or because they seek to convince others "of their rationality or predictability, perhaps" wanting them to follow suit. "This is" for Popper "how traditional taboos arise and how they are handed on."[70]

So far as the origin of science is concerned, Popper traces it to the invention of the critical attitude, its application to accepted myths, and the use of language for formulating and criticizing myths.[71] Science arises from the confluence of these three traditions. Part of Popper's explanation of what we have distinguished as Problem 1, particularly as it regards the persistence of traditions, is that they are handed on to successive generations. For example, the scientist cannot commence research *de novo*, Popper contends, but "must make use of" his predecessors' work and accomplishments, maintaining "a certain tradition."[72] Scientific knowledge advances, in Popper's account, not by accumulation but, by leaps that are revolutionary without being destructive of the tradition. The development of traditions is, Popper implies, by way of criticism, "weighing their

merits against their demerits."[73] He considers that the critical assessment of social traditions, and the replacement of them with new traditions that are expected to be superior, is a process that depends on, and proceeds within, "a framework of social traditions."[74]

A social theory of tradition is further called on by Popper to explain whether tradition (in general) has a "function …in social life" and, if so, what the function is (distinguished above as Problem 2).[75] Popper is wondering whether traditions generally have a common function (as distinct from whether specific traditions have particular functions). Popper's solution to this problem rests on his recognition of a broad "parallel" between scientific (and certain other critically examined) theories and social "traditions in general." [76] The similarity is that critically assessed theories of science help us "to orientate ourselves in …[the natural] world" and social traditions "help us to orientate ourselves, especially in the social world." This in essence is Popper's view of the general function of social tradition.[77]

Popper's argument for his solution of Problem 2 relies on five pieces of support.

First, he advises of a need (general condition) of social life, being regularities in the social environment that enable agents to make successful predictions. "Social life can exist only if" its agents "know, and …have confidence, that there are things and events which must be so and cannot be otherwise," explains Popper.[78]

Second, explaining why it is that social life depends on agents making successful social predictions, Popper affirms that people experience psychological disturbance when either the natural or the social environments are unknown to, and unpredictable by, them. Writes Popper, "we should be anxious, terrified, and frustrated, and we could not live in the social world, did it not contain a …great number of regularities to which we can adjust ourselves."[79]

Third, why does Popper believe that psychological disturbance results (and social life is impossible) when agents cannot make successful social predictions? His bedrock explanation is that without predictability "there is no possibility of [agents] reacting rationally."[80] Being able to confidently predict that Smith the pharmacist will provide me with the medication that my doctor has prescribed for my bronchial condition, rather than a drug for some entirely different condition, or a placebo, or poison, I can act rationally in making my purchase and taking the medication. For predictions of this sort to be made, and confirmed, Popper reasons, a society must have its regularities, imparting order to social life. (Gilbert Murray truly wrote of "that intricate web of normal expectation which forms the very essence of human society [but which if frequently] torn …by continued disappointment [means] that at last there ceases to be any normal expectation at all."[81] )

Fourth, Popper considers that institutions and traditions are important among the stabilizations of social life, providing people with "a clear idea of what to expect and how to proceed."[82] They are among the regularities that impart structure to social life.[83] (Institutions are compared by Popper with traditions in terms of assisting their members [and others] to form reliable predictive knowledge of "what to expect" and assisting them to decide how best "to proceed."[84] )

A fifth aspect of Popper's solution to Problem 2 of explaining tradition, concerns what might be termed the specific functionality of traditions. Besides being regularities in social life and contributing to its predictability (general function), traditions, according to Popper, may be specifically functional for particular institutions. Among the effects that Popper regards institutions as having in society are ones that he describes as "prima facie"

or "proper" functions (e.g. diffusing knowledge, maintaining order, keeping people fed and clothed), being socially beneficial effects that institutions have been constructed (or discovered) to produce.[85] Popper believes that institutions are "ambivalent" in that their members may choose to behave deviantly, diverting their institutions away from their "proper"/"prima facie" function(s).[86] Among his illustrative examples, the police, whose proper/prima facie function is to protect the citizenry from crime, can become an agent of crime, and a parliamentary Opposition, whose proper/prima facie functions include exposing government corruption, may cooperate with a government in practicing corruption.[87]

As a part of their specific functional contribution (relating to institutions), and as a part of their general functionality (enhancing the predictability of social life), Popper sees traditions – mediate between agents and institutions – offsetting the ambivalence of institutions by encouraging members of institutions to respect and enact their appointed roles, enabling the institutions to perform their proper functions. He cites the social institution of language as having description and argument for its "characteristically human functions."[88] In its descriptive function, language is, Popper proposes, "a vehicle of truth," which function depends for its discharge on a tradition that is favorable to it, and that is unfavorable to language being misused to spread false information.[89] The argumentative function of language depends on tradition to counteract the ambivalence of this function, being "the critical tradition" (or "tradition of reason") that encourages "clear speaking and clear thinking" while discouraging people from misusing language to present "pseudo-arguments and propaganda."[90]

Traditions also are "ambivalent," Popper believes, but they are less corruptible than are institutions because the "character" of traditions "is less instrumental than that of institutions," and traditions are almost as "impersonal as institutions."[91] (Referring to the "impersonal" nature of these social objects, Popper would appear to mean that typically one cannot enumerate each of the concrete particular persons belonging to them at any given time; and by referring to them as more "instrumental" than traditions, Popper suggests that institutions more directly promote some definite end or value. "It is tradition which gives the persons (who come and go [in an institution]) that background and that certainty of purpose which [enable the persons to] resist corruption."[92] )

## Rationalism And Liberal Democracy

Polanyi, we noted, discusses the tradition of liberty as a vital element in the life of a free society. In Popper's open society, the traditions of fundamental importance are critical rationalism and humanitarianism (humanitarian values). Critical rationalism - science's tradition of criticism (the "second order" tradition of science) "writ large"[93] - is the tradition on which Popper's account of the open (liberal democratic) society turns, with its choice being deemed by Popper as quite likely "the most fundamental" of all moral decisions.[94] Popper highlights the importance he places on reason/rationality, and on the commitment to it ("critical rationalism"), when he paraphrases, with obvious approval, what he understands to have been Socrates' view that "it is your reason that makes you human; …that makes you a self-sufficient individual and entitles you to claim that you are an end in yourself."[95]

The open society's rationalism is "critical" ("true") rationalism, as opposed to "uncritical" or "comprehensive" rationalism which, its followers suppose, requires no underlying faith commitment but which Popper dismisses as "inconsistent."[96] Critical rationalism emphasizes "argument and experience," tries "to take

argument seriously," and proposes that '"I may be wrong and you may be right, and by an effort we may get nearer to the truth,'" encouraging responsiveness to criticism.[97] It is a Socratic rationalism, with agents aware of their "intellectual limitations."[98] Popper notes that the rationalist attitude ("reasonableness") is very similar to "the scientific attitude," with truth seeking and objectivity being understood as cooperative ventures.[99]

Explains Popper, critical rationalism cannot be "established" or "determined" by argument, although a decision regarding it can be "helped" by argument.[100] In the first instance, Popper believes, the adoption of rationalism must be as a tentative, "irrational faith in reason."[101] The decision to prefer critical rationalism need not be blind. Popper's agent returns to reappraise his initial decision after having traced out the respective "consequences" or "tendencies" of critical rationalism and, its "alternative," irrationalism, being the two main possible objects of choice in this situation.[102] Popper explains that although consequences cannot determine the decision – agents have to decide in light of their conscience but conscience is not determining – they can "influence" ("induce" or "help") it.[103] The sum value of the consequences of critical rationalism is, for Popper, such as to confirm the rationalist's initial faith commitment to it.

Popper's view of the initial adoption of this tradition – as faith commitment – is akin to Polanyi's account of the adoption of the tradition of freedom by way of an act of faith. A difference is that Popper's agent engages in a *rational assessment* to ascertain that it is the "right faith."[104] Popper's agent is sufficiently able to detach himself from his tradition as to deliberate on its consequences and those of irrationalism, deciding between them in light of this analysis of their consequences, and of his conscience.

The consequences that assist an agent to decide in favor of critical rationalism Popper refers to as "humanitarianism," and he also sees this position as resting on a faith commitment, being referred to by him as a "religion."[105] Humanitarianism, for Popper, includes democracy, equality/impartiality (with particular reference to political relations, and settlement of conflicts by discussion and compromise rather than by violence), tolerance, freedom, piecemeal social engineering, the unity of humanity as opposed to tribalism, individualism as an ontology and as an "ultimate [ethical] concern" as opposed to collectivism, alleviation of misery and eschewing the maximization of happiness as a false ideal for social-political reform.[106]

## Review Of The Theories

The two theories can now be critically compared.

### *Contents*

Polanyi and Popper differ as to how they understand the contents of traditions. The core of critical rationalism as Popper's paradigmatic tradition – a meta-tradition applicable to other traditions – consists in an attitude of willingness to criticize theories and social objects (traditions, and institutions). (Popper requires that criticism be tempered with the degree of dogmatism that enables an agent to properly understand a position and appreciate its strengths.) Popper suggests that the mere holding of the attitude is insufficient to constitute the tradition, which also has to be expressed in word or deed appropriate to circumstances.

Polanyi's liberal tradition consists in a body of cognitive-practical skills that has been transmitted to agents, become embodied in their conduct, and which they will transmit to the next generation. Like scientific research and other traditions of skill, Polanyi's liberal tradition is transmitted by direct contact, with "apprentices"

observing and emulating "craftsmen." Such traditions occur only "in closely circumscribed local traditions," or in countries to which craftsmen have migrated and recommenced their practice.[107] This fact would help to explain why the liberal tradition has proven so difficult to establish beyond Britain, the US, and a handful of countries of Continental Europe and the British Commonwealth. Polanyi delves into the process of transmission, regarding it as an essential feature of tradition, whereas Popper offers only the basic idea that tradition is transmitted by imitation. Polanyi's tradition of freedom consists in an array of nuanced craft skills (intuitions, discriminations, judgments, capacities) and activities. Informing the conduct (knowledge-in-practice) of members of a free society, Polanyi's tradition of freedom represents a work in progress, being altered by its enactments. It exemplifies what Oakeshott referred to as "a concrete coherent manner of living in all its intricateness."[108]

***Tradition And Social Ontology***

Polanyi envisages science, common law and Protestant denominations as spontaneous orders (rather than as institutions), being a distinctive feature of his free society. Polanyi's spontaneous orders are horizontal, and consist in large numbers of freely moving parts, being unlike institutions with their hierarchies of superiors and subordinates. Language and science Polanyi takes to be spontaneous orders, whereas Popper construes language as an institution ("controlled by persons"), and science he suggests is an institution compounded of many others (institutions).[109]

Popper's traditions are distinct from institutions, being applied to them, and assisting members to serve their institutions' "proper" functions. Popper describes traditions as existing between persons and institutions, referring to "a uniformity of people's attitudes" etc., and being "more closely bound up with persons and their likes and dislikes …than are institutions."[110]

Polanyi's tradition of freedom does not exist separately from, and is not applied to, his free society with its component spontaneous orders and institutions. It exists within, as a sustaining principle of, these objects. The tradition consists largely in the form of tacit knowledge, being actualized in adherents' skilful enactments of its principles, maxims, standards. Polanyi's liberal tradition is acquired by apprentices from masters as an art of skilled interpretation, judgment and conduct. Enactment of the tradition, as with scientific research and other traditions, involves intuitive knowledge of standards, morés, values, delicate discriminations, complex interpretations, and subtle judgments of which agents are largely unaware and are unable to formulate in detail.[111]

According to Polanyi, tacit knowledge is an essential element of the liberal tradition. Popper, in contrast with Polanyi, is a characteristically modern philosopher for whom rationality concerns propositions that "admit of explicit formulation" being subjected to "the requirements of …[the proper] epistemological method."[112] The fundamental role of tacit knowledge in social life has been well covered by James Scott in his book, *Seeing Like a State*. Scott argues that formulated rules and knowledge are insufficient for social groups to be viable, with initiatives, skills, "informal understandings and improvisations" having to be included. These implicit "forms of knowledge embedded in local experience" Scott distinguishes as "metis,"[113] the gist of which consists in agents "knowing how and when to apply …[relevant] rules of thumb in a concrete situation."[114] Metis is socialized by way of a lengthy "apprenticeship", relying on practice and conservation of skills. Scott's analysis resonates with that of Polanyi.[115]

***Instrumentally Valuable Or Self-Justifying?***

Popper's choice of title is not properly reflective of his principal aim for his article. Popper's purpose is seen as twofold by the present author, being to explain tradition by way of a theory that is rational, and – the more important aim, not clearly reflected by the title, "Toward a Rational Theory of Tradition" - to produce a theory that shows tradition to be rational. His article would have been more accurately titled, "Toward a theory of rational tradition." A rational theory of the subject is, for Popper, one that is tractable by criticism. In regard to the other aim – producing a theory of tradition as rational – Popper's point is substantive, affirming tradition to be a rational element in social life, making an instrumentally valuable contribution to the activities and lives of people. This in other words is Popper's argument that tradition is functional for society, consisting in a type of regularity that helps to make social life more ordered and predictable for agents (general function), and in traditions assisting social institutions to perform their proper/prima facie functions (institutional function).[116]

Whereas Popper chiefly studies traditions as rational instruments, serving institutional or broad social functions, Polanyi is interested in the nature of traditions and the meaning they have for agents, being value that is immanent in the tradition.[117] Polanyi's tradition of freedom is the context in which practitioners of cultural disciplines seek and make discoveries about the nature of spiritual ideals. The view of traditions as possessed of immanent value and meaning one also finds expressed in Michael Oakeshott's writings, traditions being valued for their own sake, not because they serve goods that exist extrinsically to the traditions. In the same spirit as these thinkers, Anthony O'Hear suggests that "A very great deal of the meaning [significance] we as human beings find and the satisfaction we take in our activities and traditions …has little to do with their efficiency or ability to subserve ends aside from what is involved in engaging in the activities."[118]

Agents in Polanyi's liberal tradition are not acting with a view to serving social functions. They embody resources of the tradition in their activities, dealing with contingencies and difficulties as they arise. Polanyi envisages rationality as internal to the tradition of freedom, and to traditions that flourish in a free society (science, justice, etc.), being defined by standards that are laid down in the tradition. It is not instrumental rationality. Liberalism, science, common law and traditions of many other spontaneous orders, Polanyi depicts as spiritual and describes as "self-purposive."[119] These activities, conducted for their own sake, agents deem to be important and valuable in themselves, John Casey maintaining that institutions, traditions and the like are "things in themselves …[or] ends" and to judge them instrumentally is "inappropriate."[120]

***Criticizability***

Popper underscores criticism of dogma and Polanyi underscores dogma as submission to authority. Popper's pre-eminent tradition – rationalism – is one of criticism. Popper envisages criticism (rationalism) as a comprehensive tradition, applicable to theories, policies, institutions, and traditions, all of them being objects "that we can criticize and change."[121] Popper's traditions are rationally held when they have been criticized and have coped well with criticism. An underlying assumption of Popper's support of criticism of traditions is that they can be rationally discarded and replaced with new traditions, Popper comparing the process to the creation of laws.[122] There are thinkers who would question Popper's idea that traditions are objects of planning and of deliberate creation. Popper sheds no light on how traditions can be made, but he suggests it is not straightforward, citing that to establish a tradition of research can involve a "real struggle" and be a "very hard thing to bring about."[123]

To the question of whether he regards the tradition of freedom (and other traditions) as being criticizable, Polanyi suggests a complex answer. Some of the content of a tradition that has been formulated, particularly its associated lore, can be criticized, according to Polanyi, but not its "fundamental beliefs." He quotes J. S. Mill's argument for cognitive "fallibility" in *On Liberty* that "The beliefs which we have most warrant for have no safeguard to rest on, but a standing invitation to the whole world to prove them unfounded."[124] The presuppositions of liberalism are, Polanyi writes, along with all other "fundamental beliefs[,] irrefutable as well as unprovable. The test of proof or disproof is . . . irrelevant for the acceptance or rejection of fundamental beliefs." Even the "admission of our fallibility only serves to reaffirm our claim to a fictitious standard of intellectual integrity."[125]

A further aspect of this topic concerns Polanyi's views on the authority of tradition. Adherents, as described by Polanyi, "indwell" the tradition, submitting to its authority, assimilating, and relying on, it. Being dwelled in, a tradition cannot be externalized by its adherents which, with the tacit dimension, makes it doubly difficult for them to criticize the tradition. This does not prevent agents from becoming dissatisfied with practices in a tradition, Polanyi suggests, and new practices evolve that seem better adapted to problems at hand. The tradition changes as it is employed in new situations, encountering problems that are unprecedented.

The Popperian believes traditions can be compared with one another, as for example the traditions of critical rationalism and irrationalism, or of Marxism with the tradition of the open society and humanitarian values. The critical comparison is conducted instrumentally, with reference to the (un)desirability of their envisaged effects. Popper considers that, after being adopted on faith, traditions have to be assessed and, coping well with criticism, they are held rationally. Polanyi agrees that people reject traditions and take up new ones, citing St. Augustine's embrace of Christianity as a paradigm case. But such changes cannot be effected by reason alone, Polanyi contends; emotion and faith also become involved, with the change itself amounting to a "conversion." Discussion in *Personal Knowledge* of controversies between supporters of different frameworks and traditions (e.g. liberalism versus Marxism) indicates that, for Polanyi, these controversies cannot be mediated on neutral grounds. There are no "fixed external criteria" of truth and validity, and agents have to "accredit" their "own judgment as the paramount arbiter of all . . . [their] intellectual performances."[126] Criticism of a tradition must be external, according to Polanyi, expressed by people who are not indwelling the tradition. Relativism, while explicitly rejected by Polanyi (as it is by Popper), is a position that his analysis of traditions and frameworks of belief would appear to imply, making the analysis unattractive in certain quarters.[127]

Two perspectives on social traditions have been presented in this article, Polanyi's paying particular attention to the perspective of participants in, and Popper's including more of the perspective of observers of, traditions. Popper's class of traditions overlaps that of Polanyi, but a good many of Popper's traditions – attitudes or values or practices (e.g. the way an orchestra performs classical compositions, the conduct of members of a police force, or of politicians of an opposition party) – look to be more specific than are Polanyi's traditions, with Popper's as the more populous class. Polanyi's view of traditions - the liberal tradition having been of particular interest to us - is deeper and richer than is Popper's view. Polanyi's view shines light on complexities of traditions that Popper's view ignores.

## Endnotes

[1]Edward Shils argues in *Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 101 n. 24 that

Popper and Polanyi were the first scholars to show that science has tradition among its vital principles. In fact, early in the 20th century, Pierre Duhem affirmed physics as having a "continous tradition" in his *The Aim and Structure of Physical Theory* (New York: Athenaeum, 1981), 32-33 (the first edition of this work having appeared in French in 1906).

[2]Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (London: Routledge, 2002), xxxvi-xxxvii.

[3]Ibid., 761-762 , n. 61; also 501, 704 n. 6, 714 n. 44.

[4]Michael Polanyi, "Foundations of Academic Freedom," (1947), reprinted in Polanyi, *The Logic of Liberty* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 45.

[5]Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), 376.

[6]Michael Polanyi, "Preface," *Logic of Liberty*, vi.

[7]Michael Polanyi, "Perils of Inconsistency," *Logic of Liberty*, 107; also "Preface," v.

[8]Michael Polanyi, "Scientific Convictions," (1949), reprinted in *Logic of Liberty*, 30; see also "Perils of Inconsistency," *Logic of Liberty*, 106-109; for a similar view see Max Planck, *Where is Science Going?* (1932) (New York: AMS Press, 1977), 64.

[9]Polanyi, "Scientific Convictions," *Logic of Liberty*, 30; also Michael Polanyi, *Science, Faith and Society* (1946) (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), 72-73; and Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 377.

[10]Michael Polanyi, "Manageability of Social Tasks," *Logic of Liberty*, 158ff., 193.

[11]Michael Polanyi, "The Growth of Thought in Society," *Economica* 1941, Nov., 430.

[12]Ibid., 438.

[13]Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 222.

[14]Ibid., 244, 376-377.

[15]Ibid., 215.

[16]Ibid., 374-380; also Michael Polanyi, "On Liberalism and Liberty," (1955), reprinted in Michael Polanyi, *Society, Economics & Philosophy*, Ed. with an introduction by R. T. Allen (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1997), 203ff.

[17]Polanyi, "Liberalism and Liberty," 203, 205. For Polanyi on social lore, and on "liberal orthodoxy" as a form of "articulate system" see *Personal Knowledge*, 174, 203ff., 215, 321, 375-77. Concerning Polanyi's lore/tradition distinction, see Struan Jacobs, "Polanyi on Tradition in Liberal Modernity," in *Emotion, Reason and Tradition*, Ed. with an introduction by Struan Jacobs and R. T. Allen (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 69ff.

[18]On several occasions Polanyi opines that freedom is likely to be destroyed when speculative thinking proceeds unchecked, corroding commitments to tradition and "traditional ideals" with skepticism, and violence used to remake society. He cites the rationalist, anti-religious French Revolution, and the "nihilist skeptical" Communist revolutions and Fascist counter-revolutions of the twentieth century. See for example, Polanyi, "Liberalism and Liberty," 204-207, and "Perils of Inconsistency," *Logic of Liberty*, 93ff.

[19]"Whatever else a tradition is, it is a series of acts," writes D. M. Armstrong, "The Nature of Tradition," in *Liberty and Politics*, ed. Owen Harries (Rushcutters Bay: Pergamon Press, 1976), 8.

[20]Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 54; also Polanyi, "Perils of Inconsistency," *Logic of Liberty*, 98ff.

[21]Polanyi, "Liberalism and Liberty," 205; also Polanyi, "Preface," and "Scientific Convictions," *Logic*

*of Liberty*, v and 23; Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 216ff.

[22]Polanyi, *Science, Faith and Society*, 43; Michael Polanyi, "Planned Science," *Logic of Liberty*, 88ff.

[23]Polanyi, "Liberalism and Liberty," 203, 206.

[24] Polanyi, *Science, Faith and Society*, 67-68, 71, 76.

[25]Polanyi, "Scientific Convictions," *Logic of Liberty*, 29.

[26]Polanyi, "Liberalism and Liberty," 204; also Polanyi, *Science, Faith and Society*, 49, and for analogies with science see Polanyi, "Self-government of science," *Logic of Liberty*, 54-57.

[27]Polanyi, *Science, Faith and Society*, 71 emphasis added.

[28]Polanyi, "Lliberalism and Liberty," 203; also Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 62, 207; and, regarding science, Polanyi, *Science, Faith and Society*, 45. R. T. Allen, *Beyond Liberalism* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers), 67ff.

[29]For analogical illumination of these points see Polanyi, *Science, Faith and Society*, 42ff.; Polanyi, "Foundations of Academic Freedom," *Logic of Liberty*, 44-45; Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 170; Michael Polanyi and Harry Prosch, *Meaning* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), 61.

[30]Polanyi, "Foundations of Academic Freedom," *Logic of Liberty*, 45-46.

[31] Polanyi, "Liberalism and Liberty," 205; Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 53ff.; and for analogies with science see Polanyi, *Science, Faith and Society*, 43-45; Polanyi, "Scientific Convictions," *Logic of Liberty*, 26ff.; Polanyi, "Self-Government in Science," *Logic of Liberty*, 52ff., 55ff.

[32]Polanyi, "On Liberalism and Liberty," 204, 207.

[33]Ibid., 203.

[34] Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 266; also 207ff., 271, 375ff; see also Polanyi, *Science, Faith and Society*, 45; and Polanyi, "Managability of Social Tasks," *Logic of Liberty*, 193.

[35]Polanyi, *Science, Faith and Society*, 45; Richard Allen, "Some Implications of the Political Aspects of Personal Knowledge," *Tradition & Discovery* XXXIV, no.3 (2007-2008): 8

[36]Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 271.

[37]Ibid., 208; also 53f., 207, 375-76.

[38]Ibid., 378, 380.

[39]Ibid., 378; also 208f. and 264.

[40]Ibid., 266 and 183.

[41]Ibid., 285, 272ff.

[42]Ibid., 268, also 285.

[43] Ibid., 277.

[44]Polanyi, "Liberalism and Liberty," 202-203 emphasis added; also Polanyi, *Science, Faith and Society*, 44-45.

[45]Ibid., 202-203.

[46]Ibid., 203.

[47]Ibid., 202.

[48]Popper, *Open Society*, 498.

[49]Karl Popper, "Towards a Rational Theory of Tradition," *Conjectures and Refutations*, 4th ed. rev.

(London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 133, and 126.

[50]Ibid., 122.

[51]Ibid., 122 emphasis added.

[52]Ibid., 133 emphasis added.

[53]Ibid., 133, emphasis is added to highlight the importance of the psychological dimension in Popper's traditions.

[54] Ibid., 121-123, 134.

[55]Ibid., 122, 127, 134-135; Popper, *The Open Society*, 205ff., 497ff, 500ff, 512- 513.

[56]Popper, "Rational Theory of Tradition," 122; *The Open Society*, 517.

[57]Popper, "Rational Theory of Tradition," 127.

[58]Ibid., 120.

[59]Ibid., 120.

[60]Ibid., 120-121.

[61]Ibid., 122.

[62]Popper, *The Open Society*, 492.

[63]P opper, "Rational Theory of Tradition," 122.

[64]Popper, *The Open Society*, 492, 519-520.

[65]Popper, "Rational Theory of Tradition," 122; Popper, *The Open Society*, 489, 492, 496ff.

[66]Popper, "Rational Theory of Tradition," 123-124; Popper, *The Open Society*, 787 n. 11.

[67]Ibid., 125.

[68]Ibid., 125, also 133.

[69]Ibid., 125 emphasis added.

[70]Ibid., 132, also 134.

[71]Ibid., 126, 130; Popper, *The Open Society*, 711 n. 38.

[72]Popper, "Rational Theory of Tradition," 129.

[73]Ibid., 132.

[74]I bid., 132.

[75]Ibid., 125 emphasis added.

[76]Ibid., 126, also 125; Popper, *The Open Society*, 499.

[77]Popper, "Rational Theory of Tradition," 126, also 131.

[78]Ibid., 130.

[79]Ibid., 130 emphasis added.

[80]Ibid., 130; also 131.

[81]Gilbert Murray, *The Rise of the Greek Epic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 55.

[82]Popper, "Rational Theory of Tradition," 130, also 131.

[83]Popper is aware that traditions also are ambivalent, and not always functional for social life, as with traditions of public officials taking bribes, of political extremism, and religious fanaticism.

[84]Popper, "Rational Theory of Tradition," 130, also 134.

[85]Ibid., 133.

[86]Ibid., 133.

[87]Ibid., 133.

[88]Ibid., 135.

[89]Ibid., 135; also *The Open Society*, 512, 767 n. 30.

[90]Ibid., 135; see also Max Black, *The Labyrinth of Language* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), 27.

[91]Ibid., 134.

[92]Ibid., 134.

[93]In *The Open Society* (ignoring material that Popper added in editions other than the first (e.g. 711, n. 38)), so far as the present author can make out, Popper (496ff.) refers to rationalism in what may be termed synchronic fashion, as an "attitude" (also as a "creed" (507), "irrational decision" (824 n. 6; cf. 825 n. 8), and as a "faith" (515) involving conversion (515-516), rather than explicitly describing it (diachronically) as a tradition of transmission. But he strongly suggests in *The Open Society* (517; also 498-499, 501, 762) that he looks on rationalism as a tradition, and this is, of course, how he describes rationalism in the "Theory of Tradition" essay. For impressions of Popper on the history of rationalism in the West see *The Open Society*, 501, 517, 761-62 n. 61. Tradition also is involved in the critique of utopian engineering (dirigisme), and the defense of piecemeal engineering (reform) that Popper presents in *The Open Society*, as for example at 180-182. See also Popper, "Rational Theory of Tradition," 131-132.

[94]Popper, *The Open Society*, 506; also 504, 513, 517.

[95]Ibid., 207 emphasis added; cf. 519, 828 n. 10.

[96]Ibid., 499, 500, 502-504, 519, 824 n. 6, 825 n. 8.

[97]Ibid., 499, 510, 512-513, and 829 n. 19.

[98]Ibid., 695 n. 6, also 497, 499, 511, 714.

[99]Ibid., 497, 510.

[100]Ibid., 504, 505.

[101]Ibid., 503.

[102]Ibid., 505-506, 513.

[103]Ibid., 505-506, 510, 513, 519-520.

[104]Ibid., 519.

[105]Ibid., 513, 531-532, 780.

[106]Ibid., 507-512, 516-517, 519, 530, 591, 668-669, 697, 763, 770, 829n.18.

[107]Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 53. Examples of such circumscribed "local traditions" are numerous, one being provided by Alan Watts, The Way of Zen (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1962), 29 in regard to the transmission of performing Oriental music.

[108]Michael Oakeshott, "Rational Conduct," in *Rationalism in politics and other essays* (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1991), 119.

[109]Ian C. Jarvie, *The Republic of Science: The Emergence of Popper's Social View of Science 1935–1945* (Atlanta: Rodopi, 2001), 64.

[110]Popper, "Rational Theory of Tradition," 133-134.

[111]Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 53.

[112]Mark T. Mitchell, "Michael Polanyi Alasdair MacIntyre, and the Role of Tradition," *Humanitas* 19, nos. 1 and 2 (2006): 120. See also John Flett, "Alasdair MacIntyre's Tradition-Constituted Enquiry in Polanyian Perspective," *Tradition & Discovery* 26, no. 2 (1999-2000), 6ff.

[113]James Scott, *Seeing Like a State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 311. Another good guide on the subject is Ira J. Cohen, *Structuration Theory* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 27.

[114]Ibid., 316.

[115]Ibid., 319. Scott approvingly cites Polanyi in *Seeing Like a State*, 426 n. 22.

[116]An example of Popper – the tradition of intolerance of traditionalists – suggests as a possibility that among traditions there are, in Popper's view, some that, while they are themselves regularities, may not enhance social order. Ibid., 134. Shils argues that some traditions weaken the social fabric (Shils, *Tradition*, xxxiv, 201-202).

[117]Although Popper typically views traditions as instruments, there are some, he suggests – science for example – that have immanent value for their practitioners, science being regarded by Popper as self-justifying and a spiritual adventure, as well as being an instrument with which to better understand the world. In this regard, his theory overlaps Polanyi's.

[118]Anthony O'Hear, "Criticism and Tradition in Popper, Oakeshott and Hayek," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 9, no. 1 (1992): 69-70; also Alan Wells, *Social Institutions* (London: Heinemann, 1970), 289.

[119]Polanyi, "Growth of Thought," 450.

[120]John Casey, "Tradition and Authority," in *Conservative Essays*, Ed. Maurice Cowling (London: Cassell, 1978) 85.

[121]Popper, "Rational Theory of Tradition," 131.

[122]Ibid., 131.

[123]Ibid., 121 and 122.

[124]Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 270, quoting J. S. Mill, *On Liberty* (London: Dent, 1910), 83.

[125]Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 271.

[126]Ibid., 265.

[127]Marjorie Grene, *A Philosophical Testament* (Chicago: Open Court, 1995), 169 considers that Polanyi's position does not entirely "escape from the relativist dilemma." See also Struan Jacobs, "Michael Polanyi, Tacit Cognitive Relativist," *The Heythrop Journal*, 2001 xlii: 4, 463-476. For a contrary interpretation of this strand of Polanyi's thought, see Mark T. Mitchell, *Michael Polanyi* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2006), 101, 176 n.34.