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Edward Shils' Turn Against Karl Mannheim: The Central European Connection

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Abstract This paper traces Edward Shils' transition, during World War II, from enthusiasm to harsh criticism of Karl Mannheim, the Hungarian-born sociologist of knowledge. While serving in London, Shils drew upon a direct and explicit intellectual assault on Mannheim by fellow emigrés to England. Even while Shils maintained regular contact with Mannheim, Shils was exposed to an often vituperative dismissal of Mannheim's work by Karl Popper and Friedrich Hayek, in the pages of the London School of Economics (LSE) journal *Economica*. After the war, when both Popper and Shils joined the LSE faculty—Hayek's affiliation dated to 1931—Shils' encounter with their critiques was deepened. And in these early postwar years, Shils became close friends with yet another emigré Mannheim critic, Michael Polanyi. Combined, these sustained and sophisticated criticisms helped wrest Shils from his interwar, Mannheim-friendly intellectual coordinates. The implications for Shils' later propagation of the "mass society theory" label are considered.

Keywords Edward Shils · Karl Mannheim · Sociology of knowledge · Karl Popper · Friedrich von Hayek · Michael Polanyi

Edward Shils was an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania when Karl Mannheim published *Ideology and Utopia* in 1929. "I was dimly aware of the great commotion which it set going in Germany," he recalled years later (Shils 1995: 221). By 1932, Mannheim was still "terra incognita" to Shils—but this would change dramatically, once Shils took up an assistantship under Louis Wirth at the University of Chicago in 1933. Soon after, Shils became de facto translator of the book, and then sole translator of Mannheim's next, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction*, published in 1935 and in translation, 1940. Along the way, Shils was, for a time, an enthusiastic adherent of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge. And, at least until his World War II service in London, he accepted many of the basic tenets of *Mensch und Gesellschaft*'s bleak prognosis. Though he never embraced

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Mannheim's urgent call for wide-scale planning, he was, like Mannheim, deeply shaken by the collapse of Weimar. Shils came to believe, partly under Mannheim's influence, that modern societies were threatening to unravel, and that their precariousness derived, in large part, from a mass populace that had broken free from its old *Gemeinschaft* sinews. The basic contours of this view—Mannheim's view—became, years later, the gist of the "mass society theory" pejorative that Shils, among others, attached to downcast intellectuals in the late 1950s. This is not coincidence. Mannheim's gloomy, dissensual analysis of modernity—which Shils accepts, then turns against harshly during and after the war—becomes the model, for Shils, of other intellectuals' post-ideological deflation in the 1950s.

In this paper, I argue that Shils' rejection of Mannheim drew significantly upon a direct and explicit intellectual assault by fellow emigrés to England. During the war—even while he maintained regular contact with Mannheim—Shils was exposed to an often vituperative dismissal of Mannheim's work by Karl Popper and Friedrich Hayek, in the pages of the London School of Economics journal *Economica*. After the war, when both Popper and Shils joined the LSE faculty—Hayek's affiliation dated to 1931—Shils' encounter with their critiques was deepened. And in these early postwar years, Shils became close friends with yet another emigré Mannheim critic, Michael Polanyi. Combined, these sustained and sophisticated criticisms helped wrest Shils from his interwar, Mannheim-friendly intellectual coordinates.

Shils and the Reckless Intellect

During his undergraduate years in the late 1920s, Shils had already become fascinated with, and repulsed by, the tendency that he observed among intellectuals to despise their own societies. Shils' aversion to intellectual disloyalty was a constant throughout his adult life, though his specifically "Shilsian" take on the intellectual and his society would only cohere, in a sophisticated, original, and consistent way, in the late 1950s. But he had, while a very precocious college student, already come to distrust the utopian aspirations that underpinned, he thought, intellectuals' gloomy pictures of their own societies.

It is important, for understanding Shils, to realize that *his* God never failed; that he was born only once; and that he chose the West from the beginning, without any of the Cold War agonizing of ex-radicals. But like so many others, Shils experienced a crisis in his own liberalism during the 1930s, which he spent as a still-precocious graduate student and instructor at the University of Chicago. The Great Depression was important to Shils' crisis, as it was for so many others. But Shils filtered the decade's turmoil through his own, distinct experience and intellectual prisms.

He formed his profound reverence for German academic achievement just as his beloved Weimar conversation was coming to a violent close. His friendships, in the 1930s, with traumatized German Jewish refugees amplified his despair over the rise of National Socialism. At the same time, he came to link European intellectuals' other-worldly aspirations with the barbarous collapse of their own societies; he held them partly responsible for the calamities in Germany, Italy, and Soviet Russia.

In the partially formed analysis of fascism and Soviet communism that he developed in these years, Shils came to accept a downcast picture of modern society,

especially in the lead up to World War II. In a complex, overlapping composite of his own readings and the diagnoses of Mannheim, Shils came to subscribe to a view of modern life that stressed the dangerous attenuation of belief systems, the threat posed by unanchored masses, and a general fear of social disorder. Along with Mannheim, Shils helped articulate this view of dangerous disintegration with reference to Tönnies's *Gemeinschaft–Gesellschaft* contrast—which Shils took to be implicit in the broader stream of late nineteenth and early twentieth century German sociology. The illiberal regimes, he came to believe, had exploited these isolated, meaning-starved masses by supplying them transcendent ideals and the comforts of order. The basic outline of this analysis was, of course, developed by many other scholars, especially emigrés from across the political spectrum, before, during and after the war. It should be obvious, too, that this diagnosis is substantially the same picture of modern society that Shils and Daniel Bell come to dismiss—and historicize—as the "theory of mass society" in the mid- to late 1950s. What later gets called "mass society theory" was, in the late 1930s, Shils' own view and the view, too, of those close to him.

By the 1950s, when Shils was attacking "mass society theorists," he had replaced his old interwar fears with a strikingly different image of modern, and especially Anglo-American, life. The crucial years of revision were 1942 to 1945, when Shils worked in the London branch of the Office of Strategic Services, precursor to the CIA. His contacts there, with English and emigré intellectuals, helped along his new understanding, as did his intense study, in this period, of literature on early modern English religious tolerance. Above all, his wartime research on German prisoners-of-war contributed to his changed view: In trying to explain the extraordinary tenacity of the *Wehrmacht* in the face of certain defeat, Shils came to realize that close primary ties among small units—and *not* diffuse attachments to Nazism or the Fatherland—accounted for the soldiers' will to fight. On reflection, Shils came to see the persistence of primary ties as an overlooked feature of modern life—a feature that helped to undermine the more dissensual picture he and those around him had clung to in the pre-war years.

Shils' observations, readings, and contacts in wartime London also gave him, crucially, a new and half-formed appreciation for the distinct and particular achievements of the English liberal tradition. He came to admire England's civil and consensus-driven politics, and their exclusion, especially, of the totalizing worldviews that on the Continent had proven so destabilizing. British intellectuals were, for the most part, averse to Promethean politics; they tended to accept, he observed, the limitations of politics, and they displayed a healthy attachment to their nation, its elites, and its traditions. Britain seemed to him a living riposte to the Schmittian gloom and cynicism about liberal democracy so common among German intellectuals fleeing the disastrous denouement of the Weimar experiment—a cynicism that he, too, had flirted with in the late 1930s.

Shils' appreciation for Britain's achievement, which he saw essentially confirmed in the United States's own English traditions, was amplified in the immediate postwar years. He was appointed reader in sociology at the London School of Economics in 1946, where he deepened his exposure, in particular, to the intellectual defense of the self-stabilizing English political order that was part of the LSE-based critique of Mannheimian planning. Friedrich Hayek and Karl Popper were especially important here. Shils' own foray into the post-war politics of nuclear technology at the University of Chicago—where he remained on a half-time basis—

supplied for Shils, in the form of a living community of responsible scientist-intellectuals, a counter-ideal to the reckless, antinomian intellectual he had so long despised. Through one of the Chicago nuclear scientists, Leo Szilard, he met Michael Polanyi, the Hungarian chemist-turned-philosopher-of-science. Shils' sensitivity to order-maintaining liberal traditions was reinforced in his close friendship with Polanyi, in his LSE years and beyond.

In this postwar period, Shils' remained convinced that utopia-drunk intellectuals had contributed to the disastrous collapse of Continental societies. He was especially put off by the persisting claims of intellectuals, many of them leftist emigrés traumatized by National Socialism and the Holocaust, that modern society—and by implicit and explicit extension, the U.S. and Britain—were plagued by dangerously suggestible and atomized masses who could, yet again, yield to totalitarian demagogues. This was, to a significant degree, his own fear in the years leading up to the war, but he had since come to recognize the more complex, *Gemeinschaft*-persisting integration of all modern social orders, as well as the particular defenses built up by the liberal Anglo-American societies.

The Central European Encounter

Stephen Turner, in a 1999 paper, makes a highly suggestive case that Shils was exposed, while in London, to a loose "conversation" that emphasized the ineffability of tradition over the total and rationalist tenets of ideology.[1] Central to the conversation, according to Turner (who himself draws on the recollections of J.P. Mayer), were Michael Oakeshott, T.S. Eliot, and Michael Polanyi, but also—"at a degree removed"—Karl Popper and Friedrich Hayek and "more distantly yet," Isaiah Berlin, Christopher Dawson and Mayer (1999: 131). Turner argues that the discourse formed as an inchoate but profound defense of liberal democracy against the totalizing claims of fascist and Marxist ideology: "Rationalism, reductivism, and the closure characteristic of ideological systems was the error they sought to avoid; explaining the rise of ideology was for them a problem of explaining a pathology" (131). Turner's thesis is that this cluster of thought deeply influenced Shils' critique of the ideological cast of mind, as well as his related defense of liberal democracy—which Turner takes to be the central feature of Shils' thought, a neglected alternative to the criticisms of liberal democracy advanced by Habermas and Foucault (127).

Turner's argument is brilliant and fascinating, but his claims for the "conversation's" influence on Shils need to be qualified, at least in the absence of additional evidence. Turner's stress on Oakeshott and Eliot, in particular, is at least chronologically suspect; though it is fair to assume that Shils read Oakeshott and Eliot's key works from this period—Shils, after all, read everything—there is very little indication that either thinker entered the stream of Shils' published thought until much later.[2] Shils (1981) openly acknowledged his debts to Eliot in his 1972

[1] Turner (1999: 131) admits that the conversation wasn't so much a group as a "current of thought within which there were a large number of personal relationships."

[2] In Turner's defense, and as he also notes, Shils' influences were often of a "sleeper" kind—submerged for years only to appear decades later as a central aspect of his thought.

lectures on tradition, but earlier postwar references to Eliot are less flattering.[3] Neither, moreover, appeared in his main intellectual self-narratives, nor in his 1982 accounting of intellectual debts. Later in life, it's clear that Shils admired both Eliot and Oakeshott, though he seems to have never formed a friendship with either.[4] In a 1994 reflection on Harold Laski, Shils referred to Oakeshott as a "genuine and deep ruminator of original conservative convictions," but there don't appear to be any references to Oakeshott in his postwar publications and through the 1950s. It is significant that Oakeshott was appointed to Laski's old LSE chair the year *after* Shils' own tenure there ended.

It seems more likely, moreover, that Shils' aversion to ideological politics evolved out of his own undergraduate engagement with Georges Sorel and the disgruntled intellectual, though of course his restatement of these old themes—best expressed in his 1950 introduction to Sorel's *Reflections on Violence*—was probably influenced by the wartime conversation to which Turner refers. The particular channels of influence, however, seem not to have been Eliot nor Oakeshott—certainly not Berlin[5]—but instead emigrés like Popper, Hayek and above all Polanyi.[6] And their influence came, in large part, by way of a thorough debunking of Karl Mannheim and his diagnosis of distress.

There is no adequate history of this fascinating emigré dispute, in which Central European transplants to Britain carried on certain pre-emigration debates without, however, disclosing their Continental prehistory.[7] Mannheim, Polanyi and Hayek were central figures within distinct but linked intellectual circles in Budapest and Vienna—circles that, in the broadest sense, were preoccupied with the fate, promise and failures of socialism in the early decades of the twentieth century. Budapest, in particular, sheltered a vibrant and complex intellectual world—forgive my Hungarian—that included Polanyi, his brother Karl, Ervin Szabó, Georg Lukács, Oszkár Jászi and Mannheim. The turn-of-the-century Budapest scene deserves a much more nuanced treatment, but for our purposes it is enough to mention two self-conscious intellectual clusters—the Galilei Circle around the Polanyi brothers and the Sprites around Lukács and Mannheim—both influenced by the modified Sorelian syndicalism of Szabó.[8] The Polanyis' Galilei Circle, formed in 1908, was

[3] See, for example, Shils (1972b/1955: 135).

[4] As Shils' British friend and colleague Julius Gould remembered in reference to Oakeshott (and Elie Kedourie): "I know how much he admired both of these contemporaries; but, for whatever reasons, there seems to have been little occasion for personal or convivial familiarity with them" (Gould 1995: 247).

[5] Shils seems to have held Isaiah Berlin, however, in permanently low esteem. As Shils' close friend Joseph Epstein (1995: 109) recalled, "[Shils] didn't consider Isaiah Berlin great, but merely charming, a man who often wanted courage because he was intellectually hostage to certain Oxford dons."

[6] See also Halsey (1999: 400).

[7] Martin Jay, in his treatment of the Frankfurt School attacks on Mannheim, makes some suggestive, passing references (Jay 1994/1974). Richard Hull's (2005) description of the Vienna and Budapest intellectual scenes in relation to Hayek, Popper, the Polanyi brothers, Mannheim, Lukács and others is more comprehensive, but suffers from the haste and singlemindedness of a polemic. Ralf Dahrendorf's (1995: 422–423) thick history of the London School of Economics takes only passing interest in the dispute (*LSE: A History of the London School of Economics and Political Science, 1895–1995*). Kettler and Meja's (1995) rich account of Mannheim provides some excellent detail, but is understandably silent on the 1920s Austrian socialist calculation debates.

[8] See Hull (2005: 143–148) and Jay (1994/1974: 175–177).

informed by their cousin Szabó's critique, but also a commitment to Hungarian national culture (Hull 2005: 143–145). During the first world war, Lukács, Mannheim and others formed the Sprites, more overtly radical than the Polanyis' group but also deeply critical of the Second International, Engels-Plekhanov current of Marxist materialism (Jay 1984: 81–82). By the time that the Sprites formed in 1916, Lukács had already undergone one of his intellectual conversions—from a tragedy-of-culture neo-Kantianism to a blend of Hegelian culturalism and Sorelian politics (Jay 1984: 86–97).[9] This is significant to our story because Mannheim largely adopted Lukács's Hegelian-syndicalist worldview—indeed, Mannheim's "Soul and Culture" (1918) essay became the Sprites' unofficial manifesto (Hull 2005: 144).[10]

There was a great deal of overlap between the two circles, with Mannheim and Lukács as frequent visitors to the Polanyis' salon and vice versa. Both groups of intellectuals, moreover, published in Oszkár Jászi's journal *The Twentieth Century* (Hull 2005: 144). But the war and its aftermath, including the short-lived and brutally crushed Hungarian Bela Kun regime, drove the Budapest intellectuals in very different political directions. The Polanyi brothers became Christian social democrats, with Karl especially active in politics. Lukács (1971/1923), by contrast, had joined the Communist Party in December 1918, the Bela Kun government in 1919, and made a final break with his pre- and wartime aesthetic politics in the landmark *History and Class Consciousness*—arguably the founding text of the Western Marxist tradition.[11]

Mannheim, in response to the Lukács conversion,[12] the war, and the failed revolutionary regimes, ended up leaving for Heidelberg in 1919 to study with Max Weber (Kettler and Meja 1995: 3). At Heidelberg, Mannheim briefly attended Weber's seminars, and also worked with Emil Lederer; Alfred Weber and Lederer later sponsored Mannheim's *Privatdozent* licensing on the basis of his study of nineteenth-century German conservatism (Kettler and Meja 1995: 3). Though he never embraced political Marxism, Mannheim was greatly influenced by Lukács's *HCC*, and argued for the first time in systematic fashion, in 1924, that political and cultural knowledge is socially grounded.[13] Mannheim enjoyed great professional success in Germany and, after a sped-up naturalization, was appointed Professor of Sociology at Frankfurt in 1929 (Kettler and Meja 1995: 3). That success, of course, was tragically brief; as a "foreigner" and a Jew, he was ousted from his chair soon after the Nazi *putsch*, and fled to England and the LSE by way of the Netherlands

[9] Through his studies in Heidelberg with Max Weber and Georg Simmel, he had come under the influence of neo-Kantianism and Dilthey's *Geisteswissenschaften* tradition. But between the 1910 publication of *The Soul and Form* (1974/1910) and his 1916 *Theory of the Novel* (1971/1916), Lukács abandoned the tragedy-of-culture view.

[10] Jay (1984: 99), following Kettler, labels the Hegelian-syndicalist view that Lukács and Mannheim came to embrace as "revolutionary culturalism."

[11] *HCC*, of course, remained Hegelian, activist, and openly dismissive of Second International-style materialism, but did represent a break from his 1910s Hegelian "revolutionary culturalist" period.

[12] Jay (1994/1974: 175–176) reports that Lukács's sudden conversion came as a great shock to Mannheim.

[13] On the influence of *HCC*'s Hegelian–Marxist synthesis on Mannheim's early sociology of knowledge, see Jay (1994/1974: 177). According to Jay, Mannheim's debts to Lukács were, in 1924, openly acknowledged, but that by *Ideologie und Utopie* (Mannheim 1929) Lukács was relegated to a single footnote, and openly attacked in "Wissenssoziologie" (Mannheim 1931).

(Kettler and Meja 1995: 145–159).[14] On arrival in London, he had already written some of what would become *Mensch und Gesellschaft* (1935)—and had adopted the chastened, planning-centered liberalism that would become the other Central European emigrés' intellectual target.

The Polanyi brothers, meanwhile, had after the war both adopted a Tolstoyan, leap-of-faith Christianity. Both were nominally socialist, but Karl was far more invested in radical politics, while Michael focused on a distinguished academic career in chemistry. After a visit to the Soviet Union in 1933, Michael became increasingly hostile to state involvement in the sciences. He emigrated to Britain the same year, taking up a chemistry post at the University of Manchester. Beginning with a caustic 1935 review of J.D. Bernal's *The Social Function of Science*, Polanyi conducted an increasingly vigorous campaign against the Soviet-inspired scientific instrumentalism then in vogue among some British scientists (Hull 2005: 149–155).[15] Polanyi had openly declared his liberal commitments in the 1935 Bernal review, which widened a rift with his brother Karl that had already opened over a 1934 dispute between their wives (Hull 2005: 146).[16] Michael published a number of additional essays and reviews over the next few years in the same vein, which he collected in 1940 as *The Contempt of Freedom*. Mannheim, his old Budapest acquaintance and champion of wide-scale planning, had already become a predictable target of Polanyi's pen.

Hayek's own antipathy to Mannheim grew out of a linked, but distinct intellectual debate in 1920s Vienna, over the viability of socialist "calculation" (see Boettke 2000). The dispute was both academic and political, and pitted an evolving Austro-Marxism against the Austrian current of neoclassical economics. In the 1910s, key figures in the Austro-Marxist cluster, most significantly Karl Renner and Rudolf Hilferding, had analyzed in great depth the trend toward state intervention in the economy. By the late teens, Renner, Hilferding, and fellow Austro-Marxist and Social Democratic Party leader Otto Bauer were proposing a state-managed economy as a key component of their evolutionist program (see Bottomore 1978). In a long 1920 paper, Ludwig von Mises (1990/1920) challenged the very possibility of such a state-planned economy, on the grounds that pricing and valuation were too complex to be calculated. The "bewildering mass" of daily economic decisions, von Mises argued, renders any attempt at rational planning an act of futility. The debate continued throughout the 1920s; Vienna Circle philosopher Otto Neurath joined on the socialist side, as did Karl Polanyi, who published ripostes to von Mises in 1922 and 1925. Hayek, von Mises's student, weighed in on the anti-planning side. Though

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[14] Mannheim was invited to LSE by Harold Laski, the Marxist political scientist, as part of an organized effort to rescue eminent scholars persecuted by the Nazis (Kettler and Meja 1995: 3). Dahrendorf (1995: 290) reports that Laski and the committee nearly recruited Horkheimer's Frankfurt Institute to the LSE, and that only last-minute objections over their Marxism from Robbins and Hayek prevented the absorption.

[15] There is a growing literature on Michael Polanyi, including two biographies that treat his post-emigration critique of instrumental science. See Scott (1995) and Scott and Moleski (2005).

[16] Indeed, Karl Polanyi's (1944) *The Great Transformation* became a textual bête noire of the liberal Mont Pelerin Society that Hayek formed in 1947, with Popper and Michael Polanyi as members (Hull 2005, 146). On the brothers' split, see Congdon (1997).

not a participant, Karl Popper—a graduate student for most of the 1920s—was profoundly shaped by the debate (see Popper 1976).

When Mannheim assumed his post at LSE as a lecturer in sociology in 1933, Hayek was already a full professor of economics there. Hayek had joined the faculty in 1931 on Lionel Robbins's invitation, and the pair famously spent the decade struggling against the Keynesian avalanche at Cambridge (Dahrendorf 1995: 211–212; McCormick 1992). In 1935, Hayek edited a volume on the socialist calculation debate, *Collectivist Economic Planning*, which included Mises's original 1920 paper. He famously recognized certain weaknesses in the von Mises argument, and set out, over a series of essays published in the LSE's *Economica*—beginning with "Economics and Knowledge" (1937) and including a trio of papers in the early 1940s (von Hayek 1942, 1943, 1944a)—to critique planned orders in a more systematic fashion. Mannheim was his foil.

Karl Popper, from New Zealand, first published his *The Poverty of Historicism* (1957) as a series of *Economica* essays from 1944 to 1945 (Popper 1944a, b, 1945a). Mannheim was *his* foil. And Popper and Hayek both wrote mid-1940s polemics—*The Open Society* (1945b) and *The Road to Serfdom* (1944b)—with the theme that planning leads to totalitarianism. Mannheim was a significant villain in both books.

Popper, Hayek and Polanyi—whose 1946 *Science, Faith and Society* piled on still more abuse—all used their emigré acquaintance as a kind of intellectual punching bag. Mannheim, after all, was a known and local remnant of certain Central European tendencies that they had come to deplore. It was this bloodbath that Shils waded into.

Shils and Mannheim in Wartime London

Not long after writing what was, on the fundamental points, a positive review of Mannheim's *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction*, Shils left for London in the fall of 1942 and went straight off to visit Mannheim at his small, tidy house on the outskirts of the city (Shils 1995: 230). Over the war years, Mannheim was Shils' frequent host, and the two men spoke often about Mannheim's troubled LSE tenure and the battering of his many detractors (Shils 1995: 231–233). Shils himself, all the while, was reading these same critics, Popper and Hayek especially, and found their case against Mannheim rather convincing. After Hayek and Popper, and then Polanyi too, Shils had become a different sort of liberal—chastened not so much by the masses nor imminent societal breakdown, but instead by the perils of *planisme* hubris. From Hayek and Popper he absorbed what became, in some ways, a Cold War commonplace—that well-intentioned attempts to radically redesign the world have disastrous, unintended consequences. Already cognizant of the Weberian warnings against academic prophecy and the ethic of conviction, Shils in the presence of Hayek and Popper's relentless assault on "scientism" was stripped of any lingering fondness for rule-by-social-science. And if Shils had any leftover sympathy for the view that knowledge is social and historical in character—if he hadn't, that is, already converted to Talcott Parsons's analytic realist view—then Popper's elaborate dismembering of "historicism" killed that off too. Indeed, "scientism" and "historicism," deployed with the same peculiar definitions that Hayek and Popper had given these terms, became for Shils in the postwar years routine pejoratives. Shils even embraced Popper's falsificationist

philosophy of science as an awkward partner to Parsons's high deductivism. In the case of Polanyi, Shils found a congenial defense of scientific autonomy, along with a rare appreciation for the ongoing importance of intellectual tradition.

All of these arguments—against philosopher-king confidence, for example, or against a pragmatic view of science—were formulated with Mannheim as the explicit counter-exemplar. Shils' once-feverish excitement with Mannheim and his thought was, over these years, fully exhausted. By the time Mannheim died in 1947, Shils had apparently drafted a caustic goodbye-to-all-that, which Julia Mannheim successfully quashed (Kettler and Meja 1995: 245–246). Mannheim would remain, until Shils' own death, a haunting presence in his intellectual life, to judge by the drastic tonal swings in published commentary over the decades. Shils' late-life portrait of his one-time intellectual idol, published in 1995, is wistful and emotionally reverent—an implicit expression of regret for the many nasty treatments over the years.

On Shils' visit to Mannheim in the fall of 1942—his first face-to-face encounter with the author of his two book-length translations—the conversation centered on Mannheim's American reputation; according to Shils' (1995: 231) later account, Mannheim's first words were, "What do they think of me in America?"[17] Mannheim had been stung by Alexander von Schelting's harsh 1936 review of *Ideologie und Utopia*, and by Hans Speier's more respectful but dismissive 1937 review—all the more painful on account that Mannheim had recommended Speier, his former student, as a sympathetic reviewer to Louis Wirth (Kettler and Meja 1995: 219).[18] According to his memoirs, Shils (1995: 231) attempted to allay Mannheim's fears about what had been, however, a disastrous American reception. Shils (1995: 231) later claimed to have been struck, on this first visit, by Mannheim's "apprehensive solicitude about the fate of liberal European civilization," but this reaction was probably layered on to his memory retroactively, as Shils too was anxious at the time.

Shils would dine with the Mannheims about once a month during the war years, by his (1995: 231) own account. Shils (1995: 233) remembered the dinners with real fondness, as "invariably delicious" and always accompanied by a bottle of fine wine. Mannheim would often invite a glittery assortment of intellectual guests to these dinners, including Arthur Koestler, Arthur T.M. Wilson, and Edward Glover.[19] Mannheim and Shils' private conservations, however, were rarely on substantive sociological topics, but tended to focus instead on Mannheim's many LSE travails. He was painfully aware, certainly by 1942, that many of his colleagues were hellbent on ridding him from the School. Mannheim's immense popularity in the classroom was part of the problem; as his former assistant Jean Floud (1979) recalled, many LSE faculty "reacted furiously to him … and considered him a charlatan who

[17] On Mannheim's decade-long anxiety about his American reception—letters indicate that he hoped to emigrate to a prominent post there—see Kettler and Meja's (1995: 194–246) detailed account. Mannheim had, in this vein, altered much of the language of the translated *Ideology and Utopia* to reflect the American pragmatist tradition on the hope that this would aid its American embrace (Kettler and Meja 1995: 214–216).

[18] Howard P. Becker, book-review editor at *ASR*, had rendered von Schelting's prose nastier (Kettler and Meja 1995: 209–210; Shils 1995: 231).

[19] In his Mannheim memoir, Shils (1995: 233) notes that some of these dinner guests became his friends, and adds—without however specifying names—that "many of theme had a tremendous intellectual and professional influence on the subsequent course of my life."

confused the young." Morris Ginsberg, the School's Professor of Sociology, was especially hostile (Albrow 1989: 200; Bulmer 1985: 21; Dahrendorf 1995: 295)[20]; only Bronislaw Malinowksi and an increasingly marginal Harold Laski offered any support.[21]

Mannheim's problem, in part, was that his unflagging proclamations of crisis failed to resonate among the other faculty; nor were his grandiose calls for social scientific planning well-received (Kettler and Meja 1995: 182).[22] His reception was damaged, too, by his impolitic criticism of British sociology, published soon after his arrival, which irritated Ginsberg and others for its claim that the field was theoretically barren (Kettler and Meja 1995: 281).[23] Mannheim also unwittingly assumed the mantle of a British sociological tradition—centered on Patrick Geddes and Victor Branford—that had vigorously pushed social science planning; Ginsberg had been busy trying to reclaim the discipline *from* this tradition, which, however superficially, resembled Mannheim's approach.[24] By 1938, when A.M. Carr-Saunders became the director, the School repeatedly appealed to the Rockefeller Foundation—which partially funded Mannheim's post—for assistance with his relocation.[25] Mannheim was aware of the attempts to move him along.[26] It was only in 1945, however, that Mannheim finally left the School to take up a professorship in the sociology of education at the Institute of Education (Kettler and Meja 1995: 252).

According to Shils (1995: 226–227), Ginsberg's hostility was a painful blow to Mannheim's dignity. He was, according to Shils, sensitive about his status as a lecturer, that he hadn't assumed a professorship with the attendant privilege to give, for example, the required introductory course. Shils (1995: 228), with more sympathy than the passage suggests, claimed that Mannheim "wanted to be a Kant"—that student popularity was not enough for him. His sense of isolation was intensified by the criticisms from Hayek and Popper; Shils (1995: 232) later claimed that Popper's 1945 LSE appointment was "felt to be an injury" to Mannheim, that

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[20] Dahrendorf refers to the dispute as the "Mannheim-Ginsberg problem."

[21] On Malinowski, see Kettler and Meja (1995: 182). In the second half of the 1930s, Laski greatly diminished his role at the School after Lord Beveridge, the School's director, forced him to curtail his popular radical writings under pressure from alumnae and trustees (see Dahrendorf 1995: 197). According to Donald MacRae, T.H. Marshall also attempted to mediate between Mannheim and Ginsberg.

[22] Floud (1979: 281) described the general aversion to Mannheim's "preaching at large the gospel of salvation through sociology."

[23] In the "British Sociology" paper, Mannheim strongly implied that he could fill the field's theoretical lacunae. In a July 1933 letter to Wirth announcing his acceptance of the LSE post, Mannheim explained that his choice of LSE over a competing New School offer came down to Laski's claim that it would be Mannheim's task, in cooperation with Morris Ginsberg, to "finally and truly to establish sociology in England…." (quoted in Kettler and Meja 1995: 177).

[24] For an excellent discussion of this tension, see Kettler and Meja (1995: 182–85).

[25] Kettler and Meja (1995: 188–89) quote a 1938 memo from a Paris officer of the Rockefeller Foundation: "The School is more interested now in developing empirical sociology in England and Mannheim has not the particular qualifications necessary for this new orientation… As indicated by Carr-Saudners, they would certainly carry him for a year or two until he has an opportunity of obtaining another position. They wish, however, to give notice immediately to Mannheim that he cannot expect his position at the school to be indefinitely maintained."

[26] In a 1938 letter to Wirth, Mannheim complained that he didn't get "intellectual support" from his peers and that Ginsberg was attempting to have him moved (quoted in Kettler and Meja 1995: 182).

"Hayek held him in contempt too."[27] According to Shils (1995: 232), "Mannheim thought—rightly—that Hayek's *Road to Serfdom* was directed against him."

Mannheim's close association with "the Moot"—the circle of clerical and lay intellectuals around the Christian thinker J.H. Oldham that included T.S. Eliot, A.D. Lindsay, and many others—also ended in a failure brought on, in part, by Michael Polanyi, who Mannheim himself had introduced to the circle (Kettler and Meja 1995: 256–258, 266–268). Mannheim attended the second Moot gathering in September 1938, and then all of the group's subsequent meetings, except its very last: By chance, he died the same weekend in 1947 (Kettler and Meja 1995: 268). The Moot, and the establishment English gentility that it represented, was Mannheim's final answer to the haunting question that he had first posed in *Mensch und Gesellschaft*: Who will plan the planners (Mannheim 1940/1935: 74–75)?[28] Mannheim's hopes for elite coordination, after 1938, were invested in the English gentleman and his traditional values; he was impressed, not unlike Shils, by England's stability and successful integration of democracy with elite rule (Kettler and Meja 1995: 257–260).[29]

Mannheim presented most of his papers at the Moot before publication, and his calls for the crisis-driven intervention of the traditional elite were met with some sympathy, especially by Eliot (Kettler and Meja 1995: 250). Mannheim's more aggressive proposals to the group—like his call for a "revolution from above"—alarmed some of the Moot circle, however, as did his not infrequent references to the successful example of fascist regimes.[30] Polanyi's first visit to the Moot in 1944 was, according to a participant, a "ding-dong battle" between the two Hungarian emigrés (Kettler and Meja 1995: 256). In a second meeting attended by Polanyi, the two offered divergent takes on Eliot's "Clerisy" paper—with Polanyi's tradition-bound liberalism much better attuned to the Moot's end-of-war mood (Kettler and Meja 1995: 267).[31]

Mannheim's influence in the group subsequently waned. Shils (1995: 234) later claimed in his memoir that Mannheim had been "very sensitive" to Polanyi's

[27] The Popper appointment came, on Hayek's recommendation, shortly after the publication of *The Open Society* (1945b), which included the first "Poverty of Historicism" essay. Shils (1995: 232) recalled that Mannheim was wounded, because "Popper clearly had him in mind as their target."

[28] Kettler and Meja (1995: 251) report a late 1938 letter that Mannheim sent to Wirth, in which he excitedly claimed that the group seemed to be getting on board with his "mission" of elite planning.

[29] In an otherwise caustic treatment of Mannheim, Shils (1968: 560) manages to concede that one of his Moot papers, presented in 1943, evinced a growing sensitivity to the importance of religious belief: "The 'primordial images' which have directed the life experiences of men though the ages," Shils goes on to paraphrase, "have vanished, and nothing has taken their place." He (1975: xvii) also praised the paper in a 1975 memoir, the "closest he came" to dealing with consensus: "Unfortunately, although I saw him frequently during and after the Second World War, I did not have the problem sufficiently in focus in my mind to be able to draw him into discussion about it. I regret this very much now because I think this would have benefitted his own work and mine."

[30] Kettler and Meja (1995: 261) quote from his Moot papers: "We are too lazy to move. Hitler started with six people"; and: "The Germans, Russians and Italians are more advanced than we are in the techniques of managing modern society, but their purposes are wrong and even atavistic. We may look to elite groups in our society, e.g., the Moot, or enlightened Civil Servants, to use these techniques for different ends."

[31] As Kettler and Meja (1995: 266) argue, Mannheim's growing disappointment with the Moot "coincided with the rising influence of Polanyi."

criticisms. Shils recalled traveling in a taxi with Polanyi the day after Mannheim's death, when Shils informed him of Mannheim's passing. Polanyi made no reply. In a rare censure, Shils (1995: 234) later wrote that Polanyi "was probably thinking of one of his philosophical conundrums and there was no clear category in his mind for Mannheim."

Shils himself may have contributed to Mannheim's sense of isolation. He remembered that Mannheim "was daunted by me," and attributed the elder scholar's meekness to Shils' critique of his planning proposals. Shils had read the manuscript of what would, in 1943, be published as *Diagnosis of Our Times*. According to Shils (1995: 232), he criticized its vagueness and optimism, which Mannheim took "extremely amiably, at least in my presence." Mannheim protested that the manuscript had already been delivered to the publisher, but that in the future, in Shils' (1995: 232) paraphrase, "he would heed [Shils' criticisms]; he made it seem as if he were a schoolboy and I was his teacher." Mannheim, Shils continued, used to "repeatedly seek my recommendations on the sociological literature he should read. He seems to have thought that I knew a great deal, much more than I in fact did."

Mannheim in his English years was saturated in criticism, much of it harsh. The muted response to his cries of crisis, the widespread rejection of his planning proposals, were met by Mannheim with wounded but dogged seclusion. When Shils (1995: 233) arrived at Mannheim's home soon after hearing of his death in January 1947, he was embraced by Julia who declared, "Ginsberg killed him!" Mannheim's emigré experience—more than half his scholarly life—was a tragic, drawn-out denouement to a brief but brilliant career, brought on by world-historical nightmares that were, for him, all too real. Shils himself seems to have come around to this view, eventually. At the conclusion of his 1995 memoir, Shils (1995: 235) referred to the emigration as an "unmitigated catastrophe for Mannheim":

> Despite [T.S.] Eliot's profound appreciation of his intellectual and moral qualities, and other strong indications that he was not entirely alone, nothing assuaged Mannheim's anxiety about his status and his future. That was a great pity. He was a man of great intellectual and moral merit. He was a good person, capable of receiving and expressing affection, but he needed more than that. He had a genuine drive for truth and delight in intellectual activity. He said many things which are still worthy of mediation.

But a younger Shils, perhaps ambitious and certainly drained of any intellectual respect for Mannheim, reacted differently. According to Julia's letters, Shils in 1948 showed her a draft of an article on Mannheim that he was set to publish; in a letter, she called the article "blind violence to somebody to whom you owe so much."[32] In another letter to her sister later that year, she claimed that she had thwarted Shils' plans to "publish an extremely nasty paper on Karl" (quoted in Kettler and Meja 1995: 246)—and it's true that Shils' first extended treatment of Mannheim did not appear until 1968. In the same letter to her sister, she claimed that Shils had refused to return the full manuscript of Mannheim's uncompleted "Essentials of Democratic Planning," leaving the "book … a torso." (Presumably the draft was eventually returned: *Freedom, Power, and Democratic Planning* was published in 1950,

[32] The letter is dated April 1948; quoted in Kettler and Meja (1995: 245–246).

without reference to any missing portion.) Mannheim had lost all appeal to Shils by this time, and the sustained criticism of Popper, Hayek and Polanyi played no small role in the intellectual parting.

Mannheim's Central European Critics

From 1942 to 1944, Hayek published his three "Scientism and the Study of Society" essays in *Economica* (von Hayek 1942, 1943, 1944a).[33] Drawing on his basic claims about the limits of social knowledge—claims first developed in his revised "socialist calculation" critique, "Economics and Knowledge" (1937)—Hayek labels "scientistic" the belief that total comprehension of the social world is possible, and that such knowledge can be used to engineer solutions to social problems. Hayek pointed to L. T. Hobhouse, Joseph Needham, and Mannheim as archetypical adherents to scientism.[34] All three, he claimed, held the absurd and elitist tenet that some "super-mind"—usually their own—can understand the impossibly complex tangle of human life. Mannheim is singled out for special abuse here, and Hayek goes so far as to attribute Mannheim's scientism to his sociology of knowledge which, he adds, is a "derivative of the 'materialist interpretation of history'" (von Hayek 1944a: 31–32).[35] When Hayek turns to the other element of scientism—social engineering—he attributes to Mannheim the "doctrine of technical supremacy" and notes that "[o]nce again one of the best illustrations of this tendency is provided by K. Mannheim" (von Hayek 1944a: 34). And in his 1944 *Road to Serfdom*, Hayek (1944b) writes of Mannheim's *Man and Society*: "The difference cannot be better illustrated than by the extreme position taken in a widely acclaimed book on whose program of so-called planning for freedom we shall have to comment yet more than once."

Popper's three-part "The Poverty of Historicism" series, also published in LSE's *Economica* from 1944 to 1945, is in many respects a brief against Mannheim (Popper 1944a, b, 1945a). His quarrel is with "historicist" thinkers, though Popper's definition of "historicism"—this is true too of his and Hayek's "scientism"—hardly resembles the term's conventional meaning. "Historicism" normally refers to the view that knowledge of human life has an irreducibly historical character—the idea, often associated with Dilthey and the German Historical School, that each age or national culture or event must be interpreted in its own terms. Popper means something that is nearly the reverse: *His* "historicism" label applies to any doctrine that claims to have uncovered laws of development, laws that explain the pattern of human history. Though conceding the logical contradiction, Popper claimed that historicists have typically *also* argued that social science should discover these laws and then use them to guide society. Comte, Hegel and Marx are his historical

[33] The three papers were collected, with other writings, in *The Counter-Revolution of Science* (von Hayek 1952).

[34] See, for example, von Hayek (1944a: 31).

[35] Hayek's reference here to Mannheim's sociology of knowledge is, to say the least, a stretch, since *Ideology and Utopia*'s recourse to social genesis undermines claims to total knowledge, as the book's many critics were at pains to emphasize. It's true that Mannheim imagined a synthesis of partial truths that, in some versions, is cobbled together by a relatively free-floating intelligentsia, but he was always careful to employ the "relatively" qualifier. And it's only true in a very indirect sense that Mannheim's sociology of knowledge is Marxist; Hayek's reference here is misleading.

exemplars, but he devotes the most space and vitriol to Mannheim.[36] In his second essay (Popper 1944b), for example, 18 footnotes and well over half of the in-text quotations are Mannheim's. He justifies this otherwise curious fixation with the claim that Mannheim's *Man and Society* is a near-perfect stand-in for the whole deplorable doctrine: "This book is the most elaborate exposition of a holistic and historicist programme known to me and therefore singled out here for its criticism." Popper contrasts Mannheim's technocratic zeal with the proper "piecemeal" approach to social reform. The "utopian engineer," he writes (with Mannheim interspliced), "aims at remodeling the 'whole of society' in accordance with a definite plan or blueprint; it aims at 'seizing the key positions' and at extending 'the power of the State… until the State becomes nearly identical with society.'" (In a footnote to this last passage, Popper adds that the formula "is nearly identical with one by C. Schmitt.") In Mannheim, he finds historicism and "Utopian dreams" in an "unholy alliance" that is all too common for historicist thinkers. Though Popper links the historicist mindset to the "totalitarian intuition" here, he greatly extends the argument that mandarin technocracies bring on tyranny in *The Open Society and its Enemies* (1945b).

After Mannheim

Shils' turn against Mannheim, even if the break was not explicitly noted until years later,[37] was already obvious in his postwar publications. Some of this implicit notice got signaled through newly acknowledged debts to Popper, Polanyi and Hayek. None of the three contributed to Shils' eventual, multifaceted account of social order, except—indirectly—Polanyi through his stress on intellectual tradition.[38] Hayek's claims for "spontaneous order" on analogy to the price system, and Popper's similarly effortless notion of social self-regulation, could not, for Shils, carry the explanatory burden. But all three influenced Shils in important ways, with Popper and Polanyi leaving the more profound debts.[39] All three

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[36] Mannheim, especially in his sociology of knowledge phase, was arguably a historicist in the conventional sense, but certainly not in Popper's terms. Popper probably featured Mannheim so centrally because he fit the second half of his erstwhile definition, in terms of social engineering. It's also possible that Popper focused on Mannheim at least in part for Hayek's benefit. Popper certainly knew, at least from publication, that Hayek often targeted Mannheim. The second "Historicism" essay, moreover, contains a number of almost obsequious references to Hayek especially, but also to Ginsberg, the Webbs, Tawney and Malinowski. Popper was appointed, of course, to the LSE shortly after the publication of these essays, and Dahrendorf (1995: 422–423) reports that Hayek, upon reading Popper's recent work, was instrumental in arranging the appointment.

[37] In a 1960 essay that attempted to explain the absence of a vibrant sociological tradition in Britain, Shils (1985/1960: 166) was quite dismissive of his one-time idol: "Karl Mannheim quickened the pulse of British undergraduate and foreign students for a time but he found little intellectual hospitality among his co-equal except for a few educationalists, journalists and literary men; he left no mark on British sociology." He also disenguously dismisses *Man and Society*: "It was a grandiose disquisition on epochal trends and the enthusiasm which it called forth among students sent very few of them into the field. (I do not recall that there was one native Briton among the few who did a little field-work under his sponsorship)" (170).

[38] Stephen Turner (1999: 131) suggests that Shils may have been influenced by Popper's 1949 reflection on tradition and reason, which is certainly plausible though I found no proof of the influence. See Popper (1949).

[39] It is significant that both Popper and Polanyi are included in Shils' (1982: xxix) stock-taking of his intellectual influences—two of the 11 "elders" that he lists.

helped turn Shils, for example, decisively against any version of social scientific technocracy.[40]

Shils maintained close friendships with both Popper and Polanyi, though separately since the two emigrés had an early falling out.[41] Shils was only acquainted with Hayek, though he helped to arrange Hayek's 1950 appointment to Chicago's Committee on Social Thought—which Shils had joined, on Hutchins's invitation, in 1947. Like Polanyi, Shils was never an unqualified supporter of laissez-faire economics in Hayek's mold, though he respected the kind of classical liberalism endorsed by Hayek (and also by his old mentor Frank Knight and future friend and Chicago economist Harry Johnson). But in the early postwar years Shils did indicate his general agreement with his LSE colleague's knowledge-based critique of socialist planning. In a glowing 1948 review essay of Parsons and A.M. Henderson's Weber translation, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (1947)—published in *Economica*—Shils (1948a) presented Weber as, in essence, a liberal critic of socialism.[42] Weber's political writings, according to Shils' (1948a: 37) summary, were "strenuous efforts, written with remarkable passion and eloquence, to point the tactical path for a stable democratic, liberal (i.e., non-socialist) order in Germany." In a footnote, he (1948a: 38n) observed that Weber's place in the "history of the discussion of the economic theory of Socialism" has already been pointed out by Hayek, who, Shils added, has "argued against the possibility of formally rational calculation under Socialism." Here, Shils cites approvingly the same argument that Hayek deployed against Mannheim and other "scientistic" thinkers. Shils also begins to use the "scientism" pejorative in its peculiar Hayekian sense; in the foreword to his 1949 Weber translation, for example, Shils (1949a: ix) observes that some social scientists embrace the "'scientistic' attitude" that the right ends of policy can be determined by social science research.

The Popperian echoes in Shils' work are louder still. Popper's stress on the dangers of Mannheim-style planning, his use of "historicism," and especially his falsificationist philosophy of science all contributed to Shils' postwar intellectual evolution. Popper and Shils both began their LSE tenures in the fall of 1946—Popper was recalled to London from New Zealand, where he had emigrated after the *Anschluss* in 1938. (Popper later referred to *The Poverty of Historicsm* (1957) and *The Open Society and its Enemies* (1945b) as "my war effort," and the two works prompted Hayek and Robbins to arrange in late 1945 for a Readership in Logic and Scientific Method for the Austrian philosopher (Dahrendorf 1995: 422).) Popper and

[40] As I discuss below, however, Shils' often strident aversion to "scientism" exists in tension with some published remarks on social science policy, which are much more ambiguous and even tortured in the social scientist's role (see Shils 1949b).

[41] Popper, Polanyi and Hayek were all participants in the liberal Mont Pelerin Society, which Hayek founded in 1947, though Polanyi left early. Polanyi's differences with Hayek were, in part, over the former's adherence to Keynesian state intervention in the economy. On Polanyi and Popper's relationship, see Mirowski (1998).

[42] The Parsons–Henderson translation comprised the first, systematic part of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Weber 1947/1922). Shils' portrayal of Weber as a liberal critic of socialism is, if nothing else, partial; Weber was certainly a liberal of an especially anguished kind. And he did, of course, point to certain impossibilities in socialist doctrine—but also, it must be added, to severe limits to the potential of *democracy* in the sense that Shils invokes here. And he was no cheerleader for capitalism. Shils is here engaged in an act of Cold War Weber tweaking.

Shils both became profound influences on the remarkable cluster of sociology graduate students who would, in the 1950s and 1960s, populate the sociology departments of Britain's new provincial universities.[43] In his postwar LSE years, Shils often cited Popper's account of historicism to critique German sociology in general, and, by implication, Mannheim in particular. In Shils' magisterial history of American sociology for the British field, *The Present State of American Sociology* (1948b), for example, he relegated Mannheim to a single footnote. "The best discussions of some of the methodological assumptions of German sociology," he (1948b: 4n) wrote in the footnote, are Popper's "The Poverty of Historicism" and Parsons's (1937) *The Structure of Social Action*—both of which, of course, are dismissive of Mannheim's work. As a kind of citational afterthought, he then referred to a 1934 Mannheim essay, as "a brief survey of the main topics covered in Germany sociology."[44] In the history, Shils (1948b: 5) invokes "historicism" in Popper's sense of the term, though with traces of the more typical meaning; he claims that German sociology grew out of "the background of the Romantic conception of *das Volk*, out of historicism, with its stress on wholeness and gradual development, and out of a preoccupation with the problems of the State." By 1961, Shils had fully blended the two meanings of historicism, in a scathing critique of C. Wright Mills's (1959) *The Sociological Imagination*. Shils (1961: 612) criticizes Mills's position that social laws are valid only for a particular epoch. "The informed reader," he continues, "will soon recognize the identity of Professor Mills' historicism with that of Karl Mannheim as he expounded it in *Man and Society* … The foundations of Professor Mills' position are clearly delineated and emphatically criticized in Professor Popper's *The Poverty of Historicism*, 1957."[45] Popper's "historicist" label, and its application to Mannheim in particular, remained a clear if somewhat confused element of Shils' intellectual arsenal.

Shils met Polanyi in 1946, through the Chicago atomic scientist Leo Szilard (Shils 1972a: x). Polanyi was to have a profound impact on Shils' postwar intellectual evolution—and not just through his critique of Mannheim. Polanyi's absolutist claim for the autonomy of the scientific community became the framework for Shils' own thinking about science policy, his main supplement to Weber's "Science as a Vocation" (see Shils 1976). The idea of a scientific community devoted to truth-seeking—Polanyi's animating ideal—became for Shils too a fundamental article of belief and a standard with which to critique reckless intellectuals.[46] Polanyi's counter-intuitive insistence that *tradition* is an essential element of scientific achievement framed Shils' thinking not just on intellectual tradition, but on tradition and social order more broadly (see Shils 1988: 280). Shils differed with Polanyi on some important points—he never openly adopted Polanyi's "personal knowledge" epistemology, he found Polanyi's conception of "dynamic

[43] Shils' influence is discussed below. On Popper's effect on the sociology students, see Dahrendorf (1995: 379) and Halsey (1985: 159).

[44] In the next footnote, he implicitly slights Mannheim again, claiming that there are no surveys of French sociology comparable to those on German sociology offered by Popper and Parsons.

[45] In two later dismissive treatments of Mannheim, Shils (1968: 557; 1974: 84) again blends the two meanings of "historicism."

[46] Shils even referred to the community of scientists as the "prototype of the free society" (quoted in Shattock 1996: 1).

order" insufficient to explain social consensus, and he carved out a narrow but significant role for social science in the wider public realm which contravened Polanyi's principle of autonomy. The two scholars shared, regardless of all that, a common sense of the academic ethic that, for Shils, helped motivate his assiduous pursuit of social-scientific deviants.

Conclusion

In a memoir, Shils (1975: xiv) recalled that, in his undergraduate years, Georges Sorel had "made an unpleasant but nonetheless deep impression on me." Sorel's chiliasm, his unambiguous orientation to ultimate values, and his all-or-nothing moral temperament provided, for Shils, a glimpse into the intellectual psyche—and, by extension, a way to understand intellectuals' "oppositional mentality" as derivative of a transcendent moral ideal (see, for example, Shils 1957: 138–139). It was Sorel's politics of heroic violence which, in its purist clarity, helped disclose the transcendent moral impulse that, to varying degrees, leads intellectuals to judge their societies harshly. When, after World War II, the moral ideal seemed spent even within socialist movements, Shils (1972a: xi) observed its traces in the complaints of the ex-radical apostates—"disappointed and broken-down Trotskyites and *Edelmarxisten*, most of Frankfurt provenance." They became, in turn, the prime targets of Shils' "mass society" pejorative.

If Sorel had served as Shils' archetypical instance of intellectual Prometheanism, Mannheim came to seem like Sorel's shadow—the purest expression of after-the-fall intellectual dejection. Shils came to identify intellectual crankiness about social disintegration with the threat of *real* social disintegration, the failure to recognize the invisible lines of consensus in society suddenly became tantamount to *fraying* them. Society's loose consensus depends on public belief, Shils came to argue in the years after the war, which in turn depends on the social picture put forward by intellectuals. This was, in the end, the treason of the intellectuals: Their doctrines of breakdown were untrue *and* deadly. Even the tragic Weimar collapse itself could seem to Shils (1972a: vii), in these later years, as a kind of self-immolation: "It seemed such a pity to me that the intellectuals should have been responsible for destroying a society which in so many respects had conferred such benefits on intellectuals."

Shils failed to mention that he too once held a scaled-down version of this disintegration thesis, largely under Mannheim's interwar influence. With the benefit of published hindsight, Shils would repeatedly downplay his onetime attraction to the cheerless theses of Mannheim, after Mannheim played explicit foil to Hayek, Popper, and Polanyi. Shils' many published treatments of Mannheim in the decades after the war, for example, were sometimes bilious, often condescending and almost always silent on his own up-all-night exhilaration.[47]

[47] The exception is Shils' (1995) posthumously published memoir of Mannheim, which I have drawn upon extensively in these pages. This essay's eulogistic tone, in contrast to the others, makes the piece almost read as penance. But even here he (229) omits himself from the mistaken interwar pessimism: "He greatly overestimated the strength of related tendencies in other western countries. Like many Central European refugees in Western Europe and the United States, he underestimated no less the ramshackle obduracy of such countries as Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, and the United States, in their tenacious devotion to liberal democratic traditions."

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