



Karl Polanyi: A Life on the Left

By Gareth Dale

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Karl Polanyi (1886–1964) was one of the twentieth century's most original interpreters of the market economy. His penetrating analysis of globalization's disruptions and the Great Depression's underlying causes still serves as an effective counterargument to free market fundamentalism. This biography shows how the major personal and historical events of his life transformed him from a bourgeois radical into a Christian socialist but also informed his ambivalent stance on social democracy, communism, the New Deal, and the shifting intellectual scene of postwar America.

The book begins with Polanyi's childhood in the Habsburg Empire and his involvement with the Great War and Hungary's postwar revolution. It connects Polanyi's idealistic radicalism to the political promise and intellectual ferment of Red Vienna and the horror of fascism. The narrative revisits Polanyi's oeuvre in English, German, and Hungarian, includes exhaustive research in five archives, and features interviews with Polanyi's daughter, students, and colleagues, clarifying the contradictory aspects of the thinker's work. These personal accounts also shed light on Polanyi's connections to scholars, Christians, atheists, journalists, hot and cold warriors, and socialists of all stripes. *Karl Polanyi: A Life on the Left* engages with Polanyi's biography as a reflection and condensation of extraordinary times. It highlights the historical ruptures, tensions, and upheavals that the thinker sought to capture and comprehend and, in telling his story, engages with the intellectual and political history of a turbulent epoch.



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Editorial Review

Review

Here is the book the many admirers of Karl Polanyi have been waiting for: a vivid, thoroughly researched, and lucidly written intellectual biography that is worthy of its subject. It traces Polanyi's life and developing ideas first in central Europe, then in Britain and North America, showing both their rootedness in the 'lost world' of twentieth-century socialism and their ever-greater relevance to making sense of the market societies of our own time. (Steven Lukes, author of *Power: A Radical View*)

One of the best biographies ever written of any intellectual emerging from the horrors of mid-twentieth-century Europe. It meticulously covers the whole ground?from the Jewish roots in Budapest through the First War, brilliantly reconstructs the milieu and debates of interwar Vienna, and adds enormously to our understanding of *The Great Transformation*. A compelling portrait, it is successful not just as an intellectual biography but as a personal one as well. (John A. Hall, author of *Ernest Gellner: An Intellectual Biography*)

Writing the intellectual biography of one of the truly great thinkers of the twentieth century, an heir to Rousseau?comparable in importance to Max Weber or to John Maynard Keynes?is a daunting enterprise. Particularly so, since Polanyi's life is bound to the history of a European radicalism now defunct or dormant. Gareth Dale is equal to this task, the complexity of which is incredible. I have no doubt that this is a durable work that will be read by generations. Also, it will show that this half-submerged chapter in the chronicle of revolutionary and?to say the same with another word?theoretical upheavals is indispensable for everybody who still insists on being able to think critically. (G. M. Tamás, author of *Innocent Power: 100 Notes, 100 Thoughts*)

This is a well-written, often sparkling, always informative, comprehensive narrative about the life and work of Karl Polanyi. The analysis is rich with cultural and historical contextualization, full of interesting allusions and reflections, and wonderfully evocative of the unfolding events on a European and transatlantic stage?it will be the standard reference point for all future work on Polanyi. (Bob Jessop, University of Lancaster)

This much needed and accessibly crafted biography by a recognized authority on Karl Polanyi is well researched and supported by a range of sources, including archival material, interviews, and other contemporaneous scholars. The rich historical sourcing provides stimulating material for both scholarly audiences and general readers interested in the lives, contributions, and intellectual thought of fascinating individuals and scholars who lived through this particularly era. (Sally Randles, Senior Research Fellow at the University of Manchester Institute of Innovation Research)

The long wait for an intellectual biography of Karl Polanyi is finally over. The task is intimidating because Polanyi's concepts are difficult to untangle and his life was divided into successive sojourns in five different countries with three different languages. But Gareth Dale has succeeded in writing an engaging and meticulously researched book that illuminates Polanyi's ideas and situates them in their proper historical context. (Fred Block, author of *The Power of Market Fundamentalism: Karl Polanyi's Critique*)

Gareth Dale's new biography offers us a bracing reminder of a far richer world of socialist activity that once existed in much of the West. (Nikil Saval *The Nation*)

Gareth Dale has done an outstanding job of recounting Polanyi's very full life in both the political and academic realms.... For those interested in the work, not only of Karl Polanyi... this book will be invaluable.

(EH-Net)

This terrific book can be read on different levels, learning about Jewish evolution as well as the gross of modernist thinking...Dale deserves great credit for his masterpiece. (*Choice*)

Dale has delivered much-needed, excellent scholarship on the intellectual history of the twentieth century. (*European History Quarterly*)

About the Author

Gareth Dale is senior lecturer in politics and international relations at Brunel University, London. His other books include *Karl Polanyi: The Limits of the Market* (2010), *Karl Polanyi: The Hungarian Writings* (2016), and *Green Growth: Ideology, Political Economy, and the Alternatives* (2016).

Users Review

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Information is provisions for folks to get better life, information nowadays can get by anyone with everywhere. The information can be a understanding or any news even a concern. What people must be consider while those information which is inside the former life are challenging be find than now's taking seriously which one would work to believe or which one often the resource are convinced. If you receive the unstable resource then you get it as your main information you will have huge disadvantage for you. All those possibilities will not happen with you if you take *Karl Polanyi: A Life on the Left* as the daily resource information.

Pauline Lipman:

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Leslie Woodson:

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