A Discussion on the Oakeshott’s Political View of Intimation

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<Abstract>

Purpose: The contribution of this paper lies in that Oakeshott (1901∼1990) proposes a new view of political thought: the politics is the pursuit of an intimation. Method: To do this, this paper analyzed Oakeshott’s political thought and his criticism on Rationalist politics. Results: This new political view can be seen as a paradigm instead of the traditional views of rationalist politics. And the traditional political view of rationalism of the West has experienced the process from “the pursuit of good politics” of ancient Greece to “the pursuit of utilitarian politics” of modern times (that is to say, virtue is no longer to be the “king” of the political philosophy, rationality has occupied its position), the dilemma of this political view lies in the confusing of the problems of “fact-value distinction”. For this reason, Oakeshott believes that politics is a sort of practical activity for the participation in an arrangements. On one hand, the tradition of behavior is an arrangement, on the other hand, it is also unfinished. Conclusion: In this sense, the theory of politics is a kind of theory about the intimations of a tradition of behavior. Beginning from the interpretation of the political activity itself, this paper examines the political view of rationalism through the analysis of the theory of intimation and its implications.

Key words: Oakeshott, political view, intimation, rationalism, tradition of behavior

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I. Introduction

It is generally known that Oakeshott is known as one of the contemporary political philosophers in England, and he is also considered as “the greatest political philosopher in the Anglo-Saxon tradition since Mill—or even Burke” (Franco, 2004: 1).\(^1\) Further, his thought is attracting more attention of scholars between East and West. However, this does not mean that the study of his political thought has been increasingly deepened, or rather, many studies on Oakeshott’s political works are still in the stage of theoretical evaluation. In my view, the contribution of Oakeshott’s political thought lies not in the critique of the political view of rationalism. Because the critique of rationalism has increasingly become the mainstream of western academic circles after entering the 20th century, in other words, the most outstanding achievement is the critique of rationalist politics for the development of western political thought in the 20th century. In this respect, we can summarize some of them from other scholars: (a) In Europe, some liberalistic scholars (for example, Hayek, 1960; Berlin, 1969) adjust the internal contradictions of liberalism through the critique of rationalism within the liberalism. (b) In America, it is a conservative scholar J. Keke, who demonstrates the reason that why value pluralism opposes liberalism from the perspective of conservatism (Kekes, 1997). (c) German political philosopher L. Strauss believes that the defects of Modern political philosophy exist due to the people's lack of reflection on philosophy (Strauss, 1963). (d) For contemporary western Marxist scholars (for example, Horkheimer, 1967; Adorno, 1979; Marcuse, 1979; Habermas, 1981), the critiques of political rationalism mainly embody in the critical analysis of contemporary capitalist society and the attention on the problems of social alienation. They mainly believe that capitalism focuses on rationalism and industrialization, furthermore, rationalism and industrialization can not bring the enormous benefits to humanity, but instead the danger to technology and society (i. e. human beings is increasingly under the control of S & T alienation). Thus, they hold the view that we should use the social critical theory of Marxism to re-examine the value of science and technology. In short, The contemporary western Marxist school extends the critique of technological reason further towards the critique of ideology, which provides important ideological resources for the generation and development of Ecological Marxism. (e) Some post-modernistic scholars (for example, Rorty et al., 2006; Hoy, 2007) mainly focus on the deconstruction of political rationalism (i. e. it is necessary to realize that thought and action should transcend the category of the age of Enlightenment). They neither remain in the revelation of social problems caused by technology nor rest on the single critique of technical

\(^1\) Or as Paul Franco also describes it, “Oakeshott was one of the few outstanding political philosophers of the 20th century,” echoed the Times of London. Even the left-wing Guardian called the self-described conservative “perhaps the most original academic political philosopher of this century” (Franco, 2004: 1).
rationality, but they make a deeper analysis of the essential reason of political rationalism and conclude that, why does the technology cannot solve the problems produced by itself under the guidance of technical rationality? Thus, they try to construct a new political ideal from a new point of view. But in contrast to the above five points, Oakeshott’s criticism on rationalist politics is undoubtedly the most profound, and of course, the most original point is that he proposes a new political view through his critique of the political view of rationalism—"the political view of the pursuit of an intimation" (Cf. Oakeshott, 1989: 185-8; 1991c: 66-9), that is, a new paradigm of political comprehension against the political view of rationalism. However, this point of view has not been completely realized by the present academics. In short, the object of this paper is to broaden our perspectives for understanding the rationality of politics and to provide a new way for the realistic politics to get rid of the dilemma of rationalist politics through the analysis of the political view of intimation and its implications.

II. The Problems of the Study on Oakeshott’s Political Thought

Nowadays, we have every reason to listen to Oakeshott’s philosophy due to the political disputation in modernity. People have to start listening to Oakeshott because he points out that there are too many drawbacks in the modern political activities, and reminds us the importance for the recovery and reconstruction of health politics.

But on the whole, the study on Oakeshott’s thought is still at the stage of introduction and interpretation in the academic world. Further, he had received little attention from others during his lifetime, because he never been a part of the Establishment of British political thought, but in the late 20th and the early 21st century, the study of Oakeshott’s thought enters into a new era in the West, and many books, essays on his thoughts are published, it is no exaggeration to say that all the publications and studies on his thoughts are enough to constitute an "Oakeshott industry" (Grant, 1994: 31). However, there is still not much deeper studies to hold his political thought as a whole, in other words, the interpretative study still accounts for a large proportion.

As a general view, on one hand, the academic circles hold the opinion that there are two biggest controversies in the study on Oakeshott’s political thought. First, which school does Oakeshott belong to

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2) In the west world of the 20th century, although Many philosophers (e. g., Hayek, Berlin and Strauss) criticize the politics of rationalism, their criticism lacks the basis of philosophy. Comparatively speaking, Oakeshott’s criticism is based on his idealistic philosophy, thus, it is profound and far-reaching for modern politics.
3) Oakeshott can be rated as an alternative person in the British intellectual community.
(i.e. the so-called “labelling” study⁴) For this question, although it is generally known that “Oakeshott calls himself a conservative but it is not easy to determine what kind of conservative he is” (McClelland, 1996: 738). Although many scholars in the West attempt to label him as a “liberal” (see Franco, 2004), he himself only admits that he is a conservative, because he “dislikes the hasty and abbreviated to politics implicit in ‘isms’ of any sort. Further, he himself uses the word ‘liberal’ in a narrower, historical fashion to designate a view” (Coats, 1985: 773).³ Secondly, whether does the political thought of Oakeshott keep consistent throughout his life? In fact, these two points are closely linked together, namely, the “labelling interpretation” of Oakeshott⁵ (which ultimately results in “two types of Oakeshott”). On the other hand, there are two big problems in the study of Oakeshott’s political thought: first, an overall understanding of the study on Oakeshott’s political thought has not appeared by now; Secondly, in politics, the academia has failed to attach importance to his insight of “the pursuit of an intimation”.

III. Oakeshott’s Criticism on Rationalist Politics

Based on the study of politics, Oakeshott makes a basic “diagnosis” for modern politics— “almost all politics today have become Rationalist or near-Rationalist” (Oakeshott, 1991a: 5). Thus, there is no doubt that the influences of rationalism in modern politics are profound. For this reason, Oakeshott has made a thorough critique to all crimes of rationalism in his work Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays. Taking it by and large, the general characteristics of rationalist politics can be summarized as the following points: first, they are the politics of utility, and Oakeshott’s view on this is very clear:

⁴ According to the “labelling study”, once a person is labelled, he will become such a kind of person as the label describes. In view of this fact, there are a lot of scholars consider Oakeshott as a conservative philosopher, but, in fact, from the point of his ideological tendency, it is very difficult to have an accurate grasp of Oakeshott’s thoughts that can not be classified in politics. As an British scholar says, “Oakeshott’s thought is peculiarly elusive. It cannot be condensed into a slogan, inscribed on a banner, or readily incorporated into anyone’s political programme” (Grant, 2000: 24). In short, Oakeshott’s thought has a certain elusive peculiarity.

⁵ Gertrude Himmelfarb writes that “Oakeshott rarely speaks of liberals or liberalism, probably because he himself has too high a regard for liberty to apply those hononific labels to his antagonists. But it is obvious that in describing in our time, he has in mind what would normally be called liberalism. Moreover he has no hesitation in speaking of himself as a conservative and in praising the virtues of the conservative disposition” (Himmelfarb, 1975: 410). On this view, Oakeshott does not agree with someone who considers him as a liberal, but speaks highly of the virtues and wisdoms of conservatism. This is an important key point to note when we read his books.

⁶ E.g., the western academics may have tried to pigeonhole Oakeshott as a libertarian or a conservative libertarian.
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The politics it inspires may be called the politics of the felt need; for the Rationalist, politics are always charged with the feeling of the moment. He waits upon circumstance to provide him with his problems, but rejects upon aid in their solution (Oakeshott, 1991b: 9).

The Rationalist lists himself as a social engineer, and then creates a “need” for himself and filling it, this is, indeed, what may be called the simple formula of politics. Then, in politics, for the rationalist, what is needed is to make full use of the rational tools to solve all problems which are produced by rationalism. To be specific, He believes that human beings can change the world and themselves according to their own plans, but never solve the inherent problems of rationalist politics, in other words, what the Rationalist pursues is “the politics of ‘destruction and creation’ rather than the ‘politics of repair’ ” (Himmelfarb, 1975: 409). Secondly, the essence of rationalism focuses on the pursuit of certainty. Then, of course, the politics of rationalism is a matter of pursuing the politics of certainty (that is, perfection and uniformity) at the instigation of reason (Cf. Oakeshott, 1991b: 9, 15); because the deductive method of reason is precisely to find the effective ways and methods of certain (or general) knowledge, in fact, this class of language (e. g. certainty and validity) is not appropriate for human activities (Cf. Oakeshott, 1996: 20). And, universally, political activity requires knowledge, nevertheless, the politics of focusing on certainty can only be met by “technical knowledge or knowledge of technique” (Oakeshott, 1991b: 12). Because this technical knowledge has more certainties than practical knowledge,7) it can be formulated into a rule (or be written into a principle) to better meet public’s thirst for technical knowledge. This characteristic implies one of the most dangerous factors in political philosophy (i. e. ideology). This ideology is of simple operability, “it supplies in advance of the activity of attending to the arrangements of a society a formulated end to be pursued, and in so doing it provides a means of distinguishing between those desires which ought to be encouraged and those which ought to be suppressed or redirected” (Oakeshott, 1989: 164; 1991c: 48). And the essence of it lies in reducing politics to “handbooks” roughly, with this book, people can arrange everything on political activities, which Oakeshott calls “the politics of the book” (Oakeshott, 1991b: 27).8) In short, the Rationalist disregards the traditions, transgresses his own boundaries, formulates a stubborn faith (that is, the plan),9) and severs his connection with the door of

7) In Oakeshott’s view, “technical knowledge” in science and “practical knowledge” in politics are completely different, and the practice of the Rationalist erases the knowledge of practice with his technical knowledge—an attempt to solve the political problems through knowledge.

8) For a specific example of the politics of the book, cf. Oakeshott, 1989: 168-69; 1991c: 52-3.

9) For the Rationalist, strictly speaking, rationalism is not a theory but a faith. Its basic assumption is that all the things in the world can be arranged according to the plans, because the Rationalist insists that the artificial
IV. Oakeshott’s Political View: The Pursuit of Intimation

1. The origin of the political view of intimation

The Rationalist abnegates the true meaning of politics. To be specific, the aim of the political activity is not to take care of these people who are in the political community, but blindly to implement the plan of rationalism. The Rationalist is best at doing—“when left to himself is to replace one rationalist project in which he has failed by another in which he hopes to succeed” (Oakeshott, 1991b: 37), this is the dilemma of rationalist politics—the historical problem of using epistemology to solve the problem of value.10

Nevertheless, whether does the empiricism as the antithesis of rationalism is worthy of our demands or arrangements are much better than the obedience of nature. As Oakeshott writes, “in the restricted sense that he (refers to the Rationalist) believes that what is made is better than what merely grows, that neatness is better than profusion and vitality. The genius of the philosophe is a genius for rationalization, for making life and the business of life rational rather than for seeing the reason for it, for inculcating precise order, no matter at what expense, rather than for apprehending the existence of a subtle order in what appears to be chaotic” (Oakeshott, 1991d: 139).

10) The logic of epistemology is relying on the pursuit of the universally valid knowledge (scientific knowledge, for example) to get some objective truths on the objective laws, this way of thinking is relatively suitable for the fields of natural science and mathematics, but not the field of social life, because it is difficult to get an objective and scientific analysis of the complex social life at all, which originates from the complexity of man itself (see Noddings, 2015: 220). That is to say, the political view of the Rationalist always uses the knowledge of other fields on the method—especially the field of natural science—to understand and solve the problems in the field of politics, and has repeatedly claimed he can find a way to solve political problems once and for all.
not? Of course, Oakeshott's answer is negative. He believes politics could not be purely empirical. And the politics of pure empiricism may be called the "politics without a policy" (Oakeshott, 1989: 162; 1991c: 46), actually, it is a matter of integration, not of transition (Oakeshott, 1986: 96). This empirical politics is a fantasy that cannot be confirmed, it is not a possible pattern for political education. On one hand, because the education on this pattern of politics is filled with absurdity, it results in politics being directed towards desire; on the other hand, from the perspective of historical experience, there is no purely empirical politics in the world, because politics does not exist in isolation, it is always associated with certain policies and objectives; namely, "empiricism by itself is not a concrete manner of activity at all, and can become a partner in a concrete manner of activity only when it is joined with something else—in science, for example, when it is joined with hypothesis" (Oakeshott, 1989: 162-63; 1991c: 47). Thus, the purely empirical politics is impossible, it is a misunderstanding.

Then, Oakeshott introduces the concept of "intimation" after denying the politics of rationalism and empiricism to get into the new way of understanding politics. Beginning from analyzing the concept of politics, in his view on this is that:

Politics is the activity of attending to the general arrangements of a collection of people who, in respect of their common recognition of a manner of attending to its arrangements, compose a single community. . . . [A]nd the from it takes, because it can take no other, is the amendment of existing arrange- ments by exploring and pursuing what is intimated in them. . . . [I]n politics, then, every enterprise is a consequential enterprise, the pursuit, not of a dream, or of a general principle, but of an intimation (Oakeshott, 1989: 173-74; 1991c: 56-7).

This enlightening sentence of Oakeshott can be summarized to this: "the politics is the pursuit of intimations", or can also be considered as a paradigm of political understanding that corresponds to the mainstream political view of rationalism (i. e. the political view of a pursuit of intimation).11) Based on the above viewpoints, a new interpretation is proposed for the political views of different stages in the history of western political thoughts: first, the political views of the history of western political thoughts are the political views of rationalism; secondly, these political views of rationalism show the evolution from "the politics of pursuing good" to "the politics of pursuing utility". That is to say, the natural (or ethical)

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11) In my point of view, the "intimation" is an important concept in Oakeshott's political philosophy. It means everyone is living in a unique environment, meanwhile, everyone is facing specific problems. Nevertheless, there are no existing answers and ready-made truths in political practice, but a variety of intimations from different sources (that is, the existing traditions of behavior).
politics of the ancient Greek could be boiled down to "the politics of pursuing good", at this time, the political view of rationalism has laid the foundation for itself; likewise, the theocratic view of the middle ages could be summarized as "the politics of pursuing divinity", at this time, the political view is partly rationalistic; since modern times, the main trend of the political views shows a paradigm shift in argumentation from "the politics of pursuing right (or the political view of right)" to "the politics of pursuing utility (or the political view of utilitarianism)", but this transition does not change its characteristics of the universal rationalism. In view of this fact, the unique contribution of Oakeshott's political thought is to address a "political view of the pursuit of intimation" through his criticism on the political view of rationalist politics.

2. The connotations of the political view of intimation

Basing on the profound critique of modern political rationalism, Oakeshott proposes his own countermeasure in response. This is also one of the cores of his political philosophy—namely, the insight of political philosophy: the pursuit of the "intimations" of a tradition of behavior (for a specific description of this concept, see Figure 1), more specifically, politics is the activity of acquiring the "intimations" from a tradition of behavior which is non-essential, flowing, and haphazard ( Cf. Oakeshott, 1989: 176, 180; 1991c: 58, 59, 62). To accurately describe the concept of intimation, Oakeshott introduces the concept of "sympathy" that is applied to the expectations of incoherent things between tradition and reality. And only by giving expectation and sympathy for the things of incoherence can we effectively improve the "arrangements" of political activities, indeed, Oakeshott "speaks of this activity as 'attending to arrangements', rather than as making arrangements, because in these hereditary cooperative groups the activity is never offered the blank sheet of infinite possibility" (Oakeshott, 1989: 160; 1991c: 45). He makes an analysis on the changes of women's rights and statuses to prove this assertion. He believes the promotion of women's status of rights does not depend on a matter of abstract principle (e. g. equality and justice). This change is merely based on women's existing rights. Moreover, its continued change is only a continuation (or improvement) of the traditions. In other words, this continuation makes some

12) For Oakeshott, tradition firstly refers to a tradition of behavior. Indeed, "it may even appear to be essen-tially unintelligible. It is neither fixed nor finished; it has no changeless centre to which understanding can anchor itself; there is no sovereign purpose to be perceived or invariable direction to be detected; there is model to be copied, idea to be realized, or rule to be followed" (Oakeshott, 1989: 178; 1991c: 61). Moreover, tradition is a complex whole which includes the identity and continuity. In other words, tradition is the creature, which contains many voices as the capital of practice ( Cf. Oakeshott, 1965: 90).

13) For a substantial discussion of women's status of rights, cf. Oakeshott, 1989: 174; 1991c: 57.
incoherent parts become more coherent—namely, that “there was an incoherence in the arrangements of the society which pressed convincingly for remedy” (Oakeshott, 1989: 174; 1991c: 57). In short, these two concepts of “incoherence” and “sympathy” are the fulcrums of an elaborate plan by Oakeshott to describe the theory of “intimation” accurately. American political scholar also proposes some opinions on the concept of an intimation, McClelland summarizes:

Intimations have to come from somewhere and they have to lead somewhere. They come from the practice of politics and they arise out of a sense of unease, a feeling that things are not quite right. This feeling itself arises from the mind’s tendency to be in the face of incoherence. Human conduct is never deliberately arbitrary, which means that mind is forever seeking to render coherent that which has the appearance of incoherence. . . . [T]he political life of any given society appears at once coherent and incoherent, patterned but incomplete, which intimates ‘a sympathy for what does not fully appears’ (McClelland, 1996: 752-3).

It seems that our minds always have a worrying tendency, this is the footnote of “intimations”. And the constant pursuit of “intimations” is actually pursuing a way of governing appropriate in certain circumstances (Cf. Oakeshott, 1993: 84). Because the politics of skepticism does not believe human beings only have one pursuit, but the conflicts caused by the diversification can lead to the destruction of human life. Thus, in some sense, governing is necessary, but it is negative, its significance is merely to maintain the order of society. In a word, the “intimations” (that is, the skeptical politics) do not negate the powerful government, but the tight control of behavior.

However, the “intimations” are always in an inferior status in comparison with the “dream” and “general principle”. Because these intimations are always elusive for both individual and community in political activities; and generally, they lack operability or cannot be accurately described as a principle. Thus, in modern politics, people lack patience and trust to deal with the intimations, which is also the dilemma of modern politics. It is precisely because the Rationalist lacks patience for intimations, which leads to the abbreviation of it. Based on the considerations of utilitarianism, the Rationalist is unable to completely work in a "vacuum", and the traditional approach is that he must under certain “arrangements” (that is, the “intimations”) be engaged in political activities. And, of course, the rationalist does not steadily conform to the traditional way, his method is to simplify (or abbreviate) the “intimations” according to the so-called goals.14) Though "a tradition of behavior is not a fixed and inflexible manner of doing things; it

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14) T. Fuller reviews that "when a state or any centralizing power attempts to direct these patterns of activities toward rational political goals, the patterns lose both their coherence and their ability to set procedures for the
is a flow of sympathy” (Oakeshott, 1989: 176; 1991c: 59). Indeed, the meaning of intimations (essentially a simplified symbol) far outweighs its essence in the politics of rationalism.

Then, how to understand “the political view of a pursuit of intimation”? First, for Oakeshott, this “political view of a pursuit of intimation” is an intermediate state between the politics of empiricism and the politics of ideology (or rationalism), which is that the politics, “then springs neither from instant desires, nor from general principles, but from the intimation of the existing traditions of behavior” (Oakeshott, 1989: 173; 1991c: 56). But for Oakeshott, the tradition is not the essentialism, but a state of real life, thus politics arrives at a stage of a coherent understanding between past, present, and future. Secondly, the pursuit of intimation means that we have to constantly learn the wisdom in predecessors’ words and deeds, in order to make appropriate decisions and measures for our particular situations. Further, “in normal linguistic usage to speak of responding to intimations would convey the idea of cautious and moderate amendments to the inherited social fabric” (Rees, 1953: 74). Thus, what Oakeshott promoted is “the politics of conversation” or “the politics of a pursuit of intimation” that has the same meaning, therefore, Oakeshott’s political philosophy is closely linked to his thoughts on the philosophy of history, and of education.

Secondly, “the political view of a pursuit of intimation” is the revelations on our understanding of politics. In general, for academic circles, the definition of the political concept is determined by the relationship between fact and value. By comparison, this political view of intimation not only contains the tendency between fact and value, also analyses the political problems out of this tendency. Moreover, “the political view of a pursuit of intimation” has fully recognized the complexity and contingency of politics, and the non-scientificity or philosophic attribution of politics as a discipline. Oakeshott has claimed “political activity to be the exploration and pursuit of what is intimated by the traditional arrangements of a society, and therefore it follows that the purpose of an education for politics is quite simply to initiate us into the pattern and the spirit of those arrangements” (Rees, 1953: 73). Thus, (a) in terms of research methods, we should avoid a train of thought of pure rationalism; (b) and this political view rejects the governing of violence and disposal to control men and things in political behaviors (Cf. Oakeshott, 1991: 195), but it advocates the political means of persuasion and conversation; (c) in practical terms, this political view sticks to a principle of moderation.\(^{15}\)

pursuit of private, substantial goals” (Fuller, 1999: 134). My own view is that the assumptions of any political activities are based on the right or wrong behavior, thus, when any assumption of an activity is transferred to another, the politics loses its coherence of the most intrinsic essence.

15) E.g., The principle of moderation can be seen as the “Doctrine of the Mean”. In James Legge's translation of the “Doctrine of the Mean”, the goal of the mean is to maintain balance and harmony from directing the mind
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To sum up, the revelations of “the political view of a pursuit of intimation” are as follows: the complexity and contingency of politics mean that we cannot handle politics with extreme, simple, or regular actions, in other words, politics is “to be understood in their own terms and enjoyed for their own sakes rather than subsumed under rationalist categories” (Himmelfarb, 1975: 408), at the same time, the political stand of moderation means that we must overcome the tendencies of instrumentalism, technologism and dogmatism on the choice of politics.

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16) This view of “intimation” is actually similar to the political knowledge of “allusion” emphasized by Wolin, see, Sheldon S. Wolin, Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006), which means that politics does not coincides with the patterns of rationalism, or rather, to understand the political knowledge of philosophy (that is, the love of wisdom), we need to explore other methods.
V. The Implications of Intimation on Political Education

Through the above-mentioned analyses, it is clear that there is an “incoherence” in the existing traditions of behavior. But the behaviors themselves are always continuous, that is to say, it has a principle of continuity, namely, its principles as an authority of tradition are “diffused between past, present and future; between the old, the new and what is to come. . . . And this is true also of political education; it begins in the enjoyment of a tradition, in the observation and imitation of the behavior of our elders” (Oakeshott, 1989: 179-80; 1991c: 61-2). And the object of political education is to offer a way for people to get the “municipal (that is, not universal) knowledge” of participating in the “arrangements”, and to let us learn how to participate in a conversation about politics. And this process of education is a process of exploring the “intimations” of a political tradition (Cf. Oakeshott, 1989: 180; 1991c: 62), in other words, political education is to find the education of an “intimation”.17

Each of us is in the political community, and inevitably, we all acquire knowledge in practice. For this reason, Oakeshott presents the example of native language to illustrate this point: “we do not begin to learn our native language by learning the alphabet (or grammar); we do not begin by learning words, but words in use” (Oakeshott, 1989: 180; 1991c: 62). That is to say, we should learn our native language in a specific context. Likewise, we should seek knowledge about politics in use. Obviously, this learning process is not separated from the political carrier itself, and the boundaries between them are vague. For example, the provisions of any one constitution are not absolutely isolated from the traditional environment of the political system, because the prior arrangements would continue to play their special roles, and the only thing that changed is the forms of government. Indeed, it is not hard to find that many things have been ready—even for the most revolutionary political faction. Thus, the political education begins in the enjoyment of the intimations of a tradition and keeps on transforming in complex surroundings.

Another issue about political education is the legitimacy of the study of politics. Though everything about intimations is meant to be, and the study itself is the review of traditions (or the revelation of intimations), thus, in this sense, the study of politics is justified. Moreover, it includes the following aspects: the first is the study of a political tradition, for this, although Oakeshott does not “draw upon an idea of historical process” (Devigne, 1994: 2),18 he advocates using the study methods of history to focus

17 Oakeshott has argued this point himself. Cf. Oakeshott, 1989: 178-79; 1991c: 61-2.
18 In Conservation: Oakeshott, Strauss, and the Response to Postmodernism, where Robert Devigne writes that most contemporary British conservative theorists imagine the good society without thinking of the history, because history is “human construct, it is incapable of establishing an objective standard of progress or the political good” (Devigne, 1994: 2). See, for instance, Oakeshott’s critique of the doctrine of history: “teleological history is in
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on its own issues of a political tradition, that is to say, what we should do is not to “expose its errors but to understand its prejudices” (Oakeshott, 1989: 181; 1991c: 63). Of course, in this process, we can naturally detect the relationship between tradition and modernity (i.e. the investigation of political context), which is diametrically opposed to the “universal principle” of rationalist politics. And the point to emphasize here is that the study (or knowledge) of politics only has a certain local meaning. The second is the study of other political communities. Because every community has its own neighbors, thus, we also need to have a knowledge of others. Oakeshott believes in acquiring knowledge of other communities through the method of ecology. He maintains that we must never make “an anatomical study of mechanical devices or an ideology” (Oakeshott, 1989: 182; 1991c: 64) to explore the traditional knowledge of others, which is definitely not a study about the education and knowledge of politics, thus, it is important to understand their knowledge in the context of other societies. And the third study is about the philosophical study of politics. Actually, this study is a continuation of the reflection of politics at different levels. The most prominent performance of this reflection is that philosophers can use the general way of thinking to find “a history of the incoherencies” (Oakeshott, 1989: 183; 1991c: 65). Instead, the history of affairs, for historians, is only a matter of remembering events instead of reflecting on them (Cf. Oakeshott, 1986: 92). Moreover, for Oakeshott, the significance of this study lies in helping us to understand the position of political philosophy in our experience because the implication of this philosophical study is that it is a process of continual reflection upon politics. And being aware of this can help us avoid completely the raveling in our own careers. But at the same time, Oakeshott mentions, “political philosophy cannot be expected to increase our ability to be successful in political activity. It will not help us to distinguish between good and bad political projects; it is not such as to be capable of endowing a government with authority; it has no power to guide or to direct us in the enterprise of pursuing the intimations of our tradition” (Oakeshott, 1989: 184; 1991c: 65; 1991: 193). Because political philosophy can be explained as a pure explanatory, not a practical voice, as Oakeshott puts it, “where there is genuine philosophy, there can be no guidance; if we seek guidance, we must ‘hang up philosophy’” (Oakeshott, 1993: 155). Further- more, it is the crystallization of various theories, it is a highly abstract concept that separates from practice, and its purpose is to understand the world instead of changing it. For Oakeshott, these ideas of philosophy seem to be “useless” for practice, but it is consistent

principle a self-contradiction’, quoted on page 106 of On History and other Essays (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

19) According to Oakeshott, political philosophy is not to guide or intervene the practical activities of politics. Because philosophy itself is not a platform for action; it is not a basic principle or basis for the construction of political platform (Cf. Oakeshott, 1993: 137). On this view, Oakeshott’s emphasis on the non-practical characteristic of political philosophy is the starting point when we read his books.
with his opposition to rationalism.

In general, political education contains two aspects: how to learn the political traditions of behavior? And how to learn the legitimacy of a study of politics? (i.e. the study of internal politics, of other political societies, and of political philosophy). On one hand, the focus of a political education still encloses how to acquire the "intimations" in political life. Because the object of a political education is learning to participate in the conversation of a practice, rather than the spread of a political doctrine once and for all. In this sense, political education is a sort of experiential education, because "experiential education does not assume a necessary and goal; the learning occurs in the process of the act. An experiential political education can support Oakeshott’s minimalist state as well as his philosophy of freedom without corrupting liberal education" (Engel, 2007: 346). Moreover, political education is not "an indoctrination or even elucidation of political principles, but rather the elucidation of the traditional practices and activities characterizing a nation's actual political life" (Himmelfarb, 1975: 412). On the other hand, we must have a clear understanding that a tradition of behavior is an arrangement and a flow of sympathy. Though "a tradition of behavior is flimsy and elusive, it is not without identity" (Oakeshott, 1989: 179; 1991c: 61). And the pursuit of intimations comes to be regarded as the foundation of political philosophy, and not the pursuit of an abstraction (which takes something as the pattern) divorced from intimations. Likewise, German scholar H. Meier elaborates the significance about political philosophy in his article Why Political Philosophy: "neither in establishing political meaning, in uplifting and edifying the public, nor in educating citizens in morality or in offering practical guidance for political action" (Meier, 2002: 390). At this point, Oakeshott shares the same opinion, but focuses on a different path, because there is not a clear distinction between faith and Skepticism. Thus, though the "intimations" are vague and elusive, they are Oakeshott’s choice.

Furthermore, from the perspective of Oakeshott’s political view of intimation, on one hand, he has carried on the sharp critique to the knowledge of technical rationality, he even believes such a technical rationality is executing the spiritualities and gifts of human beings. On the other hand, practical knowledge as Oakeshott advocates it emphasizes a kind of training and exploration of the mind. In fact, his practical knowledge is not the same as the application of technical knowledge, as commonly believed;

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20) Ronald Beiner writes: “What is not clear here is what it means to theorize politics while avoiding the snare of offering a doctrine. In what sense is Oakeshott himself who is not offering a doctrine?” in Political Philosophy: What It Is and Why It Matters (Beiner, 2014: 33). On this view, Oakeshott is a political skeptic about the politics which is suffused by the ideological deformation of knowledge. See for instance, “Michael Oakeshott: The Philosophical Skeptic in an Impatient Age”, in Fuller, T., Political Philosophy in the Twentieth Century, ed. Catherine H. Zuckert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 150.
it stresses we should establish a “place of learning” in which each of us can constantly explore the profound wisdom and knowledge for personal growth and development. However, in the field of education, the teaching methods of Rationalism have occupied the leading position for a long time, and many educational modes (e.g., training, regulation, and imprisonment) suppress the development of human nature, even we have made great efforts for the cultivation of the so-called innovation ability. All in all, in my view, these teaching models of Rationalism still stay at the level of exploring the means of education. For this reason, Oakeshott attaches great importance to the concept of intimation. Because everyone is living in a unique environment, meanwhile, everyone is facing specific problems. Nevertheless, there are no existing answers and ready-made truths in educational practice, but a variety of intimations from different sources. And he stresses the roles of intimation in an educational conversation. Such an educational method covers not only the external knowledge, but also the internal feelings, and it emphasizes the experience and ‘meaning’ in the process of human activities, as well as the democracy and equality in the process of education. This educational approach stands in sharp contrast to the traditional infusion education and didactic way of teaching. Through this educational view of intimation, “organised and systematic teaching has its appropriate contribution to make; the tradition can be explored to advantage in its deeper aspects by the study of its growth” (Rees, 1953: 75). In short, the political view of intimation is opposed to the educational methods of pragmatism and instrumental rationalism; it emphasizes the importance of participating in the interaction of a practice and understanding the value of a ‘meaning’ world. This kind of political view indicates that Oakeshott’s educational philosophy is not a sort of educational view of faith, but a sort of educational view of scepticism. And the most notable characteristic of this educational view of scepticism is to highlight the contingency and transiency of traditional heritage.

VI. Conclusion

The object of this paper is to emphasize the politics as the activity of protecting (or maintaining) the diversity of life rather than to overemphasize “the value of technique and planning as opposed to more practical ways of thinking, with highly negative consequences” (Neill & Meadowcroft, 2009: 32) in many

21) As Ronald Beiner points out on page 39 of Political Philosophy: What It Is and Why It Matters, “Oakeshott’s philosophy is about enjoying where you are, not about getting to some improved destination”. Similarly, the approach of learning as Oakeshott understands it is not to accomplish a certain goal or a specific task that belongs to oneself, but to participate in the conversation of an certain intimation that comes from personal life.
political activities. To be specific, on one hand, the traditions never provide clear answers, it is overly complex and has no boundaries; 22) it only gives us some intimations, there is no doubt that the politics is nothing more than the pursuit of these intimations. In Oakeshott’s view, we should learn the wisdom from the previous words and deeds in a conversational way between tradition and modernity, which will provide appropriate understandings and actions for your particular situations. On the other hand, these traditions, of course, cannot be generalized as some so-called “main characteristics”—that will only turn the traditions into an ideology. As Oakeshott concedes, “since a tradition of behaviour is not susceptible of the distinction between essence and accident, knowledge of it is unavoidably knowledge of its detail: to know only the gist is to know nothing. What has to be learned is not an abstract idea, or a set of tricks, not even a ritual, but a concrete, coherent manner of living in all its intricateness” (Oakeshott, 1989: 179; 1991c: 61-2).

Actually, this is the starting point of the Epistemology of conservatism (or traditionalism). But the Rationalist cannot see the diversity and complexity of traditions completely, he holds an attitude of reductionism about the experience, he always wants to reduce the complex experience to “a set of principle”. And, in politics, the Rationalist wants to use a set of ideology which consists of abstract principles to explain everything in the world, or to regulate all behaviors of human society. At the same time, he also constructs the realistic politics according to the principles. And modern western politics fully reflects this characteristic of rationalist politics.

But, Oakeshott does not make the same mistake when analyzing the modern western (European) politics concretely. Although he reveals the rationalism in modern politics, he remembers that this revelation of political philosophy is an abstraction, an abbreviative description of the concepts of politics, rather than the complete experiential description of politics (that is a matter of historians). For this reason, Oakeshott proposes a new political view of “intimation”. Because the use of the politics is different from the application of the technology, it is inseparable from the traditions and cultures of a nation, moreover, it needs a kind of practical wisdom (i. e. politics is the pursuit of intimation), this provides a new guidance for modern politics to get rid of the dilemma of rationalist politics.

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22) This, for example, has another possible explanation: ‘no matter how far, no less than’, which originally comes from the Chinese ancient book The Book of History (Warring States, 475 ~ 221 B. C.).
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국문초록

오우크쇼트의 암시 정치관 논의

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연구목적: 본 연구는 오우크쇼트의 정치 활동을 분석하고, 그가 주장하는 암시 이론의 특성과 그 함의를 탐구하여 이성주의 정치관을 비판적으로 검토하는 데 목적을 두었다. 연구방법: 이를 위해 오우크쇼트의 정치상상과 이성주의 정치관을 분석하였다. 연구결과: 서구 전통에서 이성주의(Rationalism) 정치관은 고대 그리스의 '적신(至善)'의 정치에서 기원하여 근대 '공리주의 추구하는 정치'로 진화되었다. 이러한 전환은 정치 철학의 기준에서 닮아가지 못하거나 이론이 그 자리를 대체하게 만들었고, 그에 따라 근대 정치는 사실과 가치 문제를 구분함에 있어 혼돈에 빠지게 되었다. 이를 극복하기 위해 오우크쇼트는 전통적인 이성주의 정치관을 대체하는 새로운 정치관으로서 암시(intimation)를 추구하는 정치관을 제시하였다. 그는 모든 사람이 독특한 정치 환경에서 생활하며 복잡한 정치 문제에 직면하게 되고 그러한 문제에 대한 답은 현실하지 않을뿐더러 이미 완성된 것이라고 하기 때문에, 행위전통과의 대화를 통해 여러 가지 암시를 얻는 것을 최선으로 보았다. 행위전통은 비본질적이며 유동적이지만 하나의 호수로 수렴될 수 있는 생활 형태이기에 미래 활동에 대한 암시를 제공하게 된다. 따라서 그 행위전통 속의 암시를 추구하는 과정에서 정치활동에 유익한 시사를 얻을 수 있다는 것이다. 결론: 결국, 오우크쇼트의 정치 이론이란 행위전통 속의 암시를 통해 시사를 얻으려는 끊임없는 대화의 과정을 의미한다고 볼 수 있다. 이러한 대화의 정치(the politics of conversation)를 추구하는 오우크쇼트의 견해는 정치관 근본적으로 복잡하고 불안정하여 극단적이거나 단 순화하여 범지식으로 처리할 수 없는 문제이며 그럴기 때문에 이론의 완전한 이성주의적 사고 방법을 의미 야 한다는 것이다. 또한 폭력과 지배의 통치 수단의 불합리성을 인식하여 정치의 '대화에 적극적으로 참여함으로써 정치에 관한 지식을 습득하고 교조주의 경향을 극복할 수 있는 가능성을 시사하고 있다.

주요어: 오우크쇼트, 정치관, 암시, 이성주의, 행위전통