

Robert P. Hyatt Presentation, "Trauma, Metaphor and Meaning"
 Polanyi Society Nashotah Conference
 11 a.m. Central Daylight Saving Time
 June 11, 2020

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. In your extensive experience as an elementary school counsellor, have you ever worked with children who had experienced traumatic situations? Did you use artistic "framing" and "story" as a modality of treatment? How was this helpful? Have there been other situations in which the arts were not successful?
2. Your paper "Polanyian Philosophical Resources..." describes a theatrical performance created by victims of trauma. "The trauma victim becomes a contributor to a creative script fashioned out of his 'inchoate experience' of victimization thereby detaching that experience and transforming it via his/her imagination into an artistic creation filled with meaning" (p. 7.) The trauma victims "indwell" their traumatic experiences, and create a new meaning that may help them achieve some distance. You also note that "a very significant part . . . [of a theatrical performance] is its convivial nature." Victims of trauma experience solidarity with others, mutual recognition and respect. Conviviality becomes part of the "gestalt from within which the theatrical production emerges" (p. 8.) How does this strengthen the theatrical experience? Please say more about Polanyi's view that tacit judgments are primordially rooted in pre-articulate sentiments of fellowship (PK pp. 205, and 209.)

Polanyi states, "The interpersonal coincidence of tacit judgments is primordially continuous with the mute interaction of powerful emotions." (PK 205) and further the sentiments of trust and the persuasive passions ... bring us back... to the primitive sentiments of fellowship that exist pervious to articulation." Ibid.209. I would elaborate in terms of the "therapeutic situation")

3. People may be unfamiliar with the terms "tenor" and "vehicle" as they relate to metaphor. What do these terms mean, and what is their relationship (if any) to Polanyi's discovery of the "from-to" structure of all knowing?
4. Polanyi claims that all forms and disciplines of knowledge are achieved by integrating tacitly held particulars into a comprehensive whole. As Ron Hall points out, it is challenging to access and describe the "from" pole of meaning in any situation. Do traumatic experiences create a "damaged" form of knowing and of conviviality? Should traumatic experiences be separated out conceptually from all other forms of knowing?

5. Why is it that simply talking about a traumatic experience, without other approaches, may not lead to healing? Do you agree that the arts may be particularly helpful?

According to William Poteat, each person's own existence "Is essentially the enactment of a drama having for its stage the conceptual and nonconceptual. If it were not so, deep personal disorientations of the sort with which psychoanalysis has to deal could quite simply be cured by bracing verbal clarification, an attempted translation of the symbolic into the verbal" (Poteat, *The Primacy of Persons and the Language of Culture, Essays by William H. Poteat*. Edited and with an introduction by James M. Nickell and James W. Stines. University of Missouri Press, 1993.) Page 323.

Polanyi suggests that "framing" sets artistic creations apart from ordinary reality. However, he also describes controversies that have accompanied artistic innovations in recent history. Are these views inconsistent? Is there a significant difference between art in general, and art created by individuals as a means of personal expression and healing?