Zoom Conference on Polanyi-Related Topics

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the June 9-11, 2020 Polanyi Society-sponsored conference “Post-Critical Philosophy and Social Theory” was cancelled. However, some papers and other elements of the cancelled conference will be presented as online events beginning in the period originally scheduled for the conference in Nashotah, WI.

Anyone interested in participating can do so but all participants must register by e-mail for a specific Zoom session beforehand in order to be included. Registering is free and is simply a device to help set up a secure connection. If you register, you will be sent information which you can use to enter the Zoom meeting at the scheduled time.

A scheduled Zoom meeting will typically include a presentation and discussion; sessions will likely run about an hour long, although some may be a bit longer. Because presenters and participants will be located across the world, some Zoom events will occur at very odd times for some participants. Some online events will be recorded and made available for downloading (from a link on this page) by anyone interested.

In most cases, presenters in Zoom sessions will post a paper that will be available for downloading from the Polanyi Society website on this page before the online session. Zoom meeting participants should read the paper before the Zoom session since the presenter will only summarize main points in order that most of the allotted time can be spent in discussion.

Below is information on Zoom sessions presently scheduled. Links for papers or other materials for sessions will be on this page as soon as they are available. Information about additional sessions will also be posted on a revised version of this page as the details are worked out.

11 a.m. US-Central Daylight Saving Time on Tuesday, 9 June 2020

Discussion of Michael Polanyi’s “Economics Education” Film with Gabor Biro

“Money Circles, Sensible Citizens and the Walt Disney of Economics” is a 21-minute talk (with PowerPoint slides) by Gabor Biro posted on YouTube at the following address:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0HT6QO7jOM

Biro, author of The Economic Thought of Michael Polanyi (2019), provides details about Michael Polanyi’s diagrammatic film on selected Keynesian ideas that Polanyi hoped would transform society as well as economics in the thirties and forties.

If you wish to be a participant in this Zoom discussion with Biro at the time listed above, please send an email to both Gus Breytspraak (gus.breytspraak@ottawa.edu) and Phil Mullins (mullins@missouriwestern.edu).
11 a.m. US-Central Daylight Saving Time on Wednesday, 10 June 2020

Jon Fennell, “Michael Polanyi and the Theologico-Political Problem”

Polanyi declares that reason and revelation are so different in kind that they cannot conflict. Surprisingly, this denial of the theologico-political problem is the product of acquiescence to the very presuppositions that are the central target of Polanyi’s rejection of Cartesian systematic doubt. Fuller appreciation of Socratic rationalism supports Polanyi’s project while demonstrating the perennial salubrious tension between reason and revelation.

If you wish to be a participant in this Zoom discussion with Fennell at the time listed above, please send an email to both Gus Breytspraak (gus.breytspraak@ottawa.edu) and Phil Mullins (mullins@missouriwestern.edu).

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11 a.m. US-Central Daylight Saving Time on Thursday, 11 June 2020

Robert Hyatt, “Trauma, Metaphor and Meaning”

Polanyian insights into the ways meaning is created within the arts provides a coherent perspective for understanding why and how the arts are useful in ameliorating the devastating effects of trauma. Recent discoveries by humanistically oriented practitioners of trauma therapy conform to, and helpfully extend, Polanyi’s views of the relationship of mind and body.

Please download all three components:

B. Austin, “The Monster Within” (1-page poem)

Robert Hyatt, “Polanyian Poetics: Commentary on ‘The Monster Within’” (3 pages)

Robert Hyatt, “Polanyian Philosophical Resources for Mental Health Professionals Dealing with Trauma Related Pathologies” (9 ½ page essay)

If you wish to be a participant in this Zoom discussion with Hyatt at the time listed above, please send an email to both Gus Breytspraak (gus.breytspraak@ottawa.edu) and Phil Mullins (mullins@missouriwestern.edu).
12:15 p.m. US-Central Daylight Saving Time on Thursday, 11 June 2020

Charles Lowney, "Body-Knowing and Neural Networks: Is a Computer’s Ability to Learn Human Skills a Victory for Reductionism?"

Harry Collins believes that Collective Tacit Knowledge (CTK) is irreducible, but Somatic Tacit Knowledge (STK) is, in principle, explicable and reducible. Polanyi, in contrast, sees irreducibility in a process of tacit knowing that extends from bodily skills right up through linguistic and social skills. Using examples from Martial Arts, I first show how the body displays intentionality and innovation that Collins sees only at the CTK level. This, however, might not convince Collins because neural network computing machines are able to perform skillful tasks we once thought irreducibly human, e.g., driving a car. I show how Polanyi’s structure of tacit knowing and learning is indeed modeled by these machines, but they also display irreducibility.

If you wish to be a participant in this Zoom discussion with Lowney at the time listed above, please send an email to both Gus Breytspraak (gus.breytspraak@ottawa.edu) and Phil Mullins (mullins@missouriwestern.edu).

11 a.m. US-Central Daylight Saving Time on Friday, 12 June 2020

Phil Mullins, “Michael Polanyi’s ‘Social Capitalism’”

This presentation/discussion is one that leads into and complements the session which immediately follows it (15 minutes after the conclusion of this session). “Social Capitalism” was a 2200-word Michael Polanyi opinion piece (1946) that provocatively reflects some of Polanyi’s mid-century social and political ideas as well as his developing account of the history of economic ideas. Posted are both Polanyi’s short essay and a 10-page comment on a few interesting elements. The posting for the following session is a concise 1947 essay by Karl Polanyi.


Phil Mullins, “Michael Polanyi’s ‘Social Capitalism’”

If you wish to be a participant in this Zoom discussion at the time listed above, please send an email to both Gus Breytspraak (gus.breytspraak@ottawa.edu) and Phil Mullins (mullins@missouriwestern.edu).
12:15 p.m. US-Central Daylight Saving Time on Friday, 12 June 2020

Walter Gulick, Gus Breytspraak, and Phil Mullins, “Michael and Karl Polanyi”

Scholars interested in Michael Polanyi usually pay little attention to Karl Polanyi’s abundant writing and vice versa. Should this standoff end? These brothers read each other’s writings and communicated with each other. They are not, of course, always on the same page, but neither are they always “worlds apart.” This discussion aims to open up not only some of the connections and disconnections between Michael’s and Karl’s thought, but to explore how each has insights that complement the thought of the other.


If you wish to be a participant in this Zoom discussion at the time listed above, please send an email to both Gus Breytspraak (gus.breytspraak@ottawa.edu) and Phil Mullins (mullins@missouriwestern.edu).