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Sent out by Joan Crewdson

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Prof. Sam Watson, Guest Editor of Pre/Text, who is arranging a Special Issue on Michael Polanyi, writes that there has been an encouraging and very interesting response to the 'Call for Papers'. The first deadline for manuscripts is now June 1st, with revisions needing to be completed by October 1st. I do not yet have details of the publication date or cost of the Polanyi Issue, but Sam Watson has sent me on request an explanation of what is to be understood by 'Rhetoric', which I share with you. His address is: Sam Watson Jr. Dept. of English, Univ. of North Carolina at Charlotte, Charlotte NC 28223.

I have had no further news from Prof. Harry Prosch about a possible visit, though a number of you have written expressing support for the idea of a one-day conference. It is now too late to arrange anything for 1981 but I will let you know if there is anything to report by the time the October Convivium goes out.

Prof. Richard Gelwick writes that he will be on sabbatical in 1982 and is tempted to try and find an excuse for visiting Britain. He says he very much needs to be in touch again with friends over here, and "the encouragement of taking part in a direct exchange there with Prosch would be very compelling." This is an idea to bear in mind.

Bill Scott writes that he gave a lecture at the University of Minnesota on Dec. 2nd in a series on "The springs of Scientific Creativity". He gave a sampling of Polanyi's work in chemistry with some clues as to its creative origins. This Series will be published. As yet I have no details.

Prof. Torrance writes that Handsel Press may be publishing a book by Alexander Thomson on 'The Concept of Tradition and Authority in Science and Theology, with special reference to the thought of Michael Polanyi'. There are no further details at present.

Dr. Labia (whose article on Polanyi and Popper is in the current Convivium) sent me copies of some correspondence with Noam Chomsky, showing that the latter is familiar with Polanyi's work and thinks that what Polanyi is saying is not inconsistent with what he is trying to do, "namely to determine precisely the system of principles that constitutes the human biological endowment in various cognitive domains (language being one, and the one that most interests me), and to show how particular languages can be in effect deduced by setting the parameters in these systems in one or another of the permitted ways, under the boundary conditions set by experience. Now
far this enterprise can be pressed, one cannot know — at the moment, it is proceeding in a way that I find quite exciting.”

Bob Brownhill writes that he is trying to get a contract for a book on Polanyi and education for professionals, (learning skills etc.) He also has an article on Polanyi appearing in the June, 1981 edition of ‘N U Q’ (?). Unfortunately, he gives no more details.

The Winter Number of the American Polanyi Society Newsletter (Vol VIII No 2), has just arrived, and this time it consists mainly of material borrowed from our October Convivium! (We have a mutual arrangement over this). I list below the publications in it as having relevance to Polanyi:

**PUBLICATIONS RECENTLY REPORTED RELEVANT TO POLANYI**


(End of Excerpt from Polanyi Society Newsletter)

Dr. Magda Polanyi has drawn my attention to a book by Patrick Grant entitled Six Modern Authors and Problems of Belief. Macmillan, 1979. £10. It has chapters on Aldous Huxley, Tolkien, Robert Graves and David Jones, but the one of particular interest is on Owen Barfield and Polanyi. The context of the discussion is the crisis for the literary imagination brought about by the rise of science.
The title of this article is the sub-title of the book, *Belief in Science and the Christian Life*, edited by Thomas F. Torrance (The Handsel Press, 1980, £5.50) and the contributions that make up this book have their origin in a conference held in November 1978 at St. Catherines, Cumberland Lodge, Windsor. This article is an extended review of this series of conference papers, which I found of quite exceptional interest, particularly in view of the basic difference of conceptual outlook which has given rise in America to a debate between Richard Gelwick and Harry Prosch about how Polanyi should be read with regard to religion.

Again and again throughout these conference addresses comes the reminder that the purpose of Polanyi's epistemological programme was not only to restore the role of faith to all knowing and to free us from the scientific ideal of detachment, but also to renew our ability to believe in the reality of the living God of the Judaeo-Christian heritage. Polanyi's intention shines through the pages of this book to establish the continuity of our knowledge of reality in science, religion and the humanities generally. It is, according to Polanyi, by the powers of imaginative thought seeking the truth about reality that man has progressed in the spheres of both science and religion. It also becomes clear that knowing rightly depends upon acting rightly towards the environment, which in turn, depends upon the quality of indwelling through which the subject identifies with his world.

In the first paper, *The Framework of Belief*, Tom Torrance begins by outlining the way people have understood the relation of faith to reason from biblical and patristic times to the present. After a brief but masterly historical survey he develops the implications of Polanyi's teaching that all knowledge rests on faith and that this knowledge develops under the guidance of an objectively grounded framework of belief. We are reminded that Polanyi regarded beliefs as personal acts, held within the framework of a commitment to reality. Truth is the external or objective pole of belief of which the subjective pole is the knowing person. Although there are significant differences between religious and scientific beliefs, Polanyi's account of the structure of scientific belief is shown to be appropriate for an account of the pattern of Christian belief. Both arise compulsorily yet freely under the constraint of a reality...
that will not let us go. Torrance reminds us of Polanyi's stress on the inexhaustible novelty of reality, and since belief in the reality of God is characterised by an infinite capacity for self-disclosure in yet unthought of ways in the future, it follows that the reality of God is something far greater and more profound than the reality of nature or of the universe itself. Christian faith operates within an interpretative framework created by our encounter with the reality of God in Jesus Christ. It is this encounter which provides Christians with the mode of rationality through which the word of God addresses them.

In the last part of his paper Torrance discusses the relation of implicit and explicit beliefs and how they bear on one another in a circular way within a fiduciary framework. Behind this lie the question of working beliefs and their relation to the ultimate beliefs in which they are grounded. In view of the inexhaustible novelty of reality we have to acknowledge the possibility of alternative formulations for our operative or working beliefs. These normative beliefs need repeated re-examination and have to be tested and reappropriated on the basis of our commitment to the reality which is the source of true belief. Ultimate beliefs are grounded upon the unalterable nature of things and are under constant pressure from aspects of reality which seek realization in our own minds.

Torrance ends his paper by considering Polanyi's account of the embodiment and functioning of a self-expanding system of belief within a free society. This, as he points out, has implications for the Christian doctrine of the Church and he makes three points. There is "First, the deep interlocking of faith, worship and understanding under the guidance of the ultimate beliefs imprinted upon the mind of the Church in its commitment to God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ" (p 24). Then, the Church's explicit beliefs are formulated within this interpretative framework of belief, although there is a continual expansion of the Church's understanding of the truth of God as he is in himself "within the framework of the compelling claims of Christ upon us and of our commitment to him."(p 24). Finally, "the interrelation between implicit and explicit belief.....helps us to appreciate genuine theological operations" which "are found to outrun the Church's formalisations at any specific time and to anticipate new and more adequate modes of thought." All this relies finally "upon the profound spirituality both embodied in the Church's trad-
ition and transcending it, a spirituality that is locked through ultimate beliefs into the inner intelligible relations in God himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit." (p 25)

This highly illuminating paper provides an indispensable basis for the contributions which follow and the book would be worth publishing for Prof. Torrance's contribution alone. But there is just one question which it raises for me, one that could have considerable importance in the broader context of interfaith dialogue. If I have understood Prof. Torrance aright, he is not only saying that the Christian Church's working beliefs are governed by its commitment to God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ but that the Church's ultimate interpretative framework of belief is grounded in Christology, so that only within this interpretative framework can there be any expansion of understanding of the truth of God as he is in himself. Theologically speaking, this means that 'All theology is Christology'.

As a Christian, I am committed to God's self-revelation in Christ and I hope to share with others in this tradition a growing knowledge of the things of God "as through Christ and in the Spirit we are given ever new access into the truth of God". (p 25). But my question is whether the Christian interpretative framework should be given the status of 'ultimate' or whether it functions more as a working belief? The issue is, in what sense can God in Christ be viewed as the ultimate interpretative framework for all men? There can be no doubt that God is the ultimate framework of belief for all mankind and that Jesus, the Lord and Christ of Christian faith, operates as the Christians' interpretative framework, but can the Christ of Christian faith be viewed as the ultimate framework of belief for all humanity in the same sense that we all understand that God provides that framework?

My question in no way casts doubt upon the need to affirm that, is some mysterious way, the Gestalt or pattern of Godhead is trinitarian, that is innerly relational, because God in himself has to be understood as the ultimate 'Form of the Personal', and humanity must, as Karl Barth has said, be understood to be already in God. But can we go so far as to identify the Messiah of God with God in his unique unity? As St. Paul once wrote:

He (God) has put all things in subjection under his (Christ's) feet. But in saying 'all things', it clearly means to exclude God who subordinates them; and when all things are thus subject to him then the Son himself will also be made subordinate to God who made all things subject to him, and thus God will be made all in all.

(1 Corinthians 15:27/28. N.E.B.)
I believe a time will come when men of all faiths will enjoy a relationship with the suffering and glorified Messiah (Christ) of God. But I suspect that they may discover this relationship within a modified framework of their own particular tradition and, as such, it will fit into a different conceptual framework than that which controls the thinking of the Christian Church. If this is true it will have major implications for Christian mission, though it will not affect the universal and unique significance of Jesus for the whole of mankind. It may mean, however, that the Christian Church will have to come to terms with the possibility that the ultimate framework of belief which all men will share will be a theological rather than a christological one. Prof. Torrance's paper itself suggests that the ultimate framework of religious belief will be expanded and enriched by the clarifying and deepening of men's normative beliefs. As he points out, genuine theological operations are bound to challenge our human modes of thought and outrun our particular formalisations.

If confidence in the Judaeo-Christian tradition is justified, the day will come when the Messiah of God will be given a central interpretative role in the traditions and beliefs of all genuine world faiths, though this will not necessarily be articulated in the traditional Christian way. The issue I have raised is a purely theological one and does not affect the validity of Prof. Torrance's exploration of Polanyi's thought and its relevance for Christian faith and life. Polanyi's own religious faith had a theological breadth which embraced the christological dimension and I myself think that he might have approved the idea that the Christian tradition stands in relation to faith in God as a working belief stands in relation to that ultimate ground which Christians share with Jews and those of other world faiths, who are bound in a common commitment to the Creator and Lord of history.

The second paper by John Puddefoot, entitled, Indwelling: formal and non-formal elements in faith, aims to show that the non-formal experiences and knowledge achieved by the Christian Church collectively provide a reliable ground for the re-interpretation of the Church's formal texts (its Bible and necessary doctrines). Puddefoot locates the authority of the Bible and of Christian doctrines, not in the formal texts, but in the shared accrediting of these by the Church, the community of interpretation viewed as a conviviality. (p30)
The problem he explores is that formal texts and doctrines are inadequate as an articulation of our non-formal experience of the living God. Our focal intention as Christians is to communicate the real meaning of our faith. To do this, we indwell the bible and our credal statements/subsidiaries. In Polanyian language, it is our non-formal perceptions which control our formalisations. The relationship between the Church and its formal documents is one of dual control; the Church imposes constraints upon the range of interpretations allowed, and the Bible and other records of the Church's past lay boundary conditions upon the range of the Church. The unformalizability of the relation between concepts and the Church's articulation of them, (which is a skilful, tacit, personal co-efficient), rules out the possibility of one unique system of interpretation. It is only a thought-world acquired with integrity and a sense of responsibility to the reality of God that can protect and sustain Christian truth convivially as a living 'Way'. In the end, the life of the Church is a life of the disciple dwelling in the person of his Lord. Christianity is commitment to a relationship, not to any set of formal texts or doctrines. It is about dwelling in one in whom God resolved all the theological problems of saying many things at once, one in whom men saw a life combining perfectly unity of form and inner conviction. I can assure those who attempt to indwell John Puddefoot's paper that they will be repaid with many rewarding insights.

The third paper entitled Conversion and Penitence is by John Barr, who begins by asking what light the work of Polanyi throws on conversion and develops an answer which shows how important are his teaching on discovery, tacit knowing and communication for this subject. The fourth paper by Daniel Hardy has the fascinating title of Christian Affirmation and the Structure of Personal Life. Hardy draws attention to the serious gap in modern though and life concerning the dynamics of personal life and thought. How many of us, for example, can conceive what it means to be able to fulfil the possibilities of full personal existence in God? How does Polanyi's work help us to make inroads into the vacuum in our understanding of the personal? One way in which Hardy tackles this question is to examine Polanyi's account of the dynamics of knowing which shows that we discover our own significance through the discernment of significant form in the other. Reality is perceived in the relationship between knower and known. I must confess that
I found this paper difficult to follow, perhaps precisely because of the importance of the subject and because it was breaking new ground in the area of personal being. I hope that Hardy will offer us a further opportunity to become more 'at home' in his thinking on this important matter.

Dr Colin Gunton's impressive paper, *The Truth of Christology*, aims to answer the question: What do problems of Christology look like when seen through the instrumentality of a mind that has immersed itself in the philosophy of Michael Polanyi? He deals with this question by examining two critical areas which Christology has to face, subjectivism and historicism. Since Schleiermacher transferred from object to subject the primary reference of theological assertion, Christology has had to contend with a radicalising of Melanchthon's dictum that 'To know Christ is to know his benefits'. Of course, says Gunton, this is true, but although faith feels the rightness of attributing God's name to Christ - by experience, it is a mistake to confuse a Christology that has existential relevance with one concerned only with subjective experience. Polanyi offers good reason to suppose that theories of knowledge on which subjectivist Christologies are heavily dependent are false. Just as scientific knowledge is not objectivist, nor is theology subjectivist in the modern sense, and the best way of approaching this question is through indwelling theory. Gunton points out that the theory of indwelling is the obverse of the theory of tacit knowing. The former concerns a logical relationship that links life in the body to our knowledge of things outside and the latter illustrates the irreducibly personal nature of knowing. Indwelling presupposes a real relation of mind and body, person and world, concept and reality and the key to it all is that there is a genuine interaction of mind and reality. If this is the case, Gunton concludes, there is good reason to think that it could be the case for Christology. So he claims to have established the necessary (though not the sufficient) conditions for believing that theological doctrines about the Person of Christ may properly be held to be true.

In discussing historicism, Gunton reminds us that Polanyi places the study of history in the panorama of the sciences by means of an extension of the theory of indwelling. If one accepts the view that the distinctiveness of history differs, not in principle but only in degree, from the distinctiveness of nature, - "Every pebble is unique, but... Great men are more profoundly unique than
any object in nature." (p 103 Quoting from The Study of Man) - then it is possible to consider the meaningful uniqueness of particular events in past history. Since Christology is bound up with a divine history mediated through documents recording both a history and its significance, Gunton finds it helpful to deal with the problem of modern relativism by discussing the thought of Polanyi in conjunction with that of H.G. Gadamer, who shares Polanyi’s concern to break with the Enlightenment’s view of rationality. Gadamer argues for the objective meaning of a text over against the interpreter, but he lacks Polanyi’s understanding of the emergence of linguistic meaning from lower levels of meaning. Having established that tradition has a place in all types of scientific inquiry and that texts from the past can be meaningful to us and to our own time, Gunton concludes his paper with an examination of the Chalcedonian definition in order to find out how a classical christological text comes out of analysis in the light of Polanyi’s view of the hierarchical structure of reality. He finds that the text bears "some of the marks of Polanyi’s account of how the mind works in making a discovery", but, not surprisingly, he also finds that this unique theological formula "does not fit easily into a Polanyian mould." (p 105). This is because "the logical levels of Chalcedon do not reflect levels of reality related to each other in a hierarchy." (p 106). Needless to say, this paper is a sophisticated and thorough piece of work of a very high standard.

The last paper is on Providence and Prayer by Peter Forster and aims to see whether Polanyi can help to throw light on our understanding of those problems which arise in a consideration of any possible relationship between the infinite God and a finite world. Forster finds some illumination for providence and prayer by using Polanyi’s concept of a stratified ontology and by reminding us that while one can speak of God as occupying the level immediately above man’s consciousness and will, he is also present to all levels of our universe transcendentally, holding them in being. This means that when we speak of a transcendent level, we are saying something about the mode of God’s presence to his creation. Forster also suggests that when Polanyi speaks of a field or gradient of potential meaning, we can identify this with the living God who is the one who evokes and sustains ever more meaningful organisations of matter, though God is, of course, far more than the fields of meaning present in and to
creation. Forster applies the same kind of argument to Polanyi's analysis of the asymmetry of success and failure in the ascending hierarchy of levels of living beings. Just as with a machine, there are only causes of failure, no reasons, and conversely, there are only reasons for the successful operation of a machine, so when one arrives at the human level of behaviour, man cannot regard God as the Author of evil, but the good he does can be ascribed to the level above him - God.

The risk of distorting Forster's arguments are considerable, so I will say no more about his paper, except that it is a profound and sensitive exploration of a very mysterious subject. Forster does not claim to offer 'answers'. "The mystery remains," he says, "as it is right that it should. My aim has rather been to show how we can dwell more deeply in this mystery and paradox." (p 119).

I found most helpful those parts of his address which allowed one to think of God's interaction with this 'personal' universe in terms of the operative principles which govern personal relationships. For example, he links the thought of Polanyi, St. Paul and St. John closely when he points out that the Christian 'dwells in ' his Lord, (p 123). He concludes that the key to understanding the doctrines of prayer and providence lies in our doctrine of God who is the source and standard of all that is real. "God is richer and more personal than we are in his life as Father, Son and Holy Spirit." (p 130).

Since this is not a technical book but is designed for a wide public untrained in theology or science, the editor has wisely included notes at the end on some forty terms and concepts which could present difficulties for the non-specialist reader. On the flyleaf, this book is described as an exciting contribution to creative thinking which will be widely acclaimed. I very much hope that it will receive such wide acclaim and believe that it should do so.

WHATEVER IS RHETORIC?

In the light of the proposed publication of a special Polanyi Number of Pre/Text, an Inter-disciplinary Journal of Rhetoric, I asked Sam Watson for a reflection on just what rhetoric is and what linkages there might be between it and Polanyi's thought. He duly sent me this reflection which will be of interest to readers of Convivium.

When Plato objects to rhetoric, his charge is definitional; not even rhetoric's prime spokesman, Gorgias, can adequately define rhetoric. No one has yet satisfactorily answered Plato's charge, and I do not presume to be able to. My temerity to approach the issue at all comes from two attitudes: (1) my conviction that rhetors are persons who address issues they do not completely understand; that is the calling which makes them rhetors, a calling which challenges all humans; (2) my strong suspicion that Plato's line of attack springs from definitional criteria, of clarity and explicitness, which are themselves misguided.

At the risk of sounding like Plato's caricature of Gorgias, let me suggest my own rash (and deliberately partial) characterization of rhetoric: it is a discipline which cannot have definite boundaries, one whose center is comprised of persons actively discovering and addressing questions. In an Enlightenment framework such an orientation must be patently absurd, for reasons Polanyi makes clear.

The orientation did make sense to the ancients. Classical rhetoric is often glossed simply as "the art of persuasion", but other characterizations are more suggestive: A mellower and presumably later Plato says rhetoric is "the art of enchanting the soul of argument". Isocrates claims it is through rhetoric that "we both contend against others on matters which are open to dispute and seek light for ourselves on things which are unknown," and Aristotle calls it "the faculty of discovering in any given situation all the available means of persuasion." Aristotle goes farther: "The duty of rhetoric is to deal with such matters as we deliberate upon without arts or systems to guide us"; his treatise establishes ethos (character) and pathos (emotions) as well as logos as modes
of proof appropriate to rhetoric and the enthymeme, whose premises are shared opinions and beliefs which need not be stated, as its characteristic form of argument.

Thus did the ancients recognize the animus of rhetoric. In seeking its boundaries they frequently claimed, as had Plato and in some senses Aristotle, that the province of rhetoric is "opinion"; that of philosophy, "truth." The distinction has never been satisfactory; the ancients' perennial battles between "philosophy" and "rhetoric" show as much; so do contemporary efforts to demarcate "rhetoric" by contrasting it to "science."

The philosophical orientation which Polanyi combats is one which cannot take rhetoric seriously; Polanyi and rhetoric share common antagonists. More positively, Polanyi conflates "opinion" and "truth." He speaks frequently of shared but unexpressed and unexpressable premises, making inquiry and argument seem very much to be in some sense enthymematic activities, in the sciences and elsewhere. Inquiry for Polanyi involves passions and character as well as "logic"; clearly some forms of all three modes of proof are necessary to inquiry, as they are appropriate to rhetoric. Polanyi insists a consequence of the tacit character of discovery is that the discoverer must engage in persuasive action; "demonstration" alone cannot suffice. Finally, it is sometimes said that the ancients had no rationale of discovery. Perhaps not, but I suggest that they most nearly approached such a rationale in their concerns with rhetoric. Certainly their theories of rhetoric seem to have deep kinship with Polanyi's philosophy, which is a philosophy of discovery.

One other connection, perhaps the most important, helps deepen the preceding points and to link Polanyi to the contemporary rebirth of interest in rhetoric as well as to the ancients. Rhetoric is an art of deliberation, and Aristotle insists, "It is about our actions that we deliberate and inquire, and all our actions have a contingent character." The contemporary rhetorician, Kenneth Burke, insists on the distinction: things move but persons act. Rhetoric assumes a view of persons as agents. As our Enlightenment inheritance has shown us, a restriction of significance to certitudes
leaves no space for such a view. Serious students in any number of fields are rebelling against those reductions, and in the necessarily ill-defined field of "rhetoric" many of them are discovering kinship, common interests and issues, which they had hardly suspected. The new journal *Pre/Text*, for which I am planning an issue on Polanyi, aims to foster those relationships, of persons as well as statements, by encouraging exploratory probes more than conclusions that claim definitive status. As an effort of exploration, it aims to be a journal of rhetoric as well as about it.

Rhetoric, Aristotle says, is a practical art, an art of doing rather than, in his framework, one of knowing. That association, of rhetoric, with praxis and the practical, invites a further dimension in my discussion. I would suggest that our thirst, for worlds of potential human and humanizing meanings, is an important motive for the recent interest in students' writing, now so strong in America and, given the work of such persons as James Britton and David Holbrook, both of whom draw instructively on Polanyi, in Britain as well. As Dot Whitner, a friend and elementary teacher who also keeps a journal, recently wrote, "The new writing theories . . . are humanizing. They are a cup of cold water to students thirsting for relationship and meaning, a crust of bread for those striving to be heard, to be allowed to express who they are and what they feel in a destructive, de-personalized educational culture." She continues instructively, "Most of all I have worked with the children. I have tried out the theories, but I have learned from the children what is real."

We learn from each other what is real. Rhetoric proceeds in that faith; it concerns and derives from human actions. With all the hazards involved, it calls upon us to achieve meanings through speaking and through hearing one another.

Rhetoric's orientation is that we actively navigate our way toward truths, contingent ones, through sorts of triangulation, taking seriously the three modes of proof and, in other terms, ourselves and our colleagues, as well as the subject matters that concern us.
The field of rhetoric is spacious; no scholar will ever characterize it in terms so definitive that other voices are stilled. But within "rhetoric" any number of persons, by no means all of them "rhetoricians", are acknowledging historical roots and contemporary convivialities for their own work: Feyerabend in philosophy of science, Booth in literary criticism, Gadamer and Ricoeur in hermeneutics, and Perelman in philosophy of jurisprudence, to mention only a few. "Rhetoric" is no longer restricted to "persuasion". Or, more accurately, "persuasion" is no longer limited to its traditional realm of public argumentation. Thus Kenneth Burke asserts, "Wherever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric. And wherever there is 'meaning' there is 'persuasion'. And Henry Johnstone, like Richard Weaver, finds human dignity to reside not in man's ability to process information but in his ability to persuade and be persuaded.

Especially given rhetoric's expanded scope, Polanyi's philosophy, or something very much like it, surely informs responsible rhetorical action. Promising to link the sciences and the humanities seamlessly together, Polanyi's orientation should help us create meaningful statements, to learn something of their explicit content and their tacit backing, and to appraise them appropriately, in all the realms of knowing and being.

Sam Watson, Jr. January 1981

A NOTE ON THREE VIEWS

Richard Gelwick - SCIENCE AND REALITY; RELIGION AND GOD: A REPLY TO PROSCH.

Ronald L. Hall - MICHAEL POLANYI ON ART AND RELIGION: SOME CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON MEANING

John V. Apczynski - TRUTH IN RELIGION: A POLANYIAN APPRAISAL OF PANENBERG'S THEOLOGICAL PROGRAM.

These three papers were read at the Consultation on the Thought of Michael Polanyi at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion last November. The Consultation followed up Harry Prosch's controversial interpretation of Polanyi's views on religious truth in its relation to scientific truth. This interpretation was stated in Professor Prosch's review of Professor Gelwick's book The Way of Discovery (in Ethics 89, Jan. 1979) and at the American Academy of Religion discussion of Meaning in 1979 (reported in the Polanyi

As summarised by Gelwick in this paper - "Prosch claimed that while showing the structure of tacit knowing in all of our cognition, Polanyi had made a sharp distinction between science and religion with respect to their bearing on reality. In the case of science, meaning bears upon realities that exist independently of the knower, and consequently is subject to verification. In the case of art, myth and religion, meaning bears upon realities that are sustained only by our continuing creation of them. According to Prosch, Polanyi did not conceive of the realities of religion as existing independently of us in a way continuous with or parallel to the realities of science. The realities of religion are only works of our imagination."

There could be three ways of dealing with Prosch's interpretation, 1) to say it is true, 2) to say it is not true, 3) to say that it is not true of Polanyi whole work, but that in Meaning there are indications that to some extent Polanyi moved to such a position.

Richard Gelwick takes the second line. He defends his own interpretation of Polanyi against Prosch's arguments, and he defends all of what Polanyi says about religion as consistently demonstrating that there is no such sharp distinction between science and religion. He agrees that Polanyi has shown differences between them but not that difference. "Our most universal and compelling knowledge and standards share the same personal foundation as scientific knowledge; the difference in some areas such as art and religion is that we face the demand upon ourselves that these creative integrations make. These are not less true but more challenging."

Polanyi's distinction between the two realms, Gelwick says, is mainly in terms of the degree of personal participation, not in the denial of an external reality to religion. Prosch had quoted the distinction between verification in science and validation in mathematics, religion and art, as evidence for his view, but Gelwick counters with Polanyi's words - "both verification and validation are everywhere an acknowledgement of a commitment; they claim the presence of something real and external to the speaker." (Personal Knowledge, p.202).

Gelwick argues his case thoroughly and in general convincingly, and says that Prosch's view is essentially a positivist one which
would undermine Polanyi's whole aim and meaning. Polanyi's hierarchic structure of reality, his belief in the greater reality of the higher intangible levels, his understanding of the risk and daring involved in all knowing and discovering— all these would be made meaningless by Prosch's interpretation.

Ronald Hall takes the third line. He agrees entirely with Polanyi's main purpose, but thinks that in Meaning he drifted away to some extent from his earlier and most essential insight. This insight was of the oneness of knowledge. "By accrediting the power of the human imagination to make cognitive contact with reality, Polanyi's epistemology seemed naturally to open out towards a new theory of meaning in art and religion, where imagination and creativity and other personal components are admittedly essential, though usually subjectivised and emptied of cognitive content."

Hall uses Kierkegaard's category of the aesthetic, contrasted with the existential, to make his point, saying that the aesthetic can be likened to Polanyi's idea of the 'frame' which isolates the content of a work of art from full everyday reality. The existential on the other hand is the historical field of human action in which we live.

Using these terms, Hall argues that in Meaning Polanyi makes science too existential, religion too aesthetic. In earlier works he had grounded science and art in the same structure of inquiry, arguing that the scientist, like the artist, is passionately and personally involved in creative, imaginative and novel integrations; that art like science makes its claims with universal intent, and that the grounds of both are neither objectivist nor subjectivist but personal. In Meaning, however, Hall senses a certain drift towards the old positivist assumptions about science and art, assumptions that Polanyi so much wanted to defeat. Polanyi's earlier writings, Hall says, had seemed to say that science is closer to the aesthetic than to the existential. In fact Hall would maintain that the 'frame' effect which Polanyi found in art is found also in the abstractness of science, while the scientist although passionately involved in his enterprise like the artist, is yet, like the artist, somehow detached from it, remaining hidden and anonymous. Thus both science and art are aesthetic enterprises.
About the treatment of religion in *Meaning*, Hall's criticism is the opposite. "Just as Polanyi does not seem to see the extent to which science is aesthetic, so he does not see the extent to which religion is existential". So he tends to turn religion into an abstraction, making it too aesthetic and not doing justice to the historical element, for instance in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. "Religious encounter within history" says Hall "is not primarily an aesthetic experience ... has no artificial frame; it really does occur in the everyday experience of human action in concrete. Moreover, religious encounter does not lead to personal disappearance as in science and art; rather history becomes the very space of human and divine appearance in concrete revelation through word and deeds".

I think this is a just criticism of *Meaning*, and I cannot feel convinced that Gelwick can defend all the statements of *Meaning* from the charge that in making religion too aesthetic it undermines its reality. For instance, in the account of the rite of Holy Communion (*Meaning*, p. 152-3) it is said that the ceremonial eating and drinking together can serve as a metaphorical vehicle for men's feeling of oneness, and can then become sacred or religious - "with the addition in time of a myth describing how this ceremony was 'once upon a time' ordained by a god". This leaves out historical fact.

Both Gelwick and Hall are in deep accord with Polanyi's work, but I believe that Hall is right in thinking that in *Meaning* there is some wavering or dilution of his most vital insights.

John Apczynski's paper deals with the same question - is Prosch right in his interpretation? - but I cannot tell which of the three ways of answering he takes. He seems to say that Prosch is right - (way one) for instance - "There is evidence that what I have just characterised as Prosch's interpretation of the place of religion in Polanyi's thought may have been close to Polanyi's personal beliefs", yet by way of an application of Polanyi's ideas to the work of the theologian Pannenberg (which not knowing Pannenberg I find extremely obscure) he sums up his conclusions thus - "Religious meanings are thus creations of the human mind established responsibly on this tacit foreknowledge. In their primary sense religious symbolisations are accepted for what they are, and they are judged to be valid".
insofar as all the disparate aspects of our experience can be meaningfully integrated by them. Theological reflection finally was understood to provide a theoretical justification of the primary sense of religious symbols and to affirm their truth insofar as they were able to function as subsidiaries in a tacit inference revealing their primordial ontological ground."

This is an unsatisfying answer, I feel. Earlier in his paper Apczynski says "For Polanyi, then, the highest human achievements are our transcendent ideals, expressed as truth, beauty, justice, responsibility and religious devotion... Since our highest ideals are human achievements... their bearing on reality is not straight-forward." Yet Apczynski has set out to show how Pannenberg was concerned to demonstrate the truth of religion and how Polanyi's ideas could enable him to do it better. The whole argument, though, seems to have become very un-Polanyi-like.

Drusilla Scott March 1981

HOLBROOK'S MISUNDERSTANDING OF POLANYI

David Holbrook shows insufficient respect both for his friends and for his supposed enemies. His critique of The Bullock Report was needed and many of his shafts go home but he is far too ready to shoot with bent arrows. *English for Meaning* is well worth reading but it contains some serious errors and some of these are at strategically important points. It is not of great consequence that, in building up Michael Polanyi as a great scientist, Holbrook describes his crucial discovery incorrectly - it was about the adsorption of gas molecules not 'absorption'. But there are other over simplifications and errors of greater moment.

Holbrook's attack on Chomsky and on linguistics is indiscriminate. It was unwise of the Bullock team to hitch their wagon so firmly to a linguistic animal. There is a good deal of current criticism - probably justified - of Chomsky's attempt to find a deep and common grammatical pattern underlying all languages. Polanyi's ideas which point to a many-levelled bio-psychological system seem to offer a more hospitable conceptual context for investigating the roots of language. Nevertheless we still have to be grateful to Chomsky for helping to turn the tide against behaviouristic psychology (his famous attack on Skinner), for making known among
social scientists the depth and creativeness of language (N.B. Anthony Kenny's recent observation that Chomsky and St. Thomas Aquinas share an understanding of potentia) and for stressing that language, like culture, is both free and, inevitably, constrained. Real freedom, as Charles Taylor reminds us (Hegel and Modern Society), is 'situated freedom'. Polanyi's own qualified approval of Chomsky (Knowing and Being, p. 195-6) is both charitable and penetrating.

When David Holbrook comes to discuss tacit knowledge he shows himself to be distinctly wobbly. He appears to be drawn intuitively to Polanyi's concept but he only vaguely grasps its meaning. Here are some examples. On p. 26 of English for Meaning he tells us that 'the professional edifice of teaching relies on what Polanyi calls "tacit inference" and "personal knowledge" and he goes on to criticise Bullock for implying 'that progress lies with the explicit, with "focal awareness", and abstract concepts of rules ... such as emerge from the treatises of linguistics...'. There are several confusions in this passage but the central one which occurs elsewhere in the book is Holbrook's suggestion that 'focal awareness' has a similar meaning to 'explicit' or to Descartes' clear and distinct ideas. It should hardly be necessary to state that Polanyi's distinction was between a person's existential awareness of a creative, integrative, focussed and passionate task or achievement - dancing a dance, playing a violin - on the one hand and of that subsidiary awareness which comes when the performer stops and thinks about what he is doing. The latter is the analysing rule-articulating, grammatical self-conscious mode of skilled action. Polanyi stresses that 'Focal and subsidiary awareness are definitely not two degrees of attention but two kinds of attention to the same particulars.' (Knowing and Being, p. 128). And he warns that '... it would be a mistake to identify subsidiary awareness with sub-conscious or pre-conscious awareness' (p. 194). The subsidiary components of a skilled performance are often hard to specify but they are not, in principle, inaccessible to scientific enquiry for 'the alteration of analysis and integration progressively deepens our insight' (p.129). The value of well-grounded theory and analysis in pedagogy or in improving the technics of an art may be great. (See my Born Curious, p. 5). But this does not alter the fact that when we wholeheartedly practice an art, believe a belief
or love a lover we do so with commitment to a focus of emergent meaning. Our analyses and our doubts may still remain part of, subsidiary to, the main tacit thrust, but they will not be present in the primary focus of action.

Educational thought needs Polanyi's ideas. But his books will only yield their meaning to those who approach them both with sympathy and with a sharp probe.

Robin Hodgkin

Introductory Note to: Popper Versus Polanyi by Dr. J. Labia.

In November 1980, Dr. Labia sent me a cutting from New Science of October 1980, headed Popper and Frankfurt with a comment deploring the absence of any reference to Polanyi's contribution in this field, "a contribution which could well bridge the gap between the apparently irreconcilable views of Popper and the Frankfurt school". "What," asked Dr. Labia, "do others in Convivium, more knowledgeable than myself, think about such matters?" Since I know little about Popper and less about the Frankfurt school, I wrote back to Dr. Labia and suggested that he should write something for Convivium, which might provoke further discussion. This seemed the best way of discovering, amongst Convivium's membership, the connoisseurship we were looking for in this area. I print below both Dr. Labia's contribution and the passage from New Science which provoked it. I hope this will lead to further discussion in the October issue of Convivium, since the differences between Polanyi and Popper are well-known but not well understood.

Extract from New Science, October 30th, 1980.

POPPER AND FRANKFURT

In 1961, at the German Sociological Association meeting at Tübingen, a heated argument ensued between the advocates of Karl Popper and those of the Frankfurt school. The argument continues to this day, and is examined by L.J. Hay (Philosophy of the Social Sciences, vol. 9, No. 2, page 149).

Popper's basic criticism of the Frankfurt school was that its propositions were unfalsifiable and that this put them in the category of pseudo-science, or even mysticism. The Frankfurt school reply was that Popper was a narrow positivist who neatly epitomised the dangers of "one-dimensionality." A reading of Hay's article suggests neither position is satisfactory.

Popper's position emerges as being more subtle and delicate - and therefore more vulnerable - than is often supposed. He strongly rejected the "positivist" label. His anti-verificationism was based on the conclusion that science applied interpretative models to the world rather than discovering "facts" through direct observation.
Any faith in scientific method was in the last analysis purely intuitive. Hence the importance of the "open society" where opinions are shared freely, because in the end that is what all science and knowledge are - agreed intuitions and interpretations.

This position is only arrived at, however, because of Popper's reluctance to abandon the positivist assumptions that objective knowledge must be value-free and the result of direct observation of the world. Because knowledge in the real world cannot be shown to be value-free, or the result of direct observation, Popper concludes there is no objective knowledge. However, if one subscribes to a rationalist model of objective knowledge, these positivist assumptions are rejected, enabling rationalists to postulate the existence of objective knowledge without neutral facts or direct empirical observation.

But it is not only that positivist assumptions underlie Popper's abstract model of knowledge. Two key notions, "truth-value" and "falsifiability" are deeply problematic in practice, using Popper's basic premises. If there is no objective truth, how do we know that, for instance, Einstein's paradigm has a better "truth-value" than Newton's? On the same basis, how do we know how to falsify a theory if there are no objective criteria for verifying and testing the criteria we are using to falsify? The answer is: only if verificationist assumptions of the neutrality of facts and the possibility of empirical knowledge return to the picture.

Therefore, there seems a good case that Popper's position is basically positivist and open to the attack of the big guns of rationalism and the new philosophy of science. However, the charge that the Frankfurt school sinks into obscure mysticism is hardly without foundation. In the search for truth which transcends both the empirical and interpretative models, they would seem to be at one with the mystic east.

Truth, they say, can only be apprehended directly through a process of self-emancipation and examination and a rejection of society - that is, a transcendence of self and society. True rationality consists of a grasping of the "identity of opposites" (the Hegelian Vernunft). Anybody with a smattering of mysticism, who has managed to reintegrate with the illusory material world sufficiently long enough to pick up this magazine, will spot the striking parallels with mystical discourse.
In conclusion, Popper's position does seem to be open to all the dangers of technocratic one-dimensionality, but the Frankfurt school's concept of truth seems totally intuitive and still steeped in German romanticism. The way between positivism and intuitionism still eludes us. End of Extract from New Science.

**POPPER versus POLANYI**

Popper's scientific truth consists in the postulation of empirically testable and falsifiable hypotheses.* For Popper, scientific truth is impersonal and detached. It is not overtly "objectivist" in that it does not exclude non-"material" reality (as does logical positivism). However, his "interactionism" - see "The Self and its Brain" by Popper and John C. Eccles, 1977, published by Springer International - leads to the following anomalies, necessarily attendant on his basically dichotomous stance.

His truth has as its touchstone, the material - "World 1" -, to which "World 2" (conscious and unconscious states and psychological dispositions) and "World 3" (products of the human mind, e.g. stories, tools, theories, social institutions and works of art) owe, indirectly, their validity - see p.9. Worlds 2 and 3 form part of reality, because of their capacity to interact with World 1 objects. Now the reality of World 1 objects depend upon their being "able to exert a causal effect upon the prima facie real things, i.e. upon material things of an ordinary size". But he says that "these changes in the ordinary material world of things" can be explained by "the causal effects of entities conjectured to be real". So World 3 (conjectured) realities determine World 1 realities, which are, however, Popper's touchstone for World 3 realities! This is surely question-begging.

Polanyi's approach to scientific (and other) truth seems to be free from such inconsistency. Also, his account tallies better with what is actually observable as taking place in the determination of truth. For him, all truth (enshrining as it does our limited degree of penetration into the ultimate mystery of reality) involves a particular experiential rootedness, whence truth-bearing, "gestaltist", meaning arises. He shows truth/knowledge emerges through personal commitment and heuristic achievement. It subsidiarily involves, and arises from a meaning-generating focussing from, the sensory clues drawn from several modalities and integrated

* For Popper, a single negative experimental instance suffices to falsify established knowledge (which, Polanyi stresses, is neither justified nor what actually happens).
with relevant previous experience and knowledge. Such commitment carries with it a clear obligation on the truth seeker and his colleagues to evaluate the evidence carefully and responsibly in the field concerned and in neighbouring fields of connoisseurship. They must, in Polanyi's terms, have the necessary degree of competence and be acting with universal intent. When they are satisfied, in the light of their own self-set standards, (including an expected coherence and consistency with other already well-established knowledge) the discovery in question can be accredited as true. Polanyi's "Personal Knowledge" requires also that the above obligation should go along with an openness to future, possibly revolutionary, innovations, which import yet deeper coherence to our understanding. His ultimate touchstone for the validity of a discovery is that it is subsequently confirmed in previously unpredictable and unexpected ways.

He also stresses, in the establishment and maintenance of knowledge, the inevitable participatory role of intuitive and tacit factors, complementing conscious ones. This ties up with what Chomsky's research reveals about the acquisition and use of language - that vehicle for, and depository of, truth, par excellence - as well as with the approach of intuitionistic philosophy. These tacitly operating factors make it impossible for knowledge ever to be completely specifiable, whether expressed in sentences or mathematical formulae. Furthermore, the degree of active personal contribution (and Polanyi uses "personal" as opposed to merely subjective, i.e. idiosyncratic, arbitrary, haphazard and only privately concerned) whether at conscious and imaginative, or at tacit and intuitive levels, as greatest in those spheres of knowledge of the fullest human concern and highest significance (e.g. arts, humanities and religion).

On the ontological side, Polanyi considers reality as being coherently regulated by principles of successively higher order and significance.

For Popper, reality is more ambiguous and disconnected and certainly not ordered in any creatively directive way, which involves rising levels of significance or phenomena. His reality
is rather one of quantitative disparities of differing complexity, which tangentially interrelate in patterns of non-qualitatively hierarchical parallelism.

Summarising, we might say Polanyi's truth is characterised by an organicity of growth which involves a special type of personal, yet co-operative, and open commitment, i.e. to the outcome of a competently qualified search for the universally valid, the emergent discovery concerned to be subsequently responsibly, judiciously and collaboratively accredited, and eventually to be progressively confirmed in new and unexpected ways - with the accent on the underlying cohesiveness of all knowledge and an ever deepening coherence. However, for Polanyi knowledge inevitably involves a degree of unspecifiability, and of the participation of tacit and intuitive factors in its heuristic discovery. On the other hand, for Popper, truth is essentially physicalist, its constituents being unrelated apart from their common ability to exert materialistic effects. It is impersonal, remote and dissociated from its discoverer. In the scientific sphere, it consists in empirically tested, falsifiable hypotheses, which are pro tanto completely specifiable. In the non-science spheres, his truth shares the dangers of the "objectivism" of logical positivism and its underlying vulnerability to reductionist nihilism and the totalitarian, force-worshipping ideologies associated with such, especially moral nihilism.

Polanyi's invaluable achievement is surely his bringing home to us the holistic and committed nature of truth/knowledge, and his clarifying thereby how only its constituent disciplines being appropriately disseminated, and balanced and integrated in relevant practical action (i.e. being widely and wisely used) can save us and our institutions from disaster.

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Note from your General Factotum.

As you may have observed, news and information about publications and research topics, comments on or excerpts from articles or books read with interest, and so on, has been rather thin in this Convivium. In other words you have not taken to heart the 'Suggestions' listed at the end of the October Convivium! It would be nice to have more information, as well as articles, to include in the next Newsletter. We have at the moment a membership of over sixty, (though many have not yet paid their 1981 subscription), and this suggests that there is both expectation and potential hidden behind the list of names above. So - It really DOES depend on you! I am here to co-ordinate what comes in, not to chase people or material, so this half-yearly reminder must be taken as a personal one by each of you.

It is possible, as some people have suggested to me, that Convivium serves no useful purpose. It certainly does not exist to bolster the reputation of Michael Polanyi, which is well able to take care of itself. I think the chief value of Convivium is that it helps to keep people in touch with ideas and publications. But this means that those of you who are in some sense 'at the centre of things' are of great importance in helping Convivium to fulfil this function. Those of us who are 'retired' are in this sense, dependent on you, though we may have more time. (A debatable statement!)

CONVIVIUM MEMBERSHIP AND RENEWAL OF SUBSCRIPTION FORM.

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Further copies of the Newsletter will be available price 50p plus postage. Material for the October Newsletter should be sent by the end of August. (And for March by early in February)