

THE POLANYI SOCIETY

Vol. XI, Number 2, Winter, 1983-84

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MEMBERSHIP AND A PERIODICAL

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With the Fall issue of the Polanyi Society Newsletter, we began an experiment with the development of a modest periodical and also the bringing up to date our membership list. Both of these efforts have been useful to our purposes.

First, the general response to the idea of a periodical has been very positive and this issue begins the publication of articles submitted for this purpose as well as continuing our sharing of news generally. The question of a title for the periodical got an open but varied response. Most were favorable toward any name that continued to foster Polanyi inquiry. Some merely wanted to continue the present title "Polanyi Society." A compromise is to combine both a new title with a subtitle such as "periodical of the Polanyi Society." The advantage of a periodical title is for citation by authors and libraries in their works. We are proposing then two choices: DISCOVERY: PERIODICAL OF THE POLANYI SOCIETY or COMMON GROUND: PERIODICAL OF THE POLANYI SOCIETY. Let us hear your preference, or if you will, your alternatives or objections.

Second, the December mailing of the Fall issue with the membership renewal form was a disaster. Although sent first class mail, many members reported not receiving the rust colored booklet that was sent out and consequently missed both its news and the opportunity for membership renewal. A membership renewal form is enclosed again for those who did not renew or join for 1983-84. For the sake of the periodical budget, membership in the future will be more precisely on an annual academic year basis.

Finally, the willingness to expand our communication, to produce materials for publication, and to share in the editorial and advisory responsibilities is very encouraging. All of our labor in producing the newsletter and periodical are presently donated, which makes our functioning on a small budget possible. Your and Stephens College's support are very much appreciated.

Richard Gelwick

SUBMISSIONS FOR PUBLICATION

Please send material typed and camera ready so that we do not have to retype it. Put the article's title in capitals, your name under the title, use 1 1/4 inch margins, and pencil on lightly the page numbers. Please send two copies.

REPORT OF 1983-84 PS
MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP

As mentioned, the Fall mailing, with the call for the return of the new membership form to be used in building a data bank of our various special interests as well as funding our society, was poorly delivered. Many of our faithful supporters have not yet responded. The following list will let you know if we have a record of your membership for 1983-84. Please return the form at the end of the periodical if your name is not on this list.

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NASCENT RITUAL AND THE REAL
Phil Mullins

I

The way in which Michael Polanyi speaks of reality and "the real" is, in my view, one of the most interesting but ambiguous dimensions of his thought. Polanyi's ontological extension of his theory of knowledge suggests that comprehensive entities are a union of strata of reality. A more generalized view of the universe can be inferred from this claim. Although Polanyi does not develop this fully, he implies that the entities constituting reality (i.e., the totality of real entities) have the character of a set of nested boxes. Each entity is subject to dual control and may be said to have a higher and lower level. Speaking ontologically, an aggregate of real entities can be viewed as the particulars composing the lower level of a more encompassing entity. The image of the universe which emerges from this description is that of an ascending series of entities of progressively more encompassing scope. The point of this relational conception seems not so much to be to outline a definite cosmology or structure for reality as to emphasize the fecundity of reality. The universe, for Polanyi, is inexhaustible; reality is an open system rather than a closed one.

Polanyi's writing carefully avoids implying that reality is constituted by and limited to the perceptions of a person or group. Likewise, he does not suggest that the real always already has a discrete form and is located in an external realm absolutely separate from the skillful, interested subjects who seek to discover its dimensions. When he emphasizes the independence of the real, it is in order to stress the importance of belief and the revelatory potential of that which is real. That which is real is not co-extensive with the tangible. For Polanyi, persons and problems are as real as cobblestones. In fact, because persons and problems have more profundity, Polanyi regards them as more richly real than the merely tangible:

This capacity of a thing to reveal itself in unexpected ways in the future I attribute to the fact that the thing observed is an aspect of a reality, possessing a significance that is not exhausted by conception of any single aspect of it. To trust that a thing we know is real is, in this sense, to feel that it has the independence and power for manifesting itself in yet unthought of ways in the future. I shall say, accordingly, that minds and problems possess a deeper reality than cobblestones, although cobblestones are admittedly more real in the sense of being tangible.¹

Polanyi's appreciation for the diversity and complexity of reality is implied in his vision of a spectrum of sciences ranging from physics to the study of dramatic history. He understands the study of man (i.e., dramatic history) as an endeavor in continuity with the study of nature. The

historian studies the profoundly unique personalities of the past; such study is the most intimate form of scientific inquiry--it more closely resembles an encounter than an observational act--and it reveals the most comprehensive dimensions of reality, those dimensions concerned with human beings as thinking creatures.

In sum, in Polanyi's conception of comprehensive entities, knowing and being are united. Polanyi's conception of reality serves to link knowing and being; his conception is likely to be problematic for those who wish to dissect it exclusively from either the perspective of knowing or that of being. Reality is an emergent, an intricately complex fabric of relationally constituted entities whose rich depths human investigations constantly seek to uncover.

II

Can the novel philosophical idiom in which Polanyi discusses reality provide a foundation for understanding ritual, a phenomenon pervasive in human experience? This is a question which I believe merits exploration. Polanyi himself, of course, was interested in the ways in which myth and ritual provide meaning in human society. Others, however, who have studied ritual have taken approaches which introduce questions about reality more directly. Ronald Grimes, a contemporary student of ritual, develops ideas I find especially fruitful. In "Defining Nascent Ritual,"² Grimes proposes the following "soft" definition of what he terms "ritualizing, which is the process whereby ritual creativity is exercised":

Ritualizing transpires as animated persons enact formative gestures in the face of receptivity during crucial times in founded places.³

These brief reflections explicate, analyze and modestly reformulate, from a Polyanian perspective, the point of view articulated in Grimes' soft definition. I find Grimes' perspective a congenial one; here I intend primarily to begin charting territory which others interested in either or both the work of Grimes or Polanyi can further explore.

More needs to be said, initially, about "ritualizing." The verbal form of the neologism emphasizes that Grimes' interest is in an activity. This activity is a name for "creative" or "nascent" ritual.⁴ Nascent ritualizing processes sometime develop into rituals and ritual systems; at other times they do not. By studying ritualizing as a genre of action, a more comprehensive view of ritual itself may be developed. Grimes suggests that students of ritual need to appreciate the emergence of ritual in developmental terms;⁵ ritualizing thus is the first phase of such an emergence. But ritualizing is of interest as more than simply an element of a developmental typology. According to Grimes, ritualizing is an activity clearly linked to theatre and healing. Encounters with the therapist as well as the gestural activity of some experimental theatre groups have nascent ritual components, even though such activities do not become rituals of a more stable, conventional sort. Grimes

finds these post-modern domains of intrinsic interest; much of his recent field work has, in fact, been with experimental theatre groups⁶ whom he views as successful in attempts to generate ritual processes and "incubate religious symbols."⁷

An important, striking image in Grimes' discussion of ritual is the image of the human being as a ritual actor. A ritual actor is a person, although not all persons are human beings. A person is "one who invests surfaces with a sense of significance."⁸ Those who participate in ritual are *personae*, beings who "concretize and display values by means such as clothing, facial gesture, posture, or even objects."⁹ The ritual actor is animated or enspirited in that he/she is infused with certain values displayed in significant surfaces. Ritualizing, the nascent phase of ritual, occurs as a layering or stripping of such surfaces. Such ritual actions are "thick with sensory meaning"¹⁰ and "attempt to wed the indicative and subjunctive, the literal and symbolic, the real and the dramatic."¹¹

Ritual enactment occurs only as the actor recognizes a certain apparent responsiveness of some aspect of the cosmos; Grimes therefore speaks of a perceived receptive face necessary for ritualizing:

The face before which ritualizing is enacted is not reducible to the mere surface or front part of something. Rather the face is that facet upon which some act depends.¹²

This face elicits gestures from the ritual actor. Such gestures make ritual enactment a communicative action received by others, sometimes very deeply. Grimes views gesture as the heart of ritual and ritualizing. The *persona's* performance takes concrete form in the body. The ritualizing moment is one in which the body knowingly responds. But too often intellectual analysis of ritualizing misses the significance of the body's way of knowing and transforms enactment into an illustration of myth and idea. Ritual gestures are "movements and poses as bearers of evocative power."¹³ They are "attitudes"--"the total bearing of a body which expresses a valued style of living."¹⁴ Such gestures or attitudes are recognizable styles which evoke feeling and sensibilities which can form culture.

The gestures of ritual participants are located and locating deeds. Ritual and ritualizing occur at junctures of our temporal experience. But it is also the case that our sense of lifetime as a fabric, woven with the thread of temporality, reflects our immersion in ritual: "Ritual is formative of the ways we bide our time."¹⁵ Ritual occurs not just in space but in a fundamental place, ground hallowed and "pregnant with formative power."¹⁶ *Personae* responding to a face of receptivity do so in ritual places: ritual gestures are in part elicited by the *persona's* sense of being grounded by place. Such ritual places become a generative center from which the larger oriented world takes shape.

Finally, it is the image of ritual as a living phenomenon that Grimes seeks to emphasize: "Rituals have

life cycles and life spans. They occur. They do not merely recur. A ritual is a performance, a 'going through form.'¹⁷ The dynamism of ritual is best represented as an analogue of breathing. Breathing is rhythmic and to some degree controllable by conscious subjects. But breathing also has an involuntary aspect, a life of its own which in fact sustains human life and overpowers, at times, the intentional mode of human being:

But breathing always gets away from us. Likewise ritual. We can form it and modulate it, but because it is a response to processes that encompass and exceed us, we cannot contain it for long. It escapes, finds other forms, and spawns new modes. As for breathing so for ritualizing: there semivoluntary, life-sustaining phasic qualities are central.¹⁸

It is particularly the spontaneous, preconscious, foundational aspects of ritualizing to which the breathing metaphor draws attention: "Ritualizing emerges periodically in the interface between our cultural and genetic heritage."¹⁹

III

In order to clarify what I deem the most fruitful and suggestive elements of Grimes' approach to ritual, a question can be posed: can ritualizing as a type of human action be appropriately described as a mode of human experience? Certainly, Grimes seems to depend upon and to presuppose the adequacy of a language of experience. He argues the ritual actor recognizes a receptive face of the cosmos and becomes an animated being; the actor is a creature who articulates with the body a formative bearing which is a response to that fundament which has presented itself. Such a perspective seemingly accepts human experience as its ground. As I read Grimes' perspective, however, he is careful not to exploit a language of experience in order to resolve the human involvement in ritualizing into either a psychological state or a psycho-social function.

Grimes' definition is a conservative definition in the sense that he denies the validity of the law of parsimony often found operative in accounts of ritual: such a law explains--and often explains away--the experience of a ritual participant in psychological or sociological terms. Ritual involvement is only partially illumined by speaking chiefly of its effect on human adjustment and well-being. Grimes' definition struggles to emphasize the sense in which ritualizing and ritual processes are richer phenomena than envisioned by such a human-centered account. Ritual involvement is of more than human making; ritualizing is an activity in which "we pursue what compels us."²⁰ The emphasis here, and throughout Grimes' reflections, upon the deeply-felt call impinging upon the ritual actor is not to be misconstrued as an emphasis upon the subjectivism of the actor. Since many of Grimes' examples come from experimental theatre, he will likely be misunderstood on this point. Grimes draws our attention in quite a different direction.

His point of departure for studying ritual seems to me, instead, what might be termed cosmic vitalism. That is, it is the dynamism of the cosmos reaching into the human realm which Grimes seeks to illumine in fixing attention on ritualizing: "Ritualizing is how we actively await formative pulsations."²¹ Ritual enactment is a responsive, gestural deed which is grounded in the lure of transitional rhythms of the cosmos: ". . . the compelling force of ritual exceeds private ownership."²²

A part of Grimes' attempt to make a place for the initiating dynamism of the cosmos reaching into the realm of the ritual actor emerges in his discussion of "animation." Although animating power is variously named, according to Grimes, such power is a critical element in all ritual processes, for such power breathes life into the persona; the body of the ritual actor thus borrows breath and the ritual person becomes masked.²² Grimes' discussion of animation conspicuously avoids the type of experiential language found in discussions of animism whereby a subject involved in ritual is said to "personify." "Personification" often is identified as a process in which internal concepts and feelings of a subject are projected upon an external environment. Grimes carefully avoids such a Cartesian framework in his analysis of animation.

In this era when thinkers in religious studies manifest a certain inebriation with human imagination, it is of interest that Grimes' analysis includes no treatment per se of the contribution of imagination to ritualizing. I suspect Grimes' intention in such an omission is to transpose our normal Cartesian image of the imagination as a subject's faculty. Like accounts of "personification," accounts of imagination easily slip into a bifurcated conceptual framework which presupposes an imagining subject fundamentally estranged from the cosmos. Rather than focusing attention on an imagining subject, Grimes speaks of ritualizing enactment which occurs only in a context of receptivity: "Ritualizing is enactment in the face of imagined, socially experienced and mythologically construed receptivity."²⁴ Ritualizing is enactment "before" a face of the cosmos: such a "face", according to Grimes, has many names and "is not objectifiable though it is 'other.' It is as much inside the ritual actor as outside."²⁵

I find Grimes' analysis, in sum, one which struggles to escape a subject-world dualism. It is an analysis implying that ritual studies require a lexicon that acknowledges the affective power exerted upon persons by a fundamentally dynamic cosmos. Although I cannot, in these preliminary comments, explore this formulation, I conclude with another "soft" definition of ritualizing which relies on Polanyi's philosophical framework and, in particular, his conception of reality: I view my formulation as complementing Grimes' perspective, while at the same time making clearer the vitalism I find there: Ritualizing occurs as bodily creatures are comprehended (i.e., grasped or overtaken) by the transcending real emergent in the cosmos.

NOTES

¹Michael Polanyi, The Tacit Dimension (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1966), pp. 32-33.

²Journal of the American Academy of Religion (vol. L, no. 4), Dec. 1982, pp. 539-555. The essay also appears as Chapter 4 in Grimes' Beginnings In Ritual Studies (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982).

³JAAR, p. 541.

⁴JAAR, p. 541.

⁵JAAR, p. 552.

⁶See especially Part IV of Beginnings In Ritual Studies.

⁷JAAR, p. 541.

⁸JAAR, p. 544.

⁹JAAR, p. 544.

¹⁰JAAR, p. 545.

¹¹JAAR, p. 545.

¹²JAAR, p. 549.

¹³JAAR, p. 547.

¹⁴JAAR, p. 547.

¹⁵JAAR, p. 549.

¹⁶JAAR, p. 551.

¹⁷JAAR, p. 543.

¹⁸JAAR, p. 543.

¹⁹JAAR, p. 541.

²⁰JAAR, p. 543.

²¹JAAR, p. 548.

²²JAAR, p. 544.

²³JAAR, p. 544.

²⁴JAAR, p. 548.

²⁵JAAR, p. 549.

EVOLUTION AND THE ACTS OF GOD

David W. Rutledge, Furman University

This paper begins with the assumption that Christian notions of "act of God" have been particularly inadequate since the Darwinian theory of evolution rendered classical views of natural theology untenable. Any satisfactory conception of God's action in the world must be developed with full awareness of the challenge which modern evolutionary theory presents to traditional views. My purpose here is to delineate the nature of this challenge, and some of the reasons it has not been adequately acknowledged or understood by Christian apologists. My own work thus far has tended to support the suggestion of Polanyi and others that an inaccurate understanding of science has distorted a number of academic disciplines which have attempted either to model themselves upon science, or challenge its apparent claims. This paper looks at such a general claim in the concrete disputes of religion and science in the nineteenth century.

The particular issue on which I concentrate below is the apparent conditioning of many Christian responses to Darwin by an allegiance to an inductive, scrupulously empirical model of knowledge which, while similar in spirit to the scientific model of the day, actually prevented any engagement with the most serious challenges of evolution to traditional views of God. I first pull together general and specific evidence that Baconian empiricism dominated American theology in mid-century, effectively blocking an accurate assessment of both evolutionary theory and its relation to biblical realities, and second, I indicate that the claim to eliminate "purpose" and "design" from the world was the evolutionary position which most needed, and still needs, adequate theological examination.

I first assume, on the basis of recent research by a variety of people, that the military metaphor of "conflict" which has governed religion and science research for the past 125 years is seriously inaccurate and should be discarded. I assume, secondly, that far from being essentially a "religion versus science" struggle, the evolution debate was chiefly a confrontation of two rival views of what science was, the clash of two different epistemes or philosophies of science. And third, I assume that when the *Origin of Species* was published, no consensus had been reached in England or America as to the implications of the new approaches to biblical study then being introduced by romanticism and German scholarship. This doomed the religious response to Darwin to take place primarily within the traditional interpretive framework of inerrancy, producing ignorance and misunderstanding on both sides of the question.

Bozeman, Hovenkamp, and Marsden have clarified in recent years the extent to which American and British religious thought in the mid-nineteenth century was strongly influenced by the empiricism of the Scottish Philosophy, or Common Sense Realism. The movement was primarily the result of the work of two men, Thomas Reid (1710-1796) and Dugald Stewart (1753-1828). Their distinctive point of view can be summarized as displaying great enthusiasm for science; identifying Francis Bacon, rather than Newton, as the father of modern science; and claiming that all knowledge is empirically obtained. They argued that objective facts are decisive in the legitimation of knowledge claims, and general laws are simply careful summaries of the facts, rooted in a meticulous survey of the particulars. Hypotheses, theories, and imaginative constructs in general were distrusted, therefore, for such concepts gave free reign to mental inventiveness, impetuosity, and fantasy. It yielded only metaphysical extravagances, not knowledge. This empirical demand for knowledge did restrict its scope, but it had the virtue of producing certainty, as the gains of natural science testified.

Such a philosophy, dominant in many intellectual circles of England and America until the middle of the nineteenth century, provided an epistemological foundation for the biblical orthodoxy that characterized the 1800s. It was compatible with, and even encouraged, natural science, and sent the exegete looking in the pages of the biblical text for the "facts" of God's revelation. The particular form of this influence in America was conservative, or Old School, Presbyterianism. Through its strong confessionalism, insistence on verbal inspiration of scripture, thorough seminary training of ministers, and Baconian interest in natural science, the Old School Presbyterians led by Charles Hodge of Princeton were best prepared to challenge Darwinism from a traditional perspective. I will now turn to one of the people who took up the task.

John William Dawson

To give concrete detail to this picture of the confluence of empiricism and biblicism, I want to examine one man, a Canadian who described himself as "a geologist and natural theologian." John William Dawson is a useful figure to study because he was both a noted scientist and a competent exegete of inerrantist persuasions; he opposed evolution fiercely, yet sided with Darwin on less momentous scientific issues; and he has not been as exhaustively studied as have his contemporaries, Gray, Agassiz, or Sedgewick.

A slightly younger contemporary of Darwin, Dawson was born in 1820 to Scottish Presbyterian parents, and lived most of his life in Canada, dying in Montreal in 1899. A geologist, he became "the most distinguished anti-Darwinian naturalist in the English-speaking world" after the death of Agassiz in 1873. From his biography we may note his early

study of Hebrew, his study at Edinburgh, the stronghold of Common Sense Realism, and his distinguished scientific career. This important conjunction of concerns is well illustrated in two books with which I wish to deal, The Origin of the World According to Revelation and Science (1884) and Modern Ideas of Evolution, as Related to Revelation and Science (1890).

First, these books show Dawson's scientific empiricism clearly. He criticizes evolution's tendency to engage in "all-embracing generalizations," "speculations," "assumptions," "suppositions," and in the "hypothetical." Science must return, he argues, somewhat plaintively, to "exact science" that is careful and deliberate in nature. In a variety of ways, he argues that evolutionary theory does not rest solidly on a foundation of facts, to which it is related by induction, but on a moment of insight by Darwin. Lacking full substantiation, which in the nature of the case cannot be provided (we have no eye-witnesses and no primary data from the moment of origin), the theory remains a highly dubious hypothesis. A characteristic comment:

...so long as any writers state correctly what they observe, without insisting on any fanciful hypothesis, science has no fault to find with them. What science most detests is the ignorant speculations of those who have not observed at all, or have observed imperfectly. It is a leading excellence of the Hebrew Scriptures that they state facts without giving any theories to account for them.

(Origin, p. 60n.)

A second common strategy of Dawson's is to persistently discount specifically literary readings or interpretations of the Bible. He distinguishes between "poetical mythus," which is a fanciful invention, "figurative expressions," which are colorful ways of stating facts, and "descriptive" statements, which give us truth in direct fashion. He only discusses the historically oriented books of the Bible, neglecting prophets, wisdom, and poetic books, and at one point he calls for a reduction of "verbal and literary training" in seminaries in order to increase the amount of scientific preparation. Here he reflects the general antipathy of conservative American Calvinism to humanistic studies generally.

The final end of these assumptions is a view of the Bible as a mirror image of the natural, physical world. Both are the products of God's benevolent activity, and both worlds can be read for revealed truth if we use the proper methods, those of the exegete, and those of science. "Truth" is a function of a statement's correspondence to physical reality, and there can be no essential conflict between faith and science. Here the conservative Dawson sounds identical to

the liberal Deists who developed natural theology into a high art in the English-speaking world. It is a position which increasingly isolates Dawson from the scientific mainstream. Most of his colleagues make the "paradigm switch" to the new way of conceiving science, just as some of his religious brethren make the switch to the new way of conceiving the Bible that is developed by higher criticism. Why was Dawson unable to change?

One answer is that Dawson's conviction that truth lies in the realm of physical entities alone prevented him from accepting the utility of a scientific theory that went far beyond the available facts in its implications, just as it prevented his appreciation of the metaphorical level of scriptural narrative. This is an unsurprising position when we reflect on the degree to which the scientific revolution has reshaped conceptions of knowledge and value. As many, Michael Polanyi among them, have argued, the empiricist sensibility is the dominant sensibility, or epistemological paradigm, of our age. To the degree that this is so, it is perfectly natural to find scientific creationists in contemporary America. They are visible reminders of the cruel dilemma into which people who take both Bible and science seriously are often put. The crucial mistake of Dawson's position is, I would suggest, that he manacles theology to a standard intrinsically inimicable to it. It was to give to an external, extra-territorial criterion -- that of scientific knowledge -- the power and the right to determine the shape of religious belief. One consequence of this "sell out" to science on the part of Old School Realism was the orphaning of biblicism when biology accepted evolutionary theory as its central principle. Without a strictly empirical science to keep man's investigation of nature within biblical paradigms, a biblicism like Dawson's fell easy prey to Fundamentalism. A second consequence was the distortion of Christianity's consideration of evolution by the empiricist model of truth. To see this more clearly, we will turn to Design in the science and theology of Darwin's day.

The Issue of Design

Histories of the period commonly say that Darwin destroyed the argument from Design. This cliché is inaccurate in several respects. First, Darwin 'destroys,' or at least renders problematic, only one form of the Design argument, that of William Paley and the "Evidences" school; other forms are perhaps possible. Second, Darwin can not obliterate design in nature, but only a state of mind that saw pattern as design. Third, what is weakened by evolution is, perhaps, not design (or pattern) in nature, but an argument for God's existence based on such design. Fourth, Darwin's real target in the Origin is not design in nature, but special creation as a scientific explanation. And finally, the various ways of understanding "design" in the period must be clarified. From

these issues, let me select a few assertions that can, I think, be defended.

The "design" of Dawson and his contemporaries was "an arrangement of parts according to plan so as to produce a complete pattern." Its emphasis is not on function (that the eye is designed in order to see), as much as it is on the fittingness or orderliness of pattern, for a man like Dawson was perfectly aware that some features of nature seemed to have no discernible function (rudimentary or vestigial organs, etc.), and must simply serve to satisfy the Creator's love of beauty, or variety. What is significant about this view is that the design of nature is static; it sees design as a pattern fixed eternally by the Creator in His initial act of creation. Nature then can be understood to have the formal structure of say, a library bookshelf, in which books are arranged horizontally according to some exact system (the Dewey Decimal system, perhaps), and these shelves then arranged vertically in cases. A library of this sort is the antithesis of accident; it, like the nature of Dawson, is a model of planned contrivance, of rational design. In the model, however, though books may be entered or removed at different times, the design of the whole, that is, the system of order governing where books are placed, is unchanging, inflexible.

For the realist, such a static view of design cohered perfectly with an empiricist epistemology, for in it the human mind operates as a great categorizer, placing like with like until every particle of nature is properly arranged within God's system. God is not capricious, and thus facts can be expected to be related in orderly ways. In both science and theology, the human mind can passively piece together the parts of God's system until the complete pattern emerges.

Darwin's objection to such views, which N. Gillespie has exhaustively analyzed, is that they are useless in science because they do not explain anything, that is, give predictive power. The ultimate explanation within such a design framework is 'God's will,' which is beyond our comprehension. Thus it is on scientific grounds that Darwin opposes the empiricistic views of design -- they are unproductive.

At this point we can begin to sense that "design," "purpose," "pattern," and related terms do not comfortably fit into positivistic language. The literalistic imagination of an empiricist like Dawson, which tries to conceive of every dimension of life in terms of Newtonian mechanics, results in knowledge that is stripped of ambiguity and equivocation. This is a great gain for the biblicalist interested in certainty, but it has the unintended consequence of making the acts of God disappear altogether. For if the positivistic

(or empiricistic) epistemology is accepted, then God can only be said to "act" through nature, in "creation by law," where His activity takes the form of physical events fully within the realm of physical nature. Thus, if our allegiance is to this empirical mind-set, then only Nature can "act," and God loses almost all personal reality in His relation to the individual believer. To know Nature is to know God, but we know nothing of God except what we know of nature. "That tremendous word," GOD, becomes superfluous.

If, however, we do not accept the mind-set of empiricism, then we are free to think and speak in non-literal ways. Metaphor and symbol become the central features of both language and knowledge, such that in conceiving of God and His actions in the world, we affirm that the meaning of that action is unspecifiable in any complete way. Such symbolic thought reminds us that there is always more to a real event than the surface, physical features of which science speaks. The literalist imagination strives at control; the symbolic imagination strives toward participation, and demands openness, wonder, flexibility, and vulnerability. When re-oriented in this way, we do not think of God's acts as another kind of force producing discrete, external changes in physical reality, but we attend to the biblical affirmation that God is unquantifiable, and is primarily known in experiences of justice or of love. In short, to know God we must first attend to the interaction of persons, not of mere chemicals or forces. To think otherwise would be to mistake God's place in our world of meaning for His "space" in a world of fact.

Such re-orientation is difficult to achieve. One cogent effort in the direction I have in mind is Jerry Gill's recent book On Knowing God, in which he uses Wittgenstein, Merleau-Ponty, and Polanyi to envision alternative ways of conceiving of language, action, knowledge, and eventually, God. But if my historical comments are correct, a coherent theology will be possible only after such re-orientation occurs. The degree of difficulty we may anticipate is suggested in a comment by Potest: "Persuading a man that he ought to think of the world as having been created is not unlike persuading a man who speaks a language having no personal pronouns that there are persons."

This paper condenses its original form considerably, particularly in eliminating all notes. Interested persons are encouraged to write to the author for the fuller version.

The primary texts used, in addition to those cited here, are cited in James C. Livingston, "Darwin, Darwinism, and Theology: Recent Studies," Religious Studies Review, 8:2 (April, 1982).

KENT STATE CONFERENCE REPORT

"Knowing In Action: A Conference on Michael Polanyi and Education" held at Kent State University, Kent, Ohio, March 8 and 9 was an outstanding success. Despite a blizzard that closed the University, roads, and airlines on the opening evening of the conference, about 250 participants attended the next day. Polanyi Society members traveling to the conference were the most affected, and a number traveling from North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky had to turn back. The twenty members who did attend had special meetings for their own work and abstracts of their papers are included in this issue.

Raymond Wilken is to be congratulated for his meticulous and excellent planning and organization. There is reported interest in having another conference at Kent State in the future. The papers of the conference speakers are being considered for publication by a major education journal. Video tapes of the addresses are also to be available through Raymond Wilken.

One of the valuable results of the conference is the national interest that it generated. A number of persons discovered Polanyi and the Polanyi Society and have joined. Wilken has had many requests for copies of the conference materials.

The conference opened with a banquet for the Polanyi Society members followed by a spontaneous round table discussion sparked by the leadership of Bruce Haddox of Simpson College. The addresses of the conference were as follows: Richard Gelwick, "Catching Knowing in Action: Polanyi's Discovery;" Harry S. Broudy, University of Illinois, "The Uses of Knowledge in Personal Life and Professional Practice;" Donald T. Campbell, Lehigh University, "Michael Polanyi's Epistemological Sociology of Science and Its Importance For Educational Research;" Maxine Green, Columbia University, "The Problematic of the Humanities: Polanyi's Cues and Clues;" and Avery Dulles, Catholic University of America, "Michael Polanyi's Theory of Knowledge and Contemporary Theology."

The conference staff working with Raymond Wilken as hosts and planners was most gracious and effective. If a future conference can be held there, everyone present at this one will want to return.

ABSTRACTS OF
POLANYI SOCIETY MEMBERS'
PRESENTATIONS AT KENT STATE

System Design Through Documentation

Donald F. Utter
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ABSTRACT

This talk presents a systems design method that has been used on numerous projects in AT&T Bell Laboratories. Products include telephone switches, information systems, hardware devices, networks and so forth.

The methods are based on information principles that allow groups of people to organize decision activity to produce information age products. The principles are made operational in a documentation framework which can be used to unify purpose, methods and action.

Abstract of "John Dewey and Polanyi"

by Harry Prosch

My presentation will show the striking similarities of John Dewey's analysis to that of Michael Polanyi of the problem for modern thought which our modern philosophies have not adequately handled. These include his notion that modern science has fostered in us the ideas of material reductionism which have left the moral and spiritual beauties of the world adrift, with no understandable connections in a world thought to be fully governed by mathematical and mechanical laws. Our failure to solve this problem is due, he thought, to our commitment to the notion that the world is a static world of things and that values, if any can be found, would have to be found as properties of these 'things.'

The nature of the shift in epistemological and ontological beliefs advocated by Dewey as needed for a solution resulted in his finding that our notion of objectivity has been misplaced, since he found it belongs rather to the public consequences of our intended actions, as simply some of the inter-actions which are what really constitute the stuff of the world. The paper shows, however, that, as Polanyi has pointed out, not even such public actions can avoid the necessity of subjection to our personal judgments about their meaning and significance, and thus that Dewey actually failed to find something wholly objective to hang his epistemology upon.

I then show how Dewey is led by his proposed resolution to come to the notion that true knowledge is technical, or is engineering in form, and thus to his proposal that education and social guidance are like other engineering arts, but that certain tacit understandings of Dewey led him to develop his concepts of these "engineering" arts along the lines of participatory democracies-- instead of along the lines of, say, civil engineering.

Evidence is then shown for the operation in Dewey's thought of tacit elements and even for a glimmering of the subsidiary-focal, very like Polanyi's, although it is also shown that, unlike Polanyi, Dewey did not seem to recognize the existence of these elements explicitly.

I then suggest that reading Dewey with the kind of respect for such elements engendered by Polanyi's work enables us, both to understand Dewey

better, and to provide, in some instances, better grounds for his conclusions. Then I show how the grounding which Polanyi gave in "ultra-biology" for the necessity of "mutuality" to achieving our very knowledge of man provides a far more cogent basis for democratic methods in education and in the management of the society than that provided by Dewey (which was said by him only to be a "faith" in the potentialities of [all] human beings).

My presentation will conclude by showing how Polanyi claimed that it is essential for our free society to respect its traditional values; which values Dewey appeared to ask us to call seriously into question, although he actually seemed to retain them tacitly in his work.

NOTE: This will be an extremely condensed version of a longer paper I have submitted for publication in what I hope is an appropriate journal.

Tacit Knowledge in Social Work Research and Practice

Abstract

Michael Polanyi's concept of the tacit dimension in all knowing is helpful in clarifying some of the problems researchers and practitioners in social work encounter in trying to work together. Part of the difficulty is seen to be related to the tendency in social work to accept positivist definitions of science, and hence of researchers, as objective and, if not value free, at least neutral with reference to value questions. Practitioners on the other hand are seen as subjective and inclined to be influenced in their thinking by intuition and personal preferences.

This paper discusses Polanyi's concepts of how the person of the scientist and commitments at various levels are involved in research. The place and importance of intuition in both science and social work practice is noted. Reference is made to comments by David Bohm about how it is possible for insight to free the mind from the traps of scientific absolutism (which at times appears to have replaced the religious absolutism against which science originally revolted.)

It is suggested, however, that there is an important difference in the degree of detachment possible in physical science in contrast to the *prima facie* personal involvement of practitioners with other human beings. This inevitable interpersonal involvement needs to be studied and recognition of the tacit dimension, in both social worker and client, would be enlightening in this process. (Much practice research has been reductive in effect as it has been designed to meet the requirements of empirical research defined in positivist terms.)

Several areas for possible exploration are indicated. For example, social work education and practice consistently emphasize the necessity of self awareness and perceptive use of self. What is meant by these expressions can be seen to be clarified by Polanyi's concept of indwelling. The practitioner dwells in the self with all of its tacit components, including skills learned first focally and then known tacitly, while focusing on learning to understand and meet the needs of this other human being. It is these tacit components which make it possible to, as Polanyi might say, to "know the mind" of this other person--and thus to understand what is needed.

This paper represents a beginning exploration of how Polanyi's concepts might enlighten social work processes and open the way for research into what practice is really about.

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HOW POLANYI WOULD IMPROVE DAVID TRACY'S
ANALYSIS OF THE CLASSIC

Dr. Aaron Milavec
Carthage College

In recent years, David Tracy has emerged as a major spokesman for specifying the function of the Scriptures within the theological enterprise as paralleling the role which classics play within the humanities. In his latest volume, *The Analogical Imagination* (1981), Tracy argues that the "dangerous memory of Jesus" erupts afresh in new situations, having been evoked by those who honor the classical Christian texts. These fresh eruptions, Tracy endeavors to justify as the Christian counterpart of the solemn claim to meaning and truth which the classics in art, music, drama, literature exert upon their respective publics. Tracy himself acknowledges that "the heart of the argument of the entire book may be found in the argument on the phenomenon of the classic" (xi).

I have strong sympathies with Tracy's basic program. My own writings have independently arrived at many parallels with Tracy's thought. With my background in Gadamer and Polanyi, however, I judge that I am in an excellent position to improve and correct Tracy's description of "the phenomenon of the classic." Accordingly the body of my paper will isolate three soft spots within Tracy's analysis and propose how Polanyi would remedy them:

1. Tracy's analysis of the classics is nearly devoid of a proper recognition of how authority and systematic apprenticeships function to determine the proper meaning and performance of the classics.
2. Tracy's analysis of the functions of the classics concentrates almost exclusively on their prophetic function in evoking fresh and startling discoveries while neglecting the prior conservative function whereby the appropriate classics serve to impose correct modes of feeling and perception upon a widely dispersed (in place and in time) body of adherents.
3. Tracy's analysis of the production of the classics fails to functionally interrelate talent, training, and imagination and overplays (following Ricoeur) the role of "distanciation" in the production of a work of genius. As such, Tracy is unable to provide any persuasive description of how colleagues come to recognize "genius" within the production of one of their peers.

In sum, the Sacred Scriptures do function within the church in much the same way as the classics in art, music, and science function within their respective publics but Tracy's analysis provides an elliptic and misleading view of how classics function that needs to be corrected and supplemented by the richer perspective of Michael Polanyi.

ABSTRACT

Richard Gelwick

A Case of Complementarity
William Perry's Model of Cognitive Development and
Michael Polanyi's Philosophy of Commitment

The aim of this paper is two-fold:

- 1) To elaborate more fully than William Perry has done the philosophical foundation of commitment in contextual relativism based upon the philosophy of Michael Polanyi and, 2) to show how the creative work of both Perry and Polanyi

Michael Polanyi's *magnum opus*, *Personal Knowledge* although published in 1958 as a general alternative to the continuing dominance of an objectivist ideal of knowledge has found one of its most significant interdisciplinary counterparts in the work of William Perry's *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years: A Schema*, published in 1970. Both Perry and Polanyi addressed the problem of responsible commitment in a complex intellectual world. Perry's model has described the processes and changes by which college students grow from simplistic and dualistic categorization toward intelligent inter-subjective comprehension of knowledge in context. Polanyi died in 1976 without direct awareness of the work of William Perry. The author of this paper, however, finds that Perry's recognition of Polanyi's philosophy as a philosophical foundation for his work is not only appropriate and correct but also the kind of application and extension of Polanyi's epistemology that Polanyi himself sought.

A comparison of the two figures shows some basic similarities. Perry confronts in the less mature mind a way of thinking about the nature of knowledge and reality that presents itself in absolute alternatives. Furthermore, when this approach to knowing does not seem to work later steps move toward a type of cynical attitude, tends to scorn commitment to available alternatives since there is no satisfactory absolute and one position seems to be as truthful as any other. This predicament described by Perry in the intellectual development of college students is parallel to a much larger cultural situation recognized by Polanyi in his philosophy where the Enlightenment led at first toward a search for absolute rational truths but in the 19th and 20th century turned into positivism and nihilism, both forms of disappointment with the failure of finding absolute answers. Perry found, however, in his research that students do move in some cases beyond this stage toward learning to make commitments toward truth by recognizing how to hold to knowledge in a particular context. Michael Polanyi argued for a similar alternative in the whole philosophy of knowledge by showing how it is possible to be committed to some knowledge as true even though conceivably it might be false and subject to doubt. Polanyi's philosophy known as "personal knowledge" and later as "tacit knowing" sets forth a theoretical model of how we can justify claiming knowledge to be true universally even when we are aware of its risk. It is therefore very correctly perceived by William Perry and his work that Polanyi has provided an explanation of how we can justify as mature and responsible the highest levels of knowledge as "contextual relativism", or as Polanyi would say the most objective knowledge is an act of personal commitment.

The complementarity of Perry and Polanyi is seen in two instances in the work of the author, namely, defining the nature of interdisciplinary study and also the teaching of philosophy itself. First, one of the most basic reasons for doing interdisciplinary study is to enrich otherwise isolated views and to make it possible to grow out of these boundaries. Such a process, however, poses many dilemmas and the student as well as the scholar is frequently presented with puzzles that are not resolvable into familiar and already established paths. Instead, exposure to these problems demands risk and growth at the edges of known positions toward promising yet unproven findings. The hazards of such development that come with interdisciplinary study are frequently undermined by diversions that allow the student or teacher to establish one view as a controlling view instead of having to deal with the genuine interplay of equal voices, thus, one discipline uses data or ideas of another discipline in the absence of a living and knowledgeable advocate from the discipline being applied. Such study though called interdisciplinary study has to be challenged and shown that it is domesticating other people's information and ideas into its own familiar territory. Once it becomes clear that when disciplines or competing views are confronted does the kind of risk involved in Perry's and Polanyi's notions of commitment and contextual relativism occur best. Under these conditions, there is more opportunity and freedom to move toward genuine discovery.

The second case and application is shown in the teaching of philosophy, particularly the history and philosophy of science. Here again the author found in his reaching confirmations of the major parallels discussed above between Perry and Polanyi. First, there is a major problem in getting students to understand that science is not just an accumulation and systematic organization of facts. One of the most obstructing problems in inquiring into the nature of scientific knowledge and its development was the student assumption that the way to approach a problem is to go and look up the right answer. Modern scientists to them, it seemed, are persons who were able to look clearly at nature, whereas people in the Middle Ages were blind. Students had great difficulty in grasping that modern science grew as its early pioneers learned to put on a new kind of "thinking cap." But the acquisition of a new thinking cap meant entertaining dubitable ideas and indeed ones that were not easily or directly confrontable by appeal to ordinary physical observations. Papers written at the beginning of the course and at the end reveal that it was when students began to deal with the problem of knowledge within its contextual dimensions that they began to move toward understanding how scientific ideas grow and change. They could not do this, however, until they gave up the older notion of science as facts and discovered that science itself is a philosophical commitment and risk.

As we face today a very dangerous and complex technological world where alternatives are not offered in dualistic and simple terms, the work of William Perry, buttressed philosophically by the thought of Michael Polanyi, suggests how we may work both with students and faculty in educating for living with ambiguity yet responsible choice within the available knowledge that we have. The moral nature of knowledge is recovered without reintroducing the absolute final answer or the cynicism of absolute relativism by understanding the heuristic nature of contextual relativism and its pursuit of truth and good.

ABSTRACTS OF PAPERS AT OTHER MEETINGS

ABSTRACT

God and the Image-of-God in Dreams: A Perspective from Jung and Polanyi
James A. Hall, University of Texas Health Science Center

The image of God is rare in dreams, although there are dreams that include religious figures, at times from cultures not known to the waking ego and requiring archetypal amplification to reveal their religious meaning. Other dream phenomena suggest religious meanings through the contextual use of dream images, although the images are not religious in usual clinical amplifications. The *Self* or Central Archetype in Jungian theory is seen as the maker of dreams, selecting for the dream-ego a particular role within the dramatic form of the dream. Jung was careful to distinguish the term *God* from the image-of-God, in order to maintain an empirical and scientific frame for his statements. When the dream is seen from a classical Jungian perspective, it is in compensatory relationship to the distortions of the waking-ego attempting to maintain a dominant-ego-image against the encompassing wholeness of the psyche. It is useful in clinical Jungian analysis to consider the dream as produced by the *Self* in relation to the on-going process of the individuating ego. This constellates the image-of-God in a process form different from an explicit dream image but consistent with Jung's view of the *Self*. The focal/tacit shifts suggested by Michael Polanyi are in some ways a better frame of reference for such changing forms than the classical distinction of conscious/unconscious. Clinical examples will be cited.

FROM THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION

ABSTRACT

HUMOR AND MICHAEL POLANYI'S THEORY OF TACIT KNOWING (Jere Moorman)

HUMOR AND MICHAEL POLANYI'S THEORY OF TACIT KNOWING will outline the structure of tacit knowing and use the structure for the analysis of the structure of humor.

Tacit knowing is a mechanism uncovered by the scientist/philosopher Michael Polanyi...a mechanism which he sees as an essential process of thinking. Of course, humor is also an essential process of thinking...the paper will attempt to investigate how the two processes can illuminate each other.

The theory of tacit knowing is offered by Polanyi as an alternative to the ideal of a wholly explicit truth...an ideal most relentlessly pursued by the logical positivists...The definition of humor used in the paper is of similar tenor...HUMOR CONSISTS IN THE INDIRECT AFFIRMATION OF THE IDEAL LOGICAL ORDER BY MEANS OF THE DEROGATION OF THE LIMITED ORDERS OF ACTUALITY...In other words...both humor and tacit knowing will be seen to be antidotes to an overblown objectivity.

The structure of tacit knowing distinguishes between two kinds of awareness...focal and subsidiary...both mutually exclusive... Another way this is put by Polanyi is... 'knowledge by attending to' and 'knowledge by relying on.' Basically, it will be seen... you can't attend to and rely on at the same time.

Polanyi shows how a totally focal knowledge is absurd...and we shall see how humor often uncovers two focal objects which satisfy the same subsidiary clues...This phenomenon of the fusion of disparate objects is found not only in humor...but in metaphor... and even in something so fundamental as the emergence of universal terms...

We shall see how Polanyi argues that all knowledge is either tacit, or rooted in the tacit...such knowledge includes as part of its universal intent a recognition of hazard...Humor will be seen to occur when the ideal of objectivity is excessive, and hazard not reckoned with...i.e. failure to recognize the metaphoric quality of all language...

In addition...the logic of tacit inference will be seen as the method used to reintegrate the clues into a more comprehensive entity...a small discovery event which takes place when one gets the point of a joke and puzzlement is relieved. This discovery will be seen to be of a similar structure as original scientific discoveries; both discoveries will be seen to be largely tacit acts...

Polanyi's theory as outlined in THE TACIT DIMENSION (Anchor Books) will be relied upon; but the presentation will be presented with no previous familiarity with Polanyi's work assumed.

FROM THE NATIONAL LINGUISTIC HUMOR CONFERENCE

POLANYIAN HAIRU

PROBLEMS WITH 'N' EQUATIONS
WILL ALWAYS CONTAIN
'N+1' UNKNOWN.

IF YOU LIVE LONG ENOUGH,
YOU WON'T LIVE LONG ENOUGH
TO SEE EVERYTHING.

BEHAVING IS SEEKING
IS BEHAVING IS SEEKING
IS BEHAVING IS SEEKING.

NONE OF THE SURVEYED
COULD IDENTIFY SMOKEY THE BEAR
CORRECTLY.

THINK BEFORE YOU THINK
BEFORE YOU THINK
BEFORE YOU THINK BEFORE YOU THINK.

PICKING UP A MORSSEL
OF WASHED POTATO
THINKING IT'S A BREADCRUMB.

HOW HARMFUL--
TO MAKE IT A REQUEST
TO BELIEVE WHAT IS PROVED.

POLANYIAN MEDITATIONS

You can't be both
subsidiarily and focally
aware of the same
particulars at the same time.

ONCE IN THE FACE,
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BARK,
BUT YOU MUST AT LEAST WAG YOUR TAIL.

WE DO NOT FEEL THE HANDLE OF THE HAMMER
STRIKE OUR PALM,
BUT THE NAIL.

THE LEAK IN THE BARN ROOF
IS NOT IN THE SAME LOCATION
AS THE DRIP.

REFLECTING EVER AGAIN
ON REFLECTING
ON OUR LAST REFLECTIONS.

"THIS IS A LEADERLESS GROUP"
SAID THE LEADER
OF THE LEADERLESS GROUP.

EARNING AN UNCERTAIN LIVING
BY TAKING IN
EACH OTHER'S WASHING.

IT IS BETTER TO KNOW
SOME OF THE QUESTIONS
THAN ALL OF THE ANSWERS.

JERE MOORMAN
San Diego



© JERE MOORMAN 1970

FROM CONVIVIUM

Alasdair MacIntyre: After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory Duckworth, 1982. (£7.95)
pp252.

I have just been reading this book and marvelling that a book which reflects so many ideas familiar to me from my reading of Polanyi could have not a single reference to Michael Polanyi in the index. Alasdair MacIntyre is writing about the failure of modern thought to justify morality and its attempt to reduce this to the status of personal preference, resulting in the rejection of conventional morality and in a culture which has increasingly come to embody emotive theory. This loss of objective moral standards constitutes a grave cultural impoverishment and, according to MacIntyre, the only way to recover a sense of the objectivity and authority of moral rules and to restore the language and practice of morality to an honoured place within our social life is to recreate forms of community within which objective moral standards can again become meaningful and sustain us through "the new dark ages which are already upon us." (p 245) Since the Enlightenment, every attempt to find a new basis for the rules of morality has failed, whether it be the greatest happiness or the greatest number or the idea that man qua man has certain natural rights. The idea of human rights, like utility, has proved to be a moral fiction, but in our present culture of bureaucratic individualism moral debate continues with mock rationality between the individual who argues for his rights and the institution which argues for utility, a debate in which the preferences of arbitrary will and desire are barely concealed. As MacIntyre says, modern society represents a victory for emotivism while continuing to extend the range of moral fictions. One of these is that what MacIntyre calls the 'manager' class has an expertise and a bureaucratic efficacy which gives it authority to exercise social control and use vast resources in the interests of social change. This claim to authority mirrors the claims made by the natural sciences to have certain knowledge of a domain of morally neutral facts, on the basis of which law-like generalisations can be made and applied.

Legitimation of the institutional forms of twentieth century social life depend on the belief that the claims of 18th century philosophy have been vindicated, but as MacIntyre shows in some detail, the concept of management effectiveness based on a knowledge that gives predictive power is one more moral fiction. Apart from this, attempts to create a predictable bureaucracy committed to creating an equally predictable society is doomed to failure, since any organisation efficient enough to be able to render society predictable would itself have to be predictable and organisational success correlates, not with predictability, but with adaptability, individual initiative and a multiplicity of centres of problem-solving and decision-making.

MacIntyre suggests that our modern tendency to start from a concern with rules and then define virtue as the effective desire to act on right principles should be reversed. We should attend first to the question of what sort of persons we are to become. The self is a social creation and life is a hazardous progress, (Polanyi might say, a heuristic exploration), in which virtues are qualities tending to achievement and vices qualities tending to failure. Every life exhibits a certain narrative order, within which the self can win or lose, save itself or be destroyed. For us, in a post-Aristotelian world, certain questions confront us: What is our human telos? In what does human well-being consist? In a world without city-states,

how can we function as part of an ordered community, seeking the human good together in friendship, understanding this term in Aristotle's sense, which is close to what Polanyi means by conviviality? What role can conflict be understood to play in human life, if it is to help us learn what our ends and purposes are? Macintyre offers some suggestions of his own, but it is my hope that someone who reads this book will be tempted to take up these crucial questions and explore the kind of answers that a study of Polanyi's thought might yield. If Macintyre is right, then Polanyi's vision needs to be brought back centre stage, the vision of a free society, structured in ways that can create interlocking centres of conviviality at every level of our social and economic life, able to function for the common good and for common ends under a firmament of self-set standards of excellence such as have inspired and ruled men's lives in every age.

Joan Crewdson

FROM CONVIVIUM

Andrew Louth: Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology. O.U.P. 1983 xiv + 150 pp (£12.50)

This is a critique of the way in which theology has been influenced by the inheritance of the Enlightenment. It stresses the need for theology to take note of such writers as Gadamer and Polanyi and to use their insights appropriately. The book is reviewed in Theology, Jan. 1984, by Maurice Wiles, who commends it as having important things to say, although it betrays an uncritical dependence on the patristic tradition.

Since the publication of Andrew Louth's book, two others have appeared, also applying Polanyi's thought to theological issues. Both are reviewed in this issue of Convivium. I would welcome offers of further review for our October issue.

Finally -- please do not wait to be asked for offers of articles, information, notices of books, reviews, and anything of interest to our readers. I would also like to ask all of you to do a little 'promoting' and try to get some new subscribers in the course of 1984!

Joan Crewdson

FROM CONVIVIUM

MICHAEL POLANYI AND THE FREEDOM OF SCIENCE

In the immediate post-war years there took place in this country a vigorous debate on the freedom of science that raised basic questions of perennial interest concerning the necessary conditions for the healthy growth of scientific research. It is worthwhile recalling that debate because of its relevance to current tendencies to plan science and to subserve it to sociological ends.

The root of that debate may be found in the previous decade, when a group of socialist scientists launched a campaign urging that science should be organised for the benefit of all. Their motivation was wholly laudable; they saw the widespread misery in many countries in the late 'twenties and early 'thirties, and were convinced that an era of health and plenty could be ushered in by the systematic application of science and, furthermore, that scientific research should be directed with this end in view. These beliefs were powerfully expressed by Professor J.D. Bernal in his book 'The Social Function of Science' (Routledge, 1939) and in the widely-read popular science books of Lancelot Hogben, Hyman Levy and John Crowther. These writers greatly admired the way science was organised in the Soviet Union, and urged that their methods should be generally adopted.

During the war years many academic scientists willingly set aside their research, and bent their energies to the task of national survival. In so doing they recognised that they had to work towards definite objectives under centralised direction, and that their work must remain secret, conditions that are the exact opposite to those of normal scientific research. After the war, these habits tended to linger on, facilitating the task of those who aimed to establish the State direction of science as the accepted norm.

This was recognised by several prominent scientists as an insidious danger, and they saw an urgent need to reassert the freedom of scientific research and to counter the propaganda of the advocates of State direction. To do this they founded the Society for the Freedom of Science, and published a number of Occasional Pamphlets. The aims of the Society were summarised by its President, Sir George Thomson, at a meeting in 1951 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of its foundation:

I think our best defence is so to educate scientific and political opinion that it is realised that any interference with scientific liberty will quickly destroy the life of science, with all that that means for the well-being, and indeed for the safety of the State. To do this is one of our most important functions - planning 'is an insidious disease,' and it is our duty to meet it with new and effective remedies.

One of the most active members of the Society was Michael Polanyi, and in three of the earliest Occasional Papers he presented cogent arguments in support of the freedom of science. These papers are: No. 2, Rights and duties of science (1945); No. 4, The planning of science (1946); and No. 6, The foundations of academic freedom (1947).

In these papers he first emphasises the essential distinction between pure and applied science, the one directed to the extension of knowledge and the other to its practical application. The former proceeds by its inner logic, in a way that is understood by the working scientist. It is impossible to predict the results of any investigation, and in particular whether they will have any practical application. It is thus simply not possible to direct pure research so that it will subserve a particular social need, and any attempt to do so destroys the fruitfulness of that research. Once a discovery is made, however, and it appears to have some practical application, it is then possible to undertake research so as to realise that application in the most efficient way. Such research is indeed undertaken for a particular social purpose, and it is entirely sensible that it should be directed by the appropriate authority.

Polanyi remarks that there is in this no implication that the 'pure' scientists are in some way superior to the 'applied' scientists; it is just that they are engaging in different types of activity. Furthermore, these activities are distinguished by their objective, not by the means employed. Thus two scientists may be doing very similar work with the same apparatus, and yet one is doing pure science and the other applied science. He illustrates this by the analogy of mines and tunnels, both of which are excavated by similar equipment, but have quite different objectives. It is no good confusing the two. If you are digging a tunnel it is no good doing it in a place where it might later on be useful as a mine, and if you are looking for minerals it is no good choosing the place so that your excavation will later be useful as a tunnel. Of course it is always useful to keep your eyes open; if in the course of digging a tunnel you happen to notice some useful minerals, then you note the fact and later, perhaps, you start to dig them out. But when you do this you stop digging a tunnel and start a mine.

The proponents of State direction frequently maintain that this is the most efficient way to solve problems, and this has indeed a superficial plausibility. Polanyi exposes the fallacy by another analogy: Imagine that you must complete a large and complicated jigsaw puzzle as quickly as possible. What would be the best way to go about it? An advocate of centralised direction would say that you must organise a team of people who will follow the instructions of a leader. The alternative strategy is to let each member of the team work individually on his own initiative, fitting in pieces wherever he can, all the time keeping his eye on what the other members of the team are doing, and adjusting his actions as far as he can to correlate with theirs. It is very easy to see which way will get the puzzle completed first.

Polanyi quotes a statement of Enrico Fermi: 'Experience has indicated that the somewhat haphazard exploration of the field of knowledge that results from an intensive freedom of the individual scientific worker to choose his own subject is the only way to ensure that no important line of attack is neglected.' Polanyi comments that the analogy of the jigsaw illustrates this, 'namely that on the one hand the actions of individuals acting according to their own judgement may become spontaneously - and yet efficiently - co-ordinated to a joint task, while on the other hand subordination of the individual efforts to a central authority would destroy their co-operation.'

Polanyi recognises the inadequacies of the jigsaw analogy, in particular the uncertainties in the overall pattern that we seek in scientific research contrasted with the certainty that in a jigsaw each piece has a definite place. While this is a warning not to carry the analogy too far, the progress of science over the last three centuries is sufficient assurance that there is an overall pattern, although often of deeper subtlety than that anticipated by even the most far-sighted discoverer. This gives us 'a sufficient logical ground for the spontaneous co-ordination of individual scientific discoveries. The ground is provided by such coherence as science does possess. In so far as there exists a steady underlying purpose in each step of scientific discovery and each step can be competently judged as to its conformity to this purpose and its success in approaching it, these steps can be made to add up spontaneously to the most efficient pursuit of science.'

Examined more deeply, science combines the two apparently opposed concepts of freedom, namely the absence of external constraint and the liberation from personal ends by submission to impersonal obligations. 'Originality is the principal virtue of the scientist and the revolutionary character of scientific progress is indeed proverbial,' and yet 'science has a most closely knit professional tradition' and is noted for its 'continuity of doctrine and strength of corporate spirit.' There is thus 'no conflict between the principles of spontaneity and constraint.'

This unity between personal creative passion and willingness to submit to tradition and discipline is a necessary consequence of the spiritual reality of science. When the scientist's intuition seeks discovery it is reaching out for contact with a reality in which all other scientists participate with him. Therefore, his most personal acts of intuition and conscience link him most closely with the universal system and the canons of science. While the whole progress of science is due to the force of individual impulses, these impulses are not respected in science as such, but only in so far as they are dedicated to the tradition of science and are disciplined by the standards of science.

Thus, 'if the spontaneous growth of scholarship requires that scholars be dedicated to the service of a transcendent reality, then this impulse implies that they must be free of all other authority.' This applies not only to science but to all scholarship, and ultimately academic freedom can only exist in a free society.

If this transcendent reality is denied, and with it the spiritual foundations of all freely dedicated human activities, then the State inherits the ultimate devotion of men. 'If our conception of truth and justice are determined in any case by interests of some kind or other, then it is right that the public interest should overrule all personal interests in this matter. We have here a full justification of totalitarian statehood.'

The inexorable logic of this analysis of the freedom of the scientist and the consequences of its denial are borne out in grisly detail by the fate of science in Soviet Russia. As soon as one penetrates the superficial adulteration of its socialist admirers, one sees the appalling reality of science enslaved to an alien ideology. This also was publicised by the Society for Freedom in Science. Particular attention was paid to the destruction of genetics, the exile of Vavilov to his death in Siberia and his replacement by Lysenko. The poverty of Soviet science, and the enslavement of its spokesmen to Party dogma are scathingly exposed by the simple device of reprinting extracts from Pravda, Izvestiya and the Soviet Monitor.

Peter Hodgson

BOOK REVIEWS

Leslie Newbigin, The Other Side of '84 M.C.C. paper £1.95 from B.C.C. 75 pp.

Questions for the Churches

I first read a typescript of this short book which came to me as an unplethent photocopy of a fairly illegible original, and was very excited by it. Rumour has it that the author was driven to write it out of exasperation with discussions at the British Council of Churches which he felt rested upon a too-ready identification with post-Enlightenment values and assumptions. In sixty pages (there is a post-script by Wesley Ararajah from the perspective of Indian Christianity), Newbigin summarises a programme which he hopes will revitalise the Church for a dialogue with modern culture which is not hopelessly relativised by that culture. The book is already a summary of a vast enterprise, and a review which pretended to be able further to condense the material would be an impertinence. I shall therefore concentrate on one central theme, in which Polanyi's thought is used.

To engage effectively with a modern world-view dominated by post-Enlightenment science and rationalism, and to contribute to its future from a distinctive and valuable position, the Church must recover the courage of its convictions and speak authoritatively out of the faith grounded in Scripture and Tradition. In this sense, of staunchly advocating its distinctive perspective, not for its own benefit, but for the benefit of mankind, the Church is called upon and required to be legitimately and appropriately dogmatic. In other words, far from assuming a "dogmatic" position of "this is the way things are, and no discussion is necessary" (which is sterile), the Church must place before the world its own heart-felt contribution to the debate about the shape and future of society. It has insights which do not originate in a scientific world-view, which it should not abandon only to ingratiate itself with that world-view. On the contrary, it should cling to those insights until they are shown either to be untenable or to be of no value.

In this way, Newbigin picks out two central themes in Polanyi which cannot be separated: the notions of conviviality and of the paradox of self-set standards. Polanyi recognises the perpetual tension between our obligations to a peer-group, a community, a "convivium", as the source or fount of our world-view, and our equal (but sometimes opposite) obligation to dissent from the received wisdom of that world-view, not for our own sakes, but that the community might be enriched, moved on, restrained from or redeemed from error. This is the way of the cross, of the way which not out of pride but out of love refuses to comply. This is the paradox: because I love my community, and owe everything I believe and know to it (as the ground of my "fiduciary framework"), and am therefore under an obligation to it, for just this reason I cannot affirm aspects of its belief or practice which I am not persuaded of, and I am condemned and compelled to dissent either until I am convinced that I am wrong (let us never forget that aspect of things), or until they are convinced that they are wrong. In some cases, as with Jesus, this refusal to give in can lead to death at the hands of those one loves more than life itself. On this basis alone, religious education cannot be taught as an aspect of "culture", for it is of the essence of genuine religion

that it reaches beyond its own culture without denying its dependence on its modes of expression and world-views. Rationalist utopianism now looks like a bad joke, along with other would-be secular messiah's and master-plans. Yet if religions stop where they point out these failures, perhaps with a touch of self-indulgent delight, they neither make a useful contribution to the debate, nor do justice to what they claim to believe.

All sorts of cliché's and commonplace phrases spring to mind which are connected with this argument: "grasp the nettle"; "practice what you preach"; "have the courage of your convictions". They are all apposite because at its heart the Church seems to have lost confidence in the credibility and relevance of what gave it life. We now need to justify ourselves in terms other than those arising directly from proclamation of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Son of God, Son of the Author and Creator of all things visible and invisible, whose mighty acts are proclaimed in Scripture and made known in Tradition. Either we capitulate to the kind of evangelical self-righteousness which asks whether you are saved (brother) with a doubtful glint in its eye, or to absorption into ephemeral issues which align all-too-easily with contemporary party politics and fringe groupings. In each case, but in markedly different ways, the result is superficiality; we content ourselves with addressing symptoms or counting heads because we can no longer find it in ourselves to believe that the Gospel itself can change the world radically, in the true sense of "to the roots of its being". Whatever the deficiencies of Newbigin's argument (and he admits that they are many), his response to this kind of analysis is plain: nothing less will do.

For Newbigin, the Gospel challenges the world thus: you are using the wrong concepts, in order to implement the wrong plans, which are directed towards the wrong goals; even your efforts at self-renewal are vain, and compound your hopelessness, for wherever you seek to cure a disease by addressing the symptoms rather than the cause you merely succeed in infecting others with it. Thus, if I understand him rightly, some Christians ally themselves with the Left in order to oppose the evils of the Right, or argue that we should spread materialist views of happiness in order to overcome the shortcomings of materialist economies that cannot deliver the goods (in all senses of the word), and so on. Nowhere does the Gospel speak distinctively against the innermost contradiction of Enlightenment philosophy: the establishment and defence of human autonomy based upon individualism simultaneously with the establishment and defence of objectivist science based upon the complete eradication of all personal elements from knowledge. The result, a man with rights but no duties, with perception and knowledge but no responsibility for what he perceives and knows, has been catastrophic.

The man Jesus placed love of God, and love of neighbour, and love of self, side by side because he did not see autonomy and independence as constituting "happiness". Today, the Church cannot preach a gospel which satisfies human expectations because nobody and nothing can satisfy expectations based upon illusion and error (Enlightenment expectations). Instead we should be asking at least five questions: what does it mean to be a human person; what is the goal of human life; what are the rights and capabilities of governments; what is our vision of the future; and what is involved in genuine knowing?

Newbigin reminded me of perhaps the greatest piece of literature in the Bible, if not the world, the story of Job. Unlike Job, the Church has sought to ease its suffering by listening too readily to latter-day Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and Elihu; it has too readily repented of its "dogmatism", of its lack of science, of its dependence upon distant history, of its lack of irrefutable proof for its claims. It would do well to remind itself of him who created the foundations of the world. In that court, and in the presence of that judge, it would legitimately learn that it had uttered what it did not understand, and been charged and invested with words too wonderful for it to bear; and then it would see with its eyes what it had only heard with its ears, and could legitimately despise itself, and repent in dust and ashes.

FROM CONVIVIUM

John C. Puddefoot

Colin Gunton: Yesterday and Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology. D.L.T. 1983. 228 pp.

Gunton's book will make fascinating reading for anyone interested in both theology and the thought of Michael Polanyi. I hope it will also provide an illuminating introduction to Polanyi's thought for those who have not yet discovered the relevance of his ideas for theological method. In the first instance, this book is about Christology, but the issues it raises are of central importance for theology as a whole. Gunton highlights the irreducibly dualistic assumptions, both epistemological and ontological, of classical and Enlightenment thought and shows how inadequate these are as a framework within which to explore theological and Christological reality. The fundamental problem of Christology is how to understand the claim that Jesus is both God and man. Gunton shows that if we are ever to understand the human life of Jesus as the presence of God in time and to make this central Christian claim meaningful, we need to work with non-dualistic assumptions about the nature of both knowing and being. He finds in Michael Polanyi's paradigm of personal knowledge the necessary non-dualistic framework of thought for this and argues that the key to this unitive understanding of knowledge lies in Polanyi's metaphor of indwelling, which enables us to do theology in a way that makes possible a critical affirmation of Christianity's foundational beliefs without introducing discontinuity. Once we accept that all knowing is a matter of 'indwelling', we can, says Gunton, appreciate that "(all) human intellectual enterprises are necessarily fallible, but not for that matter necessarily mistaken. In fact the reverse is the case. Because we indwell the world knowledge can be contingent, fallible and partial without for that reason losing its claim to be knowledge. That is the significance for our purposes of the epistemology of Polanyi." (p 145)

Not only does Polanyi free us from having to view the problems of Christology from the perspective provided by the Enlightenment, but he frees us to look again at the method of the New Testament, which confidently holds together that which is 'from below' - the human and temporal - and that which is 'from above' - the eternal and divine - within an interpretative framework supplied by tradition. Knowing by indwelling combines both approaches to Christology and allows us to work from above - experienced as a self-revelatory quality in the object of our knowing - and from below in a dynamic interaction of reason, imagination and intuition. Gunton is concerned to

show that it is possible to be modern and to contribute theologically to the thought of our age without capitulating to its immanentist thinking. Here it is important to take Gunton's point that it is not only the language of the tradition that we indwell, but the reality of which it speaks. According to Michael Polanyi, there is no direct fit between words and things. All language is indirect and can perform its task only with the aid of metaphor and other figures of speech. This is not to deny that words can bring to light hidden aspects of reality. When we use words successfully, this can be an aid to indwelling the reality to which they refer. But there is a dynamic internality of relation between our words and the real world. This inner dynamic is at work in the theological enterprise as in every exploratory activity of the human mind. There is no radical discontinuity between language and reality. According to the New Testament writers, Jesus Christ exists now as the object of present knowledge and Gunton suggests that "by our personal indwelling of his reality (through the language of worship and tradition) our words may come to express, successfully but indirectly, something of the truth about him." (p 147) The metaphor of indwelling is already familiar to the New Testament writers. Paul talks of being 'in Christ' and the Johannine literature contains many expressions of mutual indwelling. Even Polanyi's central category of conviviality echoes Christian language about a relationship with Christ which becomes more real in the worshipping community. As the personal relationship of worship gives rise to doxological language, this in turn is indwelt and makes possible a clearer account of the object of the believer's worship, through whom indwelling becomes actual.

The importance of Michael Polanyi's theory of knowledge for Gunton's thesis is out of all proportion to the space given to a description of his thought, but Gunton takes full advantage of its implications in working out his own methodological approach to Christology. In particular, he sees how it opens up the possibility of doing theology in a way that allows us to assimilate the gifts of tradition without being its slave and how it liberates us from a rigid view of the relationship of words and things. Polanyi's epistemology greatly strengthens Gunton's hand as he sets out to show how, "far from abandoning the tradition, we may learn to stand on the giant's shoulders in the cautious hope of being able to see a little further than they." (p 208) In his Epilogue, Gunton concludes his plea for continuity in Christology with the warning that "a 'critical' theology which operates only or chiefly by rejection of all that came before the modern era will be a blind theology, for it will have lost its roots" and he goes on to say that we shall not have the theological tools to combat distortions of Christology unless we accept the legacy of the fathers and take further the process of thinking which they began. "They realized that the incarnation demanded a rethinking of the word 'God'. The God of Christendom largely...escaped that rethinking, but it was an aberration and untrue to the main direction of patristic theology and Christology." To renew our thinking "about the living Jesus of the Church's worship and of New Testament confession...cannot be done without assistance from the past, nor without the great labour of exercising thought and judgement as to where the past was right and where it was wrong." (pp 208/209)

The pivotal statement at the heart of Gunton's discussion is that Jesus of Nazareth is the logic of God's holy loving, making present in historical actuality its eternal reality. Within the dualistic framework of modern thought, the concept of God-manhood raises insoluble problems, not least because the words God man are understood in mutually exclusive ways, which make this kind of self-differentiation in God logically impossible. Gunton suggests that we can only avoid dualism and docetism by seeing the life of Jesus as the very power and knowledge of the love of God expressed under the conditions of temporality and humanity. The question of contradiction is then seen to depend, not on the concept of God uniquely present in the world, but in the meaning of the words we use to express this.

Many of the issues raised by this book concern questions of ontology as much as questions of epistemology, which gives me cause to regret that Gunton did not develop Polanyi's ideas more fully in this area in discussing the problem of soteriology. Gunton himself seems to handle the discussion more confidently at the epistemological than the ontological level, but he has to move from epistemology to ontology in dealing with the question of the relationship of Christology to soteriology and I believe he could have better illuminated the discussion if he had made use of Polanyi's ontology which flows naturally from his theory of knowledge and which has important implications for the nature of ultimate reality. However no doubt this needs to be the subject matter of another book.

Joan O. Crewdson

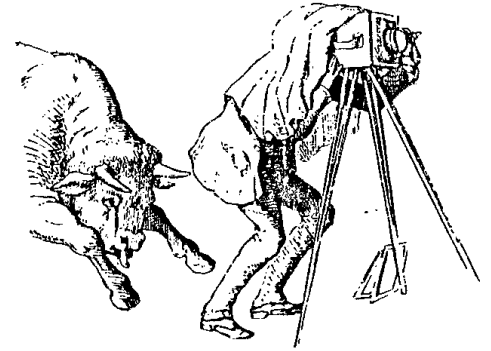
POLANYIAN MEDITATIONS

WE CAN KNOW MORE THAN
WE CAN TELL.



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HE HAS THE GREATEST
BLIND SIDE
WHO THINKS HE HAS NONE.



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YOU CAN'T PHILOSOPHIZE
YOUR LIFE
AND LIVE IT TOO.

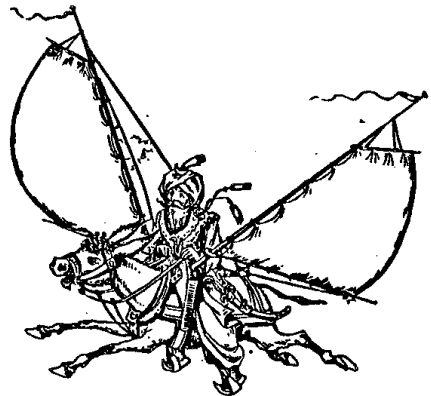


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A SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE
OF THE PERCEIVING PERSON
WHICH IS RATIONAL FROM
HIS OWN POINT OF VIEW,
BUT NOT OTHERWISE.



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A HEURISTIC IMPULSE
IS NEVER WITHOUT A SENSE
OF ITS POSSIBLE
INADEQUACY.

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REPORT ON A.A.R. Polanyi Meeting

On December 19, 1983, members of the Polanyi Society attending the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Dallas, Texas, met for a three hour session. Unhappily, our scheduled meeting coincided with one of the worst ice storms in Texas history. Most of the meeting was spent in a lively discussion of papers written by Polanyi Society members which were to be presented in later A.A.R. programs. In the business session, several issues regarding the future of the Polanyi Society were discussed. Richard Gelwick's proposal to expand the newsletter into a mini-journal met with enthusiastic response. Plans for the upcoming Kent State conference on March 8 and 9 were reviewed. It was agreed that the Polanyi Society should again request that the American Academy of Religion provide space for a pre-annual meeting session. The 1984 A.A.R. annual meeting is scheduled for The Palmer House Hotel in Chicago, IL on December 8-11.

Phil Mullins
Coordinator for Religious
Studies

NEWS AND NOTES

CONVIVIUM: A SIX-MONTHLY REVIEW OF POST-CRITICAL THOUGHT published in England has had to raise its subscription rates. Americans are requested to send their subscription fees in sterling money orders. The current rates are 5 pounds for surface delivery and 7 pounds for air delivery. Send subscriptions to: Joan Crewdson, 12, Cunliffe Close, Oxford, OX2 7BL, England. The selections in this issue of the Polanyi Society periodical illustrate the value and quality of CONVIVIUM, we publish only selected parts of it, however.

Jere Moorman, San Diego business man and member of the Polanyi Study Group there is providing his own development of Polanyi's philosophy through the field of humor. He recently presented a paper at the National Linguistic Humor Conference in Phoenix, Arizona. An abstract of his paper and selections from his submissions of "Polanyian Meditations" are included. A stand-up comedian, Moorman is the author of ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE, HUMOROUS INTERPRETATIONS OF SCRIPTURE and THE HUMOROUS DICTIONARY OF ECONOMICS. Persons interested in ordering copies of his work may write him at the address listed in the ne membership list above.

William E. Goding has revised his article published as "Polanyi and Peck: A Short Semantic Symphony" in PRE/TEXT: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF RHETORIC, August, 1981, and is willing to share with those who request it this longer version. See membership list for his address.

James Stines of the Philosophy and Religion Dept. at Appalachian State University, Boone, NC 28607, is interested in trying to have a Polanyi group at the North Carolina Professors of Religion meeting next Fall. Anyone interested should contact him.

One of the possibilities in the plans for the Polanyi group meeting at the Chicago meeting of the American Academy of Religion next Dec. 8-11 is a tour of the Polanyi Archives at the University of Chicago Joseph Regenstein Library.