



# CONTENTS

**Preface**..... 3

**Focus on the Polanyi Reader, “Recovering Truths”**

Mickey Mantle and Ted Williams Hitting a Baseball:  
Using the Michael Polanyi Reader to Analyze Practices..... 4  
*Tex Sample*

Engaging a Wider Audience: Reflections on Walter Gulick’s *Recovering Truths*:  
*A Comprehensive Anthology of Michael Polanyi’s Writings*..... 13  
*Ellen W. Bernal*

Walter Gulick’s *Recovering Truths*:  
*A Comprehensive Anthology of Michael Polanyi’s Writings*..... 19  
*Kriszta Sajber*

Covering the *Recovering*..... 27  
*Walter Gulick*

**Essays**

Michael Polanyi and Early Neoliberalism ..... 31  
*Martin Beddeleem*

Michael Polanyi and the Society of Explorers..... 45  
*Colin Corder*

**Book Reviews**

Daniel P. Sheid, *Cosmic Common Good*..... 61  
*Diane Yeager*

Adam Prior, *Body of Christ Incarnate for You* ..... 63  
*David Nikkel*

**Journal and Society Information**

Editorial Board and Submissions Guide ..... 2

Notes on Contributors ..... 4

Now posted on [www.polanyisociety.org](http://www.polanyisociety.org):  
News and Notes  
E-Reader Instructions  
Society Resources  
Society Board Members

# Tradition & Discovery

## General Editor

Paul Lewis  
Roberts Department of Religion  
Mercer University  
Macon, GA 31207  
lewis\_pa@mercer.edu

## Associate and Book Review Editor

Andrew Grosso  
Trinity Episcopal Cathedral  
Columbia, SC 29201  
atgrosso@icloud.com

## Associate Book Review Editor

Spencer Case  
University of Colorado  
Boulder, CO 80309  
casesj@colorado.edu

## Editorial Board

Ellen Bernal  
Bioethicist, Retired  
Perrysburg, Ohio 43551  
ellermob@gmail.com

Araminta Johnston  
Independent Scholar  
Charlotte, NC  
asjohncl@aol.com

Charles Lowney  
Hollins University  
Roanoke, VA 24019  
lowneycwl@gmail.com

Stan Scott  
Emeritus Professor, UMaine—Presque Isle  
Independent Scholar  
Portland, ME 04101  
stan.scott@maine.edu

David James Stewart  
St. Catherine University  
Department of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
Minneapolis, MN 55105  
contact@davidjamesstewart.com

Kyle Takaki  
Independent Scholar  
Honolulu, HI  
ktakaki@hawaii.edu

## Editor Emeritus

Phil Mullins  
Missouri Western State University  
St. Joseph, MO 64507  
mullins@missouriwestern.edu

## Book Review Editor Emeritus

Walter Gulick  
Montana State University Billings  
Billings, MT 59101  
wgulick@msubillings.edu

## Submission Guidelines

Submissions: All manuscripts should be submitted as a Microsoft Word file attached to an email message. **Articles** should be no more than 6000 words in length (inclusive of keywords, abstract, notes, and references) and sent to Paul Lewis at lewis\_pa@mercer.edu. All submissions will be sent out for blind peer review. **Book reviews** should be no more than 1000 words in length and sent to Andrew Grosso at atgrosso@icloud.com.

Spelling: We recognize that the journal serves English-speaking writers around the world and so do not require anyone's "standard" English spelling. We do, however, require all writers to be consistent in whatever convention they follow.

Citations:

- Our preference is for Chicago's parenthetical/reference style in which citations are given in the text as (last name of author year, page number), combined with full bibliographical information at the end of the article. One exception is that Polanyi's major works may be cited parenthetically using the following abbreviations (with abbreviations italicized):

*CF* *Contempt of Freedom*

*KB* *Knowing and Being*

*LL* *Logic of Liberty*

*M* *Meaning*

*PK* *Personal Knowledge*

*SEP* *Society, Economics, and Philosophy*

*SFS* *Science, Faith, and Society*

*SM* *Study of Man*

*STSR* *Scientific Thought and Social Reality*

*TD* *Tacit Dimension*

For example: Polanyi argues that .... (TD, 56). Full bibliographical information should still be supplied in the references section since many of us may work with different editions of his works.

- Endnotes should be used sparingly and be placed before the reference section.
- We do recognize that Polanyi's work connects with scholars who work in diverse disciplines that use different style guides. To the extent that our software allows, we will accept other styles (e.g., APA or MLA) so long as the author is consistent and careful in following it. The main point, of course, is to give the reader enough information to locate and engage your sources. Manuscripts that are not careful and consistent in style will be returned so that the author can make corrections, which may delay publication.

For more information see

<http://polanysisociety.org/Aims-and-Scope-9-12-18.htm>

and <http://polanysisociety.org/TAD-Submissions&Review-9-12-18.htm>

The Polanyi Society gratefully acknowledges the support of Mercer University, Macon, GA, for the mailing of *Tradition & Discovery*.

*Tradition & Discovery* is prepared for printing by Faithlab in Macon, GA.

*Tradition & Discovery* is indexed selectively in *The Philosopher's Index* and *Religious and Theological Abstracts* and is included in both the EBSCO online database of academic and research journals and the Directory of Open Access Journals. *Tradition & Discovery* is also available online at [www.polanysisociety.org](http://www.polanysisociety.org).

## PREFACE

This issue of *TAD* reflects the wide-ranging work of Michael Polanyi. The issue opens with a forum on the Polanyi Reader, *Recovering Truths: A Comprehensive Anthology of Michael Polanyi's Writings*. Tex Sample, Ellen Bernal, Krisztina Sajber, and Walter Gulick, who edited the Reader, contribute. To access the reader, which is stored on Google drive, email a request to Phil Mullins (mullins@missouriwestern.edu).

Also in this issue are articles and book reviews that speak to different aspects of Polanyi's work, Martin Beddeleem examines Polanyi's relationship to early neoliberalism and Colin Cordner examines the political implications of Polanyi's idea of a Society of Explorers. Diane Yeager and David Nikkel review books in religion that resonate with Polanyi's thought.

In other matters, welcome Ellen Bernal to the *TAD* editorial Board. You can read more about her below in the Notes on Contributors.

As always, do keep up with the latest on the annual meeting (this year in San Diego) and other news at [www.polanyisociety.org](http://www.polanyisociety.org).

Finally, since this is the October issue, we have included a reminder to submit dues by December 31 in order to keep receiving the print copy of *TAD*.

*Paul Lewis*

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**Martin Beddeleem** (martin.beddeleem@cas.au.dk) is a postdoctoral fellow at the Department of Global Studies at Aarhus University. He is writing the first book in French on Polanyi's ideas.

**Ellen W. Bernal** (ellermob@gmail.com) is the former Director of Ethics at St. Vincent Mercy Medical Center, Toledo, Ohio; former Assistant Professor, Philosophy and Values at Lourdes University, and founding member of the Bioethics Network of Ohio.

**Colin Cordner** (colin\_cordner@yahoo.ca) is a visiting scholar in the Department of Greek and Roman Studies at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. He is updating Maben Poirier's annotated bibliography of Polanyi's works.

**Walter Gulick** (wgulick@msubillings.edu) has been finding that retirement (now in his 18th year) involves doing much of what he did while full time, just less of it, which leaves time for reading, writing, and community service.

**David Nikkel** (David.nikkel@uncp.edu) is Professor of Religion and Chair of the Department of Philosophy and Religion at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke and member of the Polanyi Society Board.

**Kriszta Sajber** (ksajber@miserericordia.edu) is Assistant Professor at Misericordia University, where she teaches courses in philosophy and the medical humanities. Her research on the role of embodiment in human subjectivity draws from multiple disciplines.

**Tex Sample** (texsample34@gmail.com) is the Robert B. and Kathleen Rogers Professor Emeritus of Church and Society at the Saint Paul School of Theology and current Pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church in Kansas City, Missouri.

**Diane Yeager** (Diane.Yeager@georgetown.edu) is the Thomas J. Healey Family Distinguished Professor in ethical studies in the Department of Theology at Georgetown University, past Polanyi Society Board member, and past president of the Society of Christian Ethics.



# MICKEY MANTLE AND TED WILLIAMS HITTING A BASEBALL: USING THE MICHAEL POLANYI READER TO ANALYZE PRACTICES<sup>1</sup>



## Tex Sample

**Keywords:** Michael Polanyi, Polanyi Reader, Mickey Mantle, Ted Williams, indwelling, specifiable and unspecifiable, connoisseurship, commitment

## ABSTRACT

*This paper interprets the batting styles of Mickey Mantle and Ted Williams utilizing key concepts of the Michael Polanyi Reader. In doing so it demonstrates the thoughtful organization of Polanyi's work in the Reader, on the one hand, and the explanatory and descriptive power of Polanyi's thought about practices on the other. Key Polanyi concepts utilized in this paper include: indwelling, the specifiable and the unspecifiable, connoisseurship, a-critical and critical judgment, knowledge and knowing as action, understanding, and commitment with its personal and universal poles.*

A story runs through the baseball world about the time that Mickey Mantle and Ted Williams sat down together and talked about hitting a baseball. For over an hour these two masterful batting champions discussed what is arguably the most difficult thing to do in sport, putting a round bat on a round ball when that sphere is coming at the batter at high speeds or different speeds and with a variety of moves. To hit a baseball is typically an exercise in failure. One is considered a fine hitter if one gets three hits out of 10 official times at bat. Mantle, however, after his conversation with Williams did not get a single hit in his next 28 times at bat.

The reasons for this extraordinary failure on Mantle's part will never be known, of course, Nevertheless, I think that the broader Mantle-Williams story offers a rich

interpretive opportunity to do two things: first to demonstrate the utility of the new Polanyi Reader by means of the thoughtful organization of Polanyi's work contained therein, and, secondly to demonstrate the explanatory and descriptive power of Polanyi's thought about practices as developed and made available in this same Reader.

When I wanted to organize my interpretation of the Mantle and Williams story, I turned to the excellent Polanyi Reader and used it to gather up key Polanyi concepts which were relevant to the interpretive task I have been pondering for some years. Not only did I find more concepts than I could possibly engage in the space available here, but I found references in the Reader that provided not only a definition of each of those concepts, but in turn located the rich resources for pursuing Polanyi's thought in material in the Reader but also in its references to Polanyi's wider corpus.

In the Glossary I turned to those key notions of Polanyi about indwelling, attending, the distal and proximal, the focal and subsidiary and, of course, the tacit. Among the many things in this world that require indwelling, surely hitting a baseball does. I think of the concentration, keeping one's body balanced in the batter's box while waiting on the pitch, keeping one's eye on the ball, gripping the bat firmly but not so tightly that one locks up the wrists, lining up the Vs between the thumb and fore-finger on both hands while gripping the bat in order to keep wrists flexible, shifting one's body weight as the pitch approaches, keeping one's head down and the front shoulder in so as not to pull away on the pitch, picking a good pitch to hit and learning to wait on the ball, and, of course, follow through, etc. Added to all of these things one must practice, practice, practice. And, then, one must focus on hitting the ball as all of these subsidiary skills tacitly flow together. Polanyi often attacked the Cartesian ego with its separation of the mind and body. Indeed, a very good philosophical case could be made that the separation of mind and body in Descartes' thought could never provide one with the skills required to hit a 90-mile-an-hour baseball.

According to the Glossary, indwelling is "a process of interiorizing objects or ideas so they can function as subsidiaries bearing upon the focal target or action" (p. 8). The guidelines of hitting a baseball suggested in the paragraph above must not be simply a list of ideas one thinks through while getting ready and then swinging at a ball. That may be the worst thing one can do, as Polanyi has warned readers in a good many lectures and papers. Or, as coaches will often say to a batter, "you are thinking too much." Indwelling requires instead the interiorizing of such guidelines, their embodiment, if you will. At best, these guidelines become tacitly understood but are "automatic" or second nature in their incarnate expression so that the batter is more conscious *from* them than *of* them. Focal awareness attends to seeing and hitting the ball and must be at the center of one's concentration. Thus, the guidelines are that necessary range of subsidiaries that constitute the *from* in Polanyi's from-to structure but are synthesized in the structure of the whole.

So my first gambit in interpreting what happened to Mantle after his conversation with Williams is that he began to think too much, to focus on the subsidiaries of hitting a ball, and thereby lost focal awareness: that participation, that indwelling so necessary to high performance, the skills of a craft, and the creation of art. Mantle's focal target and action became consumed with guidelines—subsidiaries—and Mantle lost his capacity, at least for a time, to hit the ball.

Further, my interpretation of Mantle's zero for twenty-eight hitting drought must take into account the differences between him and Williams. Both were great hitters. Williams had a lifetime batting average of .344, with 2654 hits, 521 home runs, and an on-base percentage of .482. All of this while missing three full seasons in his prime years while serving in the military in World War II and then missing the far greater part of two seasons while engaged in the Korean conflict.

Meanwhile, Mantle's batting average was .298 with 2415 hits, 536 home runs, and 1509 RBIs, while playing seventeen years in pain from an early injury in the 1951 World Series. With numbers like these Williams is clearly the superior pure hitter, especially when one considers what his records would've been had he been able to play the full five seasons he missed. At the same time, to baseball purists, winning is the measure of great performance, and Mantle played in 12 World Series in an 18-year career and led the Yankees to seven wins in those Series. Further, Mantle had 18 home runs, 40 RBIs, 26 extra base hits, 42 runs, 43 walks, and 123 total bases in World Series play, all Series records. Williams played in one World Series, which his team the Boston Red Sox lost, and he batted .200.

From a Polanyian perspective, they were radically different from each other in the way they approached hitting. In Jane Leavy's substantive biography of Mantle, she reports that "Mantle was not a baseball scholar." Big leaguer Mike Epstein once asked Mantle about how he felt his body "moving in a certain direction or doing something you can talk to me about [while hitting a ball]?" Mantle answered "honestly, I don't know nothing about hitting...I just watch the other hitters." Leavy concludes that "Mantle had no idea of what he did right or wrong or differently batting right-handed and left-handed" (Leavy 2010, 156-57). Leavy goes on to make the case for "muscle memory" as the description for understanding Mantle's batting performance, by which she means "the ability to recall and replicate a perfected motion, such as a baseball swing, in the freedom of infinite space." It is the ability to recruit "the family of muscles that have to be moved to accomplish a task." Leavy goes on to suggest that "muscle memory is a form of implicit memory" in contrast to explicit memory. She claims that "Mantle was an Einstein of implicit intelligence" (Ibid., 158-59).

In these pages, Leavy is working with neurobiology and other sciences, but her discussion of "muscle memory" and "implicit intelligence" is illumined by and is quite reminiscent of Polanyi's distinction between the specifiable and the unspecifiable. In his work on this distinction Polanyi describes "What can or cannot be made explicit."

Polanyi is clear that “subsidiary awareness and focal awareness are mutually exclusive” so that in the case of a baseball batter one cannot be at the same time focally aware of hitting the ball and paying attention to the host of micro, subsidiary practices performed time and time again in the batting cage or at the hitting machine. Polanyi points out that “some deeply embodied tacit skills”—as in the case of those of Mickey Mantle—may never be, at least in principle, specifiable (Glossary, 14; *PK*, 56).

But Ted Williams was quite different from Mantle. He was a serious student of hitting the ball. He also published a book, *The Science of Hitting* (note the title).<sup>2</sup> Williams observes that “if there is such a thing as a science in sport, hitting a baseball is it.” He does go on to say that it is “not an exact science” (Williams and Underwood 1986, 12). So, when Williams gives attention to hitting as a science I regard him as a connoisseur in Polanyi’s terms. While Polanyi indicates that connoisseurship in the main is “a tacit form of knowing,” it nevertheless “involves evaluative judgment and perhaps artistic sensibility in all sorts of endeavors....” (Glossary, 3; *SM*, 23; Reader, Chapter II E 1).

At this point I find Polanyi’s distinction between a-critical and critical judgment to be descriptively helpful. By a-critical, Polanyi means “tacit acts not based upon critical reflection about alternatives.” Any action dependent upon “unspecifiable clues is an a-critical act.” Such a-critical acts are inarticulate, whereas critical judgment attends to “the assertion of an articulate form” (Glossary, 1; *PK*, 264). My point here is not that Williams used articulated critical judgment in hitting the ball and that Mantle was a-critical. A claim like that would miss the profoundly tacit dimensions of Williams’s connoisseurship—he cultivated the refined judgment of a good hitter even though he linked his book with science. Polanyi certainly thought that connoisseurship was a part of science, although he also recognized that science appreciated articulated critical judgments. Williams was more interested than Mantle in articulating critical judgments about hitting. But Williams understood that concentration and capacity to focus on the ball in spite of the ways a wide array of now-again-subsidiary-but-formerly-critical-assessments undergirds the practice of hitting.

Also, in Mantle’s case a kind of critical judgment was certainly not absent when he paid attention to the characteristics of different pitchers, or his anticipation of the pitcher’s next pitch (a fastball, curve, or slider, etc.), or the location of defensive players on the opposing team when he came to bat (such as the Boudreau shift, which moved infielders to one side of the field in order to take advantage of Mantle’s batting from the left or right side). Both Williams and Mantle made use of critical and a-critical judgment. It would be impossible to be a great hitter otherwise, certainly on Polanyi’s reckoning. As Polanyi says, “We should not apply, therefore, the terms ‘critical’ or ‘uncritical’ to any process of tacit thought *by itself*; anymore than we would speak of the critical or uncritical performance of a high jump or a dance” [or hitting a baseball]. (Ibid. Italics are Polanyi’s, brackets are mine). Still, a good case can be made that

Mantle was far more a-critical in his approach but that Williams' approach made more use of articulated critical judgment.

Thus, going back to our initial story of the conversation between Williams and Mantle, it is certainly not far-fetched to suggest that that conversation pushed Mantle in the direction of articulated critical judgment that moved him away from his strength and led him into specific judgments that perhaps disrupted his concentration (focal awareness) and distracted him from the brilliantly normal a-critical stance that, in part, made him the hitter he was. Mantle's strength was his inarticulate learning, his "feats of a-critical achievement" (Glossary, 1; Reader, II B). As we reported Leavy's comment above, "Mantle was an Einstein of implicit intelligence" (Leavy 2010, 159). For reasons of space I will not here provide a discussion of Polanyi's concepts of unspecifiable and specifiable knowledge because they are closely related to his concepts of critical and a-critical judgments (See Glossary, 15-16).

This distinction between critical and a-critical judgment raises a fundamental question about knowledge in Polanyi. He seems to emphasize the importance of knowing as action. For him the action of knowing is as important as the knowledge focally understood as the product of such action. Hence "knowing by acquaintance," which emerges from "inarticulate learning," is as important as representative knowledge, as in a linguistic, more exact description of the subject under review. To emphasize knowing as a process (an ongoing one of reliance on tacit elements) over knowledge is to focus on "the personal participation of the knower in and [in] relationship to what is known...." (Glossary, 9).

Clearly, Mickey Mantle's approach to hitting was one of knowing as a process. As he said in an expression mirroring his inarticulate learning, he watched the other players in order to learn how to hit. Mantle was naturally a right-handed hitter and hit far better from that side of the plate. From the left side, it was certainly "learned behavior," a panoply of integrated second nature skills drilled into him by thousands of balls thrown by his father and grandfather in an Oklahoma backyard as he grew up. And nobody hit the ball farther than Mantle; He "swung with ferocious intent." His power is described with words like: "a thing of raw beauty," "naturally aggressive," "violent," "sheer athleticism," and "pure, blue-collar, farm-boy aggressiveness" (Leavy 2010, 161, 407). Leavy uses current scientific methods including video and mapping of Mantle's swing. She displays the work of his legs and feet, his stance at the plate, the power-generating torque of his hips and body, the placement of his hands, the slight upswing of his batting stroke, and the way he kept his head and body otherwise still through his swing. "He had a quiet body and a quiet head" (Ibid., 412). Such power did not come after his arrival in the big leagues. While he was still a teenager in Oklahoma, reports came to scouts about a kid who was hitting 500-foot home runs.



That Mantle can be aptly characterized in terms of knowing as action can be attributed, in great part, to his somatic makeup. Arguably, he was physically the most gifted player ever to play the game. His blazing speed, a strong arm, his eye-hand coordination that enabled him to swing with such force and still maintain a high batting average, and his capacity to deliver in the clutch as witnessed in his performance in World Series games. One can only wonder what he might've done had he not played with an injury throughout his career and not been afflicted with alcoholism not many years after coming into the big leagues (Ibid). To live in a body of such enormous capacity, and, then, to indwell in the action of hitting a baseball for all of those years constitutes a knowing-as-action not finally articulable in more common notions of knowledge as that which is or can become explicit.

With these comments about Mantle, I do not mean to suggest that Ted Williams' hitting a baseball did not include knowing-as-action. His hitting clearly did include this characteristic. Yet, he also possessed more explicit knowledge about putting the bat on a ball. In fact, it may well be that no one possessed knowing-as-action and knowledge about hitting (Polanyi's terms) on the scale that Williams did. The attention he gives in his book to things made explicit like concentration, the length and weight of one's bat, studying and sizing-up pitchers, knowing oneself and one's style, rules for hitting a ball, characteristics of the batting box and the strike zone, weight balance, hip action, the position and use of the hands, corrections and adjustments in hitting, dealing with slumps, and a host of others. All of these are normally subsidiaries in Polanyi's terms. Williams was thoroughly committed to the practice of hitting the ball. He reports practicing in the batting cage until his hands bled and then developing calluses over these wounds. Indeed, the question is how William attended to all these contributors to hitting as things in themselves and then come to the plate with such comprehensive, focal awareness that he was able to hit a baseball so successfully. At this point, I would argue that he was far more the connoisseur—again in Polanyi's terms—than Mantle.

In this connection Polanyi's concept of understanding seems to characterize Williams more than Mantle. For Polanyi, understanding is "the most comprehensive form of knowing. It certainly involves active participation and it includes both tacit integrations and subsidiaries at work in inarticulate knowing, but it also involves "[t]he explicit products of integrations...." To be sure, it is "largely unspecified" knowledge because it encompasses a wide range of experience with different situations that cannot be consciously brought to an action. Nevertheless, there is a tacit anticipation of a wide range of circumstances with the capacity to respond to them (Glossary, 9).

The marvel of Ted Williams is that his understanding, like an iceberg, contained a greater unspecified knowing that was beneath his explicit teaching, and yet few can match his understanding about hitting a ball in terms of both its explicit and implicit knowing. It is doubtful that Mantle could ever have put together his "implicit

intelligence” with the matchless combination of explicit and inexplicit knowledge in the understanding of Ted Williams. Moreover, Williams was able to teach others how to hit as evidenced by the jump in batting averages by the Washington Senators players in the year when Williams first became their manager and instructed them. It is a compelling testimony to the explicit powers in Polanyi’s notion of understanding, in spite of its largely unspecifiable nature. (I suspect that Williams as coach did tell players about things they should attend to explicitly; he probably made them practice these, but then they had to become subsidiary again and be integrated with the many other subsidiaries that flow together as the batter focuses on hitting the pitch from a particular pitcher at a particular time. Maybe Williams also had players “read his book” but if so they still had to practice the different elements discussed and, finally, make these practiced elements subsidiaries that flow with other subsidiaries into attending to the *kairos*, that moment in the fullness of time before the pitch!)

Finally, in a short list, Polanyi’s concept of commitment offers an important opening into the hitting approaches of both Williams and Mantle. For Polanyi commitment is “a manner of disposing of ourselves through submission to values...” (Glossary, 3; *PK*, 363; Reader, Chapter VI D). In the Glossary the description of commitment focuses primarily on the value of truth seeking, which, of course, is appropriate. Here, however, I use the concept to focus on the value of playing the game of baseball. It is a game for which one is personally responsible. Someone has said that no sport isolates a player with the ball like baseball. In action after action it is the player handling the ball: to throw it, catch it, hit it, and chase it down, etc. Clearly it involves a personal pole, as Polanyi suggests. To play baseball is to make a public commitment. To make a play is to make a public, embodied commitment. One’s action on the field bears witness to the sincerity of one’s assertions; yes, often to one’s ultimate commitments.

Baseball also has a universal pole, at least within the game itself: to play the game well, to be a team player, and to win. In fact, many of the best players say that the best aim is to have fun, which also seems to have positive results in how well one plays and promotes the intrinsic values of the game itself. This commitment may be both tacit and explicit, and the more one plays, the more the game generates an expanding consciousness about how it’s played and how to play it right. While commitment has intrinsic value; extrinsic values come into play as well. Outfielder Hank Bauer, who played many years for the Yankees when they were winning all those World Series, used to warn rookie players with the comment: “Don’t mess with our money,” suggesting that lax play could cause them to miss the World Series and the pay ballplayers received by participating in that championship contest (Glossary, 3; *PK*, 363; Reader, Chapter VI D).

My purpose here, however, is again to return to the conversation between Williams and Mantle, with which we began. And at this point I will make a claim that lacks

as much substantiation as those I make above, but it has, nevertheless considerable explanatory power in relating my Polanyian interpretation to the baseball play of Mantle and Williams.

It is well attested that in public Mantle could be a first-class jerk, to put it in common parlance. What stands in such sharp contrast was his conduct in the Yankee locker room and the sustained awe with which he was held by so many of the players. They appreciated his desire to avoid the limelight, to be with the team, his generosity in reaching out to young players, his behind-the-scenes visits to children in hospitals, his loans and gifts of money, and his financial care for his family. In the clubhouse, he took on heroic proportions. It was not just “the respect the other players had for the way he played the game—not just his ability but the intensity he played it with” (Leavy 2010, 241).

His commitment to the team and to the game were at the center of his life. It was further displayed in the fact that he played most games in pain, that his knee required a tight wrapping in order for him to be able to run at all. Players who were with him through spring training, a 154 Game schedule, plus typically a World Series, saw him up close, day by day, and they were the ones who admired him the most.

Williams was different. The most important thing in the world to him was hitting a baseball. Fielding never gripped him the way that hitting did. Later he would regret that he had not given attention to his defense as he should. Not disposed to the excessive drinking, carousing, and the womanizing of Mantle, he led a disciplined life, getting a good night’s sleep, eating right, taking a nap before a ballgame, and getting himself ready to play. He even took a rubber ball with him to movies to squeeze in order to strengthen his hands, wrists, and forearms. After a game he did a hundred rigorously-designed push-ups with his feet on the seat of a chair while supporting his upper body with the fingers of his hands rather than his palms. He constantly checked the weight of his bats so they would be light enough to accommodate a quick swing. Williams came to the park, excited, with the expectation that something wonderful would happen. With other players, he was a constant teacher and loved to talk hitting most of all. He never stopped thinking and analyzing the game (Halberstam 1989, 180-189). He got along well with his teammates. Generous and considerate, especially with younger teammates, the Red Sox players held him with “an unusual affection” long after his playing days were over, and he maintained decades-long friendships with Bobby Doerr, Dom DiMaggio, and Johnny Pesky (Ibid., 184). But he was not a leader because in his passion to be the best hitter in the game he did not seek those kinds of responsibilities. It was more than enough to meet the expectations of the fans and teammates, and himself (Ibid., 138).

In my reading of Williams and Mantle the former was highly and affectionately admired by his teammates and certainly respected for his prodigious talent of hitting

the ball. Not a leader, but a teacher, not the driving force of his team, but rather the one man who wanted to be more than anything else the greatest living hitter of his time. With Mantle, in spite of and perhaps sometimes because of his riotous living, his capacity to play through pain, and his sacrificial giving up of himself for the team bespoke a devotion to the ball club, a readiness to do whatever it took to win, and an intrinsic commitment to the game. If Williams was a consummate student of the game, a teacher of rare competence, a batter almost unmatched in the history of baseball, Mickey Mantle, broken as he was with his compulsions, but, playing with such incredible intensity and with a profound love of the game, took on virtually a martyr-like quality with his Yankee teammates.

Mantle brought those qualities to his conversation with Williams on that day. It was perhaps this most of all that lead him to put into play the teaching he got from the one who is perhaps, at least, the best teacher of hitting a baseball in his time. It was that commitment that rendered Mantle lost in the subsidiaries of Williams's teaching. It took him away from the genius of his own implicit intelligence until he could move away from that kind of explicit knowledge to that special knowing in action that made him the great player he was. Needless to say, I have found the Polanyi Reader to be an excellent guide for the exploration of these issues and the interpretation provided herein.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>I am indebted in this paper to the following people who read and made helpful comments on the early drafts: Gus Breyspraak, Sarah and Gene Lowry, Sam Mann, Phil Mullins, and Peter Sandstrom.

<sup>2</sup>A video of him giving instruction, "Batting with Ted Williams from 16mm film by R&M Video," is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EpMIVptg2Ls> (accessed 26 April, 2019).

## References

- Gulick, Walter. *Recovering Truths: A Comprehensive Anthology of Michael Polanyi's Writings*. <http://polanyisociety.org//PolanyiReader/PolanyiReader-PrelimComments6-1-16-adobe.pdf>
- Halberstam, David. 1989. *Summer of 49*. New York: Avon Books.
- Leavy, Jane. 2010. *The Last Boy: Mickey Mantle and the End of America's Childhood*. HarperCollins.

# ENGAGING A WIDER AUDIENCE: REFLECTIONS ON WALTER GULICK'S *RECOVERING TRUTHS: A COMPREHENSIVE ANTHOLOGY OF MICHAEL POLANYI'S WRITINGS*



Ellen W. Bernal

**Keywords:** Michael Polanyi, Walter Gulick, personal knowledge, teaching, animal minds, ecoliterature, ideology, cultural crisis

## ABSTRACT

*Michael Polanyi's thought still has an "outsider" status, despite the efforts of The Polanyi Society and extensive publications by other scholars in various fields. Gulick attributes this limited familiarity to Polanyi's complexity and atypical philosophical insights, his re-introduction of the personal in feats of knowing, and his call for significant intellectual reform. Gulick sets out to remedy the situation with his well written, comprehensive, and accessible anthology. Polanyi's thought can be applied to many of today's concerns, including human research, animal intelligence, ecoliterature, and socio-political problems. Gulick's book is an excellent resource for introducing students and others to the relevance of Polanyi's thought for today's issues.*

"Why hasn't Polanyi's thought attracted more attention?" "What makes Polanyi's distinctive stance so significant now?" (*Recovering Truths* Chapter I, 1-2; hereafter *RT*). Most Polanyi scholars have undoubtedly asked themselves the same questions. At a 2005 gathering, Gulick, Dale Cannon, Wally Mead, Jere Moorman and Phil Mullins

concluded that a jointly created Polanyi Reader would be a good approach to reaching a wider audience. *RT* is the welcome result.

As Gulick points out, Polanyi remains an outsider in philosophical circles. This is so despite the sustained conversation among members of the Polanyi Society with its twice-yearly conferences and publication of *Tradition and Discovery* (hereafter *TAD*). Gulick's comprehensive bibliography documents many books and articles that appear in other journals. Still, for colleges and universities, courses on Polanyi's writings are relatively rare. (The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is one of the exceptions).

Polanyi's thought often seems foreign to mainstream philosophers:

Professor Polanyi's ambition to let nothing go by default, to surround his argument with embroidery, not of qualification but of elaboration, and to follow his theme into every variation that suggests itself, makes the book like a jungle through which the reader must hack his way (Oakeshott 1958, 77-80).

From the standpoint of the analytic tradition, Polanyi's philosophy appears rooted in continental thought. Also, Polanyi's "intellectual reform" is even more radical than the interests of "applied philosophy" in pursuits such as bioethics, environmental ethics and gender studies (*RTI*, 4).

Polanyi's work is also atypical because it strives to recover traditional virtues and faith in human knowing, and at the same time affirms the insights and methods of the sciences. This characteristic might create the impression of a Polanyian link to political action groups or even religion, which unfortunately are often suspect.

Gulick's volume is an outstanding contribution to a further understanding of the complexities of Polanyi's thought. The tone is appealing, even welcoming. In many anthologies, the editor's practice is to offer only brief introductions and transitional remarks followed by selections from primary sources. Gulick orients the reader with a comprehensive Introduction, then guidance for each subsequent chapter. There are "warnings" to the reader when one of Polanyi's ideas might lead to mistaken assumptions. For example, the reader is guided to understand that "tacit" knowing is not equivalent to "the unconscious" (II, 6). In a later chapter, Gulick explains a controversy that comes about because of Polanyi's apparent shift from a primary concern with ontology, to a focus on epistemology (V, 9).

The book offers persuasion rather than critical analysis. Gulick welcomes the reader to the study of Polanyi: "you are cordially invited to join this survey of the riches to be mined from the broad spreading veins of his interests. There is much to learn from Michael Polanyi" (I, 3). The approachable style echoes the "vulnerable yet invitational and passionate quality" of Polanyi's own voice (I, 8). The excerpts and longer

quotations are drawn from *Personal Knowledge* (hereafter *PK*) and from a wide range of Polanyi's other works. *RT* concludes with a useful glossary of Polanyi's distinctive language and a bibliography of works by and about Polanyi.

The arrangement of chapters is generally consistent with the order of *PK*, but the content is presented to the reader in a more accessible fashion. Chapter I engages the reader's curiosity by posing wide-ranging questions and highlighting where they will be addressed later on. "How did ideas prevalent in the 'civilized' West lead to totalitarian governments and the unprecedented destruction of World Wars I and II" will be discussed in IV, Section B. Discussion of Polanyi's "coherent philosophical vision that acknowledges the insights of neuroscience and the biological importance of evolution and embodiment yet also affirms freedom, moral responsibility, and meaning" will be found in II A, C; III C; V, C. There is also a helpful distinction, first brought out by Dale Cannon, between Polanyi's *post-critical stance* and the pre-modern, modern, and post-modern styles of thought (*RTI*, 10-13).

*RT* creates linkages between Polanyi's personal experiences and his philosophy. Polanyi was born into a highly educated family in Budapest. He entered into a successful scientific career, but a 1935 conversation with Bukharin in Moscow led him to question the Soviet ideology which placed scientific discovery completely in the service of explicit Five-Year plans. Polanyi feared that the exclusive focus on technology and societal benefit would destroy the process of free inquiry by virtue of which he held that scientific advances occur; and this in turn led him to ponder implications for the humanities and social sciences (*RTI*, 7).

Gulick describes Polanyi's take on the advancement of science. The individual scientist perceives a problem worth studying and integrates clues to new insights, which are then confirmed, modified or rejected by the larger scientific community.

Polanyi's assertion that tacit knowing operates within all fields of human achievement is explored in Chapter II, "Varieties of Human Knowing: A Truer Understanding." "Knowledge, like perception, arises through personal acts of integration" from tacitly known clues to a newly appreciated comprehensive vision" (II, 3). Judgments are not infallible, nevertheless they are trustworthy when they are affirmed by responsible persons of good will in a free society. Social and professional traditions allow others to affirm, deny, or modify the individual knower's findings. Polanyi avoids the pitfalls of subjectivism and fideism: knowing is a responsible act with universal intent; it requires an act of personal judgment, and not a mere reliance on received truth (*RTII*, 4-5). Gulick points out that Polanyi uses such scientific models as equilibrium and spontaneous order as *analogies* to the "fabric and functions" of a healthy society (see *RTIV*).

Our curiosity and intellectual passions are inborn, evolving from animals' abilities: *Trick-Learning* and *Sign-Learning* are based in motility and sentience, while *Latent*

*Learning* is an implicit act of intelligence that prefigures articulate problem-solving (*RTI*, 11-13).

Chapters III, IV and V explore *truer understandings* of science, society, and personhood. Chapter VI, “Polanyi’s Prescription for Transcending our Cultural Crisis,” offers a comprehensive summary as well as commentary on morality, myth, and religion.

In Chapter VI, Gulick expands on “Polanyi’s Prescription for Transcending our Cultural Crisis.” Here I believe that a more specific definition of “cultural crisis” would be helpful. We know that Polanyi himself described his project as the reform of the entire critical framework and its false picture of knowing that has led to mistaken assumptions throughout the sciences, humanities and arts. Polanyi saw that:

Our society was pervaded by the dissonance of an extreme critical lucidity and an intense moral conscience, and that this combination had generated both our tight-lipped modern revolutions and the tormented self-doubt of modern man (Polanyi 2009, 3-4).

Polanyi’s ambitious program of cultural reform would seem to require a comprehensive upgrade of society’s pervasive beliefs in objectivity and extreme doubt. No wonder that Polanyi’s thought has not been completely accepted! Is this the meaning of the “cultural crisis” discussed in Chapter VI?

On the other hand, “cultural crisis” might refer to a host of more specialized problems within Western thought, such as totalitarianism. We live in a free democracy, but concerning elements of a totalitarian structure are evident, such as extremist movements, ideologies that are competing and entrenched, cults, and mistrust of common discourse. The mass suicides of 1978 in Jonestown were the end product of a closed system that deliberately suppressed independent thought and civic virtues. Pervasive surveillance and mandatory “Learning Crews” for perceived transgressions forced individual compliance. Clever strategies to brush aside any negative press about Jones himself stabilized the myth of moral superiority (Guinn, 2017, 299-300 and 355-362).

Certainly there are many other political issues that could be explored from a Polyanian perspective: the current emphasis on power and nationalism, growing suspicion of the press and attempts to limit its proper role, extreme skepticism about science and dismissal of research that confirms climate change are just a few. There has been a deterioration of trust in social discourse. How can we “pursue ideals such as justice, truth, equality, fraternity and beauty once we are aware that they may be masks behind which other, darker motives lurk?” (*RTI*, 22).

There is an endless supply of research on humans and animals that would benefit from Polyanian insight. In a recent neurological study, several monkeys’ brains were linked with implanted electrodes connected to computers. In this set-up the animals could “cooperate” to achieve complex tasks in the hope of being rewarded. A



commentator noted, “What’s different here is that [the scientist] is able to demonstrate that more than a pair of brains can be yoked together” (Rao, quoted in Zimmer 2015). When I contacted study personnel with concerns about the suffering of the animals and the insignificance of this research—we already know that animals can cooperate—the reply was a boilerplate assurance of the researchers’ commitment to animal care. Human research is now turning to the development of patient-controlled prosthetic devices intended to help those with amputations or paralysis (Khatchadourian 2018).

While the research outcomes may prove helpful, their interpretation could mistakenly reinforce mechanistic views of human action and lead to reductionistic ideas of the mind. Polanyi would surely argue that the brain-computer interfaces are a new form of tool embodied by the research subjects and that they demonstrate levels of machine-like functions, not the “real” workings of thought or mind in firing neurons.

Another contemporary field, “Ecoliterature,” seeks to replace objectivist descriptions of nature with a more phenomenological viewpoint. The literature typically brings forward the personal interpretations of nature that are usually overlooked in scientific accounts (See Quammen 2001 and Rumsy 2001). When one group misunderstands another group’s perception of nature, there may be significant or even disastrous results. In 1845, Sir John Franklin’s expedition set out for the Arctic aboard HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror*. In 1846, the sea froze around his ships. Two years later, running out of food, the remaining crew set out on land but soon perished. The 1850’s saw the discovery of some of the crews’ remains. However, *Erebus* and *Terror* were not located until 2014 and 2016. The discoveries were made, of course, with the help of modern technology, but the Inuit stories gathered by Louis Kamookak were also essential. Since the Inuit tend to reckon position by wind direction instead of compass points, the search team had to relocate the search area (Watson 2017).

Recent naturalistic studies of ravens’ intelligence complement and extend Polanyi’s notions of animal learning. Evidence that the birds possess a “theory of mind” is supported by the ways they cache food. Individual ravens will make “false” caches or choose a more distant location if other ravens are nearby (Heinrich 1999, Chapter 22; hereafter *MR*). Ravens easily solve problems such as pulling up food suspended by a string (*MR*, 312). They also set for themselves increasingly difficult variations on hanging from branches and “fancy flying” (*MR*, 281-283, 289-291). Behaviorist frameworks do not support the investigation of an animal’s “world”: Heinrich’s initial attempts at publication met with great resistance (*MR*, 321-322). Polanyi might consider ravens’ play to be a precursor of artistic creation.

*RT* is a first-rate exploration of Polanyi’s thought that should be an excellent resource for Polanyi scholars and, one hopes, the wider community. Scholars and others who offer critiques of modernity will appreciate clarification of Polanyi’s complex vocabulary and argument (See the extensive list of publications in the Bibliography).

The anthology would also be useful in college and graduate level courses, perhaps as a companion to Polanyi's original works (See Cannon 1998 and Rutledge 1998).

## REFERENCES

- Cannon, Dale, 1998. "A Polanyian Approach to Conceiving and Teaching Introduction to Philosophy." *Tradition and Discovery* 25/2: 11-18.
- Guinn, Jeff, 2017. *The Road to Jonestown: Jim Jones and Peoples' Temple*. New York, NY. Simon and Schuster.
- Heinrich, Bernd, 1999. *Mind of the Raven*. New York, NY. HarperCollins.
- Khatchadourian, Raffi, 2018. "Degrees of Freedom." *The New Yorker*. November 26, 56-71.
- Mullins, Phil, 2008. "On Reading Polanyi and Reading About Polanyi's Philosophical Perspective: Notes on Secondary Sources." *The Political Science Reviewer* 37/1:158-240.
- Oakeshott, Michael, 1958. "The Human Coefficient." *Encounter* 11/3. (As cited in Mullins 2008, 159).
- Polanyi, Michael, 1962. *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*. Revised edition. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2009. *The Tacit Dimension*. With a new forward by Amartya Sen. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. (Originally published by Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966 and in an Anchor paperback, 1967.)
- Quammen, David, 2001. *The Boilerplate Rhino: Nature in the Eye of the Beholder*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Rumsey, Alan and James Weiner, eds., *Emplaced Myth: Space, Narrative, and Knowledge in Aboriginal Australia and Papua New Guinea*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Rutledge, David, 1998. "Beyond Logic and Beneath Will—Teaching in a Polanyian Spirit." *Tradition and Discovery* 25/2: 20-29.
- Watson, Paul, 2017. *Ice Ghosts: The Epic Hunt for the Lost Franklin Expedition*. New York, New York: W. W. Norton.
- Zimmer, Carl, 2015. "Putting Their Heads Together." *New York Times*. July 14, Section D, 4.

# WALTER GULICK'S RECOVERING TRUTHS: A COMPREHENSIVE ANTHOLOGY OF MICHAEL POLANYI'S WRITINGS



Kriszta Sajber

**Keywords:** Walter Gulick, Recovering Truths, tacit dimension, inarticulate intelligence, post-critical philosophy, Michael Polanyi

## ABSTRACT

*This well-organized collection offers a blueprint for tracing continuity in Polanyi's lifelong intellectual output. Gulick's Recovering Truths: A Comprehensive Anthology of Michael Polanyi's Writings makes it possible for anyone interested in Polanyi's writings to explore the overall philosophical stance from which Polanyi's thought originates. In addition to key texts from Polanyi's oeuvre, the volume introduces the reader to the method by which Polanyi's philosophy transcends disciplinary preoccupations and transforms the post-Cartesian intellectual terrain through the conceptual tools of a post-critical philosophy.*

The idea of compiling a reader of Michael Polanyi's works was born among members of the Polanyi Circle contemplating "how better to awaken people to the ongoing significance of Michael Polanyi's thought" (Preface, 1).<sup>1</sup> This is not to deny that Michael Polanyi's ideas continue to influence a large number of academic fields. The reader contains text selections in most of these areas: human knowledge, scientific discovery, social and economic thought, the structure of reality, and post-critical philosophy. In these, the reader will find a handy resource for locating some of the ideas for which Polanyi remains of interest in a variety of scholarly circles: epistemology and the philosophy of embodiment, philosophy and sociology of science, organizational management, economic theory, democratic theory, religious studies, literary criticism

and a wide variety of the humanities. Given this range of influence, this volume is without a doubt a welcome addition to scholarship on Polanyian thought.

Since primers are often consulted as compilations of the most influential texts of a thinker, those interested in *Recovering Truths* may reach for it at first with the intention of studying merely one or two facets of Polanyi's versatile philosophy. Before long, however, they will discover a life-long project far from fragmentary, a discovery made possible by the way in which Gulick juxtaposes his selection of Polanyi's texts. The fact that Polanyi wrote

about savings and investment, the anthropology of preliterate people, the role of authority in society, visionary poetry, science in contrast to technology, learning theory, patents, mythology, nihilism, evolutionary theory, the Hungarian revolution, metaphor, causal explanation, illusion in painting, totalitarianism, probability, the role of faith and passion in intellectual life, creativity and discovery (Why Read Michael Polanyi, 4),

makes an anthology like *Recovering Truths* necessary, yet close to impossible to assemble. Gulick approached his editorial task and the difficulties inherent in choosing selections from the kaleidoscopic diversity of topics featured in Polanyi's works through a method that is itself uniquely Polanyian. Basing himself on the variety of topics as subsidiaries upon which to rely for understanding what is of focal significance, he selected a collection that exposes the most powerfully cohesive thread connecting Michael Polanyi's writings.

The distinctiveness of Polanyi's philosophy, according to Gulick, may be attributed to the fact that "his thought as a whole is derived from his passion to combat breakdowns in the functioning of Western society in the twentieth century" (Why Read Michael Polanyi, 9). Polanyi relied on a multiplicity of sources in search of a comprehensive methodological and philosophical vision, one that is capable of overcoming breakdowns that atomize and divide us, whether in the form of scholarly compartmentalization or personal detachment. This is why "no one of Polanyi's works quite manages to illuminate all the facets of his synoptic vision," and this is why an anthology is needed to provide a "comprehensive yet also systematic insight into his philosophy" (Why Read Michael Polanyi, 5).

Continuity thus becomes the leitmotif of *Recovering Truths* and for the editorial commentary by which text selections from Polanyi's work are annotated. The focus on consistency in the Polanyian *oeuvre* serves not only as the selective principle for the presentation of Polanyi's work, but as the editor's primary means of offering opportunities to read Polanyi unbroken and in one piece—in a wholesomeness composed, strangely enough, from slices cut from his writings. Though this may strike one as

paradoxical, that isolated sections from Michael Polanyi's corpus of work have made a significant influence in a number of academic disciplines is precisely the problem this Polanyi anthology seeks to alleviate. As Gulick writes: "[Polanyi's work] is still referred to in academic circles with some frequency, but it is rarely fully engaged." As such, it merely "hovers at the margins of cultural consciousness today," even though "only a little study of his ideas reveals...their potential to illuminate and perhaps even to heal many of the problems at the center of contemporary concern" (Why Read Michael Polanyi, 1). For as long as Polanyi's work is engaged in this piecemeal fashion, Gulick contends, the internal logic at work in the engagement of what are frequently unconnected Polanyian subjects of investigation is lost from view. *Recovering Truths* thus offers a portrait of an author that goes beyond being merely of Polanyi, and succeeds at being Polanyian through and through. Gulick's editorial work uncovers continuity in Polanyi's lifelong intellectual output and presents it in an expository format perfectly suitable to and worthy of the sources upon which he draws. Content and method in this way align into a fortuitous relationship in support of illuminating Polanyi's work and its original significance.

It is customary for book reviews to summarize the argument that serves as the connecting thread of a publication. This, however, is difficult in the case of an anthology, since the specific strength of this genre lies in the principles by which selections are chosen for inclusion in the compendium. Nevertheless, *Recovering Truths* does present its topic as a specific progression of ideas: the arrangement of Polanyi's thought clearly fits an expository pattern. A presentation of the comprehensive philosophy of Michael Polanyi begins in Chapter II, which contains an overview of Polanyi's views on human knowledge, including his ideas about the tacit dimension. Subsequently, the second set of selections in Chapter III describes heuristic acts that connect and build on the sense-making activity of perception and individuated thought through participation in social formations directed at intellectual discovery.

Following the chapter about scientific activity and the possibilities of a collective understanding and discovery of truth, Chapter IV details Polanyi's engagement with the historic and political realities of his time and collects his ideas concerning politics, society and economics. The fourth compilation of quotes and crucial concepts, contained in Chapter V, lays out Polanyi's thoughts on truth and reality, whereas Chapter VI, the final selection, composes an ode to commitment, highlighting the centrality of personal meaning and religion in Polanyi's own intellectual commitments. These chapters are supplemented by a glossary of key Polanyian concepts as well as an introduction, Chapter I of the volume, which serves two functions. An original essay by the editor, the introduction defends the ongoing relevance of studying Polanyi's thought restored to its comprehensive systematicity. At the same time, it also provides a bibliographic sketch of Polanyi's eventful life. Especially valuable in this introductory chapter is the assessment of Polanyi's impact on a number of 20th century thinkers

(Catherine Z. Elgin, Marjorie Grene, William Poteat, Mark Johnson, Andy Clark, Harry Collins, and Charles Taylor), as well as the concise yet thorough survey of the manifold intellectual influences likely responsible for the accumulation of Polanyi's unique set of intellectual concerns and ideas.

Each of the chapters is organized in a similar fashion: subsequent to the author's expert introduction of crucial themes, which often contain brief but informative ways to relate Polanyi's ideas within a given disciplinary context, the topography of Polanyi's ideas is assembled from a collection of short quotations on each chapter's topic. This composition of a landscape of ideas is then carefully enhanced through "summary selections:" longer passages carefully chosen for in-depth study, with editorial remarks to guide their reading. Further examination of key concepts may be made with the help of the Glossary, which focuses on key concepts of Polanyian thought.

*Recovering Truths* engages with theories of personal knowledge both at the outset and in its conclusion: the systematic and comprehensive picture presented in the book is of a humanist thinker focused on personal forms of meaning and understanding. Fully supported, as well, is an interpretation of Polanyi's works as a philosophy of the post-critical stance, grounded in an ontology of commitment. Gulick's selections trace the conditions of possibility for human understanding throughout the chapters, culminating in Polanyi's reckoning with the ultimate question of what provides systematicity for his own thought. The idea of a post-critical philosophy—Polanyi's most comprehensive and distinctive subject matter according to the editor of the volume as well as the author of this review—receives full treatment only in this final chapter of the selections. The framework it provides for interpreting Polanyi's writings as one unitary intellectual project is nevertheless present as a point of reference in the editor's commentary on the text selections in all of the preceding chapters.

It is important to highlight the fact that selections taken from *Personal Knowledge* (1958)—Polanyi's *magnum opus*, as Gulick regularly refers to it—are in a dominant majority in the quotes and passages chosen for adoption to the reader, at least in the chapters that reflect on the human potential for knowing, believing and understanding. Polanyi's similarly significant works are also quoted, though far less frequently, despite the fact that Polanyi implemented many important refinements to the role played by the tacit dimension during his continued engagement with the topic during the decade following the publication of *Personal Knowledge*. For this reason, readers who find the *Tacit Dimension* (1966) or of *Knowing and Being* (1969)—shorter volumes written after *Personal Knowledge*—similarly if not more definitive of Polanyi's philosophy may be disappointed by the anthology's fidelity to Polanyi's thought in the form in which it was stated in 1958. As far as a unified theory of embodied consciousness and tacit knowledge is concerned, Polanyi's more nuanced statements from his later publications are substituted, for the most part, for writings reflecting an earlier stage of Polanyi's thinking.

There can be no doubt that *Personal Knowledge* is the most systematic exposition of Polanyi's ideas, and therefore there are good reasons to use it as the main pillar of a Polanyi reader. One disadvantage of this approach, however, is that Polanyi relies on developmental as well as intrinsic hierarchies among the various components of the work of the intellect for the systematic exposition of his philosophy in *Personal Knowledge*, which leads him to present human understanding in a normative framework, with implications that certain achievements of the human intellect are inherently superior to others.<sup>2</sup> One might hold that Polanyi's signature sensitivity for the potential inherent in human thought to transcend rigid boundaries imposed on its creativity is crucially more Polanyian than the mold imposed on the same ideas by his method of presentation in *Personal Knowledge*. The gestalt of the background/foreground structure through which human perception is animated, the connectivity imposed by the to-from structure on the components of several varieties of human understanding, or the type of explicatory work involved in indwelling or in overcoming detachment through fidelity and commitment all stress that human modes of knowledge, even when they impose categories for conceptualization, do so without particular regard for instituting intellectual hierarchies. Polanyi's original insights about the constituent structures from which a variety of forms of human understanding emerge are all too often given rankings in *Recovering Truths*. An examination of their dynamic interaction within a tacit dimension may be unduly foreclosed in this way. Examples of these, in my opinion, are the presentation of degrees and levels of personhood in Chapter V (Recovering a Truer Understanding of Reality, Personhood, and Meaning, 4) or in the hierarchy of forms of knowledge detailed in Chapter II.<sup>3</sup>

Chapter II and its discussion of a hierarchy of modes of knowing expressly demonstrates the limitations imposed on the task of providing a systematic overview of Polanyi's philosophy through the comprehensive structure of *Personal Knowledge*. This chapter contains what is perhaps the most surprising choice of a passage for inclusion in the collection, as well as what may be the greatest discovery of a rare gem of a text in the entire volume. The subject matter of the former is inarticulate intelligence observable in animals and children. In the text included in *Recovering Truths*, Polanyi, relying on the work of B. F. Skinner, Pavlov, Köhler and Piaget, ranks three ways of learning (trick, sign, and latent) in the order of the degree to which essential features of problem-solving are apparent in them, (Varieties of Human Knowing, 11-15). On the one hand, the passage is abridged in a way that strips it from conclusions Polanyi himself drew from his discussion of inarticulate intelligence. Perhaps even more importantly, the anthropocentrism of this unusually lengthy selection, and of the times during which it had been written, is on plain view on these pages. During the past two decades, animal scientists offered convincing evidence to disprove a number of the claims that anchor Polanyi's argument in this passage, for example that "animals learn only when impelled by desire or fear" (Varieties of Human Knowing, 13), or that

animals are incapable of language use.<sup>4</sup> To untangle the problem of whether one might find better philosophical basis in Polanyi's later writings on tacit knowledge for conceptualizing the type of things human beings understand by virtue of their pre-linguistic capacities would be beyond the scope of this review to settle. Viewed through the lens of the textual selections alone, however, Polanyi's ideas appear rigid and inflexible in their pronouncements. One may consider this particular choice of a text, in conjunction with the omission of Polanyi's own conflicting reflections on the topic,<sup>5</sup> a missed opportunity to present Polanyi as a brilliant but sometimes enigmatic thinker whose intricate ideas are compelling at times precisely because of the elaborate interpretative challenges they pose.

At the same time, in the same chapter the reader will be delighted to discover an essay reprinted almost in its entirety from *Man and the Science of Man* (1968), a book scarcely available despite its importance for exploring Polanyi's unique philosophy of the body. In "*The Body-Mind Relation*" (1965), an essay composed relatively late during Polanyi's career, we see Polanyi at the height of his finesse to draw on ideas, scientific experiments, the laws of physics and select works of literature—sources of intellectual inspiration vast and varied beyond the imagination. Drawing on his evolving thought on tacit knowledge, Polanyi proposes an intriguing theory in this essay, according to which the human body serves as the subsidiary term of the from-to structure of tacit knowing (*Varieties of Human Knowing*, 29). He then goes on to define consciousness itself as the integration of body and mind arranged in such a way that the particulars contributed by the body are organized in a subsidiary manner to the centrality of conscious acts (*Varieties of Human Knowing*, 31). Readers of *Tacit Knowledge* will find this intricately argued and thought-provoking text an important supplement to Polanyi's contributions to the philosophy of embodiment unavailable, for the most part, in works of Polanyi currently in circulation.

All in all, the word that describes Walter Gulick's *Recovering Truths* in Hungarian, Michael Polanyi's original language, is *hiánypótló*: a remedy for something thus far sorely missing. An adjective much in vogue in post-Communist Hungary, where there are ample opportunities to identify items rectifying necessities only recently discovered as existing, *hiánypótló* literally means something that fills in a gap suddenly exposed, a substitute that resolves a lack or need through bridging the distance opened up by absence. In the same manner as the logic of the Hungarian idiom indicates, *Recovering Truths* also attends to a problem that its reader may not have spotted prior to reading it. Despite eight volumes conveniently available in English of Michael Polanyi's writings, and almost twice as many book-length interpretations of his philosophy, a comprehensive selection of Michael Polanyi's thought stated in the author's own words has been regretfully lacking.

Nothing can facilitate more the understanding of a thinker of Polanyi's multitudinous talents than a selection made of his ideas with a view toward discerning the overall



coherence and systematicity definitive of Polanyi's academic preoccupations as a whole. Polanyi's thought extends to a bewildering array of topics, as those already familiar with Polanyi's prolific intellectual output know, and the compilation of a reader that can provide for such thus-far unrecognized need is not made any easier by this fact. Gulick's editorial work on this volume makes it possible for anyone interested in Polanyi's writings to explore the overall philosophical stance from which Polanyi's analyses originate. Through exploring *Recovering Truths*, the reader is gradually introduced to the method by which Polanyi's philosophy transcends disciplinary preoccupations in an attempt to restore the post-Cartesian intellectual terrain to the rich conceptual landscape of a post-critical philosophy. As Gulick correctly promises to his readers, only in view of having followed Polanyi beyond the cracks and the divisions in our knowledge of ourselves and the world can we see the significance of Polanyi's thought truly emerge and made ready for appreciation.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Given how the document is paginated, citations will be given by chapter title and page number.

<sup>2</sup>Much depends on one's interpretation of the normative implications clearly indicated throughout *Personal Knowledge* for appreciating this concern. Sometimes Polanyi's text reads as if the hierarchy is only of different expressions of the work of human intellect, while in other instances the phrasing implies that the ranking is applied to intellectual achievements.

<sup>3</sup>Gulick is most certainly justified to emphasize hierarchies of reality in Chapter V. Polanyi's hierarchical view of reality provides quintessential metaphysical grounding for his thought; however, a commitment to hierarchies on the ontological level need not imply that cognitive and pre-cognitive achievements are themselves hierarchically ordered.

<sup>4</sup>Frans de Waals' *Are We Smart Enough to Realize How Smart Animals Are?* (2016) provides excellent introduction to the extent to which anthropocentrism distorted and continues to distort our understanding of animal science and contains an extensive bibliography of the scientific literature. De Waals' discussion of "anthropodenial" is especially useful for explaining the biases of the animal science upon which Polanyi relied.

<sup>5</sup>Polanyi's own remarks, not included in *Recovering Truths*, contend that an enormous "gap" separates the intelligence of infants and animals from "the intellectual superiority of man" (see *PK*, 71).

## REFERENCES

- De Waal, Frans. 2016. *Are We Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals Are?* New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Gulick, Walter (ed). 2012. *Recovering Truths: A Comprehensive Anthology of Michael Polanyi's Writings*, digital publication (Google Docs).
- Polanyi, Michael. 1969. *Knowing and Being*. Marjorie Grene (ed). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- \_\_\_\_\_. 1958. *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1968 "The Body-Mind Relation" (1965) in Coulson, William R. and Carl R. Rogers (eds). *Man and the Science of Man*. Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1966. *The Tacit Dimension*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.

# COVERING THE RECOVERING



Walter Gulick

**Keywords:** Michael Polanyi, tacit skills, baseball hitting, personal knowing, cultural crisis, animal cognition, inarticulate learning, epistemic hierarchies

## ABSTRACT

*In this brief essay, I respond to three generous reviews of my annotated anthology of Michael Polanyi's comprehensive thought. Where my meaning or Polanyi's thought seems unclear or controversial, I offer my rationale for my usage or interpretations.*

I am grateful to the three persons who thoughtfully reviewed *Recovering Truths: A Comprehensive Anthology of Michael Polanyi's Writings*, more commonly called the Polanyi Reader. As particularly Ellen Bernal noted, the book was in its conception a community effort, and the reviewers have effectively joined that community, each offering a distinctive perspective on the volume. My most basic aim in pulling together and interpreting diverse selections from the corpus of Polanyi's writings was to provide a comprehensive introduction to the range of his thought in his own words, providing explanation and clarification insofar as that seemed helpful. It is gratifying to find out that in general each reviewer found *Recovering Truths* to have fulfilled that goal successfully.

Tex Sample approaches the Polanyi Reader as a resource, not as a critic. His article augments Polanyi's example of tacit, skillful accomplishment. Polanyi's conceptual framework illuminating such examples as using a probe, playing the piano, and tool use in general, is applied by Sample to that most American sport, baseball. Sample especially makes use of terminology defined in the Glossary to offer a Polyanian interpretation of the difference between Ted Williams and Mickey Mantle as great hitters. His analysis of the skill employed in batting touches home for me in two senses. My boyhood hero

was Ted Williams, not too surprising for a kid raised in the Boston suburbs who still remembers the 1947 Red Sox lineup. However, my idolizing of Williams was in part a compensatory commitment, for I was a terrible hitter, perhaps to be expected for a kid handicapped by rather severe asthma. I lacked Sample's appreciation for great skill wherever it was manifest, for I could only hope that Mantle, a member of those hated Yankees, would flounder and fail.

Sample provides an exemplary Polanyian analysis of how the two players approached the skillful practice of hitting a baseball. Williams augmented his embodied skill with an indwelt explicit understanding of the various facets of batting successfully. For Mantle, in contrast, hitting well was a matter of uncritical second nature, of relying on unspecifiable muscle memory. I find Sample's explanation convincing regarding the cause for Mantle batting zero for twenty-eight after hearing what Williams had to say about hitting. Mantle began to attend to the various subsidiaries Williams discussed that contribute to excellence in hitting, and Mantle thereby lost his total focus on the flight of the baseball that is so crucial to hitting it. Just as surely as the concert pianist loses control of the overall meaning of his or her performance by thinking about finger placement, so attention to batting stance or batting grip will impede success in hitting the ball. Sample's description of how the indwelt, embodied personal pole of batting is related to the universal pole of team-wide success in baseball usefully extends Polanyi's more typical explication of the personal-universal relation in intellectual terms, as for instance in solving a problem and scientific discovery.

I thank Ellen Bernal for her summary of the Polanyi Reader, a summary that is both accurate and concise. She correctly notes that for the most part I offer a sympathetic portrayal of Polanyi's thought. This is no arbitrary stance, for in fact I am deeply influenced by Polanyi and believe others would benefit as I do from his insights if they are made accessible.

Bernal suggests that one aspect of Polanyi's thought I did not make sufficiently clear is his reference to the "cultural crisis" of modern thought. She correctly intuits that moral inversion (referred to without being explicitly named in the quotation she uses from *Tacit Dimension*), inappropriate usage of Cartesian doubt and objectivity as intellectual standards in many disciplines, and totalitarianism are implicated in the "cultural crisis," but she wonders how these facets are linked together.

I take it that the background concern motivating Polanyi's philosophy is seeking an explanation for and then a solution to the tragic disasters of the twentieth century: the world wars, the depression, the rise of totalitarian governments. He sees a misunderstanding and misapplication of science as a fundamental causal agent producing these tragic events that incidentally led to the loss of many of his family members in the holocaust. The Cartesian idealization of objectivity and certainty influenced positivism, scientism, and social thought in the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. It also led to abandonment of religious, moral, and traditional

restraints on governance and behavior. Their values were seen as merely subjective. Consequently, totalitarianism in politics was unleashed and nihilism in personal belief flourished. In *The Contempt of Freedom* and other early non-scientific writings, Polanyi claims the resulting totalitarian and objectivist idealism created a “cultural crisis” that permitted or even encouraged the century’s disasters. In place of tyranny in governance, he argues for a reconstituted liberalism in which what he terms public liberty attuned to transcendent values works toward the common good. Social arrangements making for public welfare are sustained only if backed by philosophically inspired commitment that acknowledges personal responsibility. Describing how all knowing is personal is Polanyi’s key solution for ensuring that the century’s disasters not be repeated. He shows how *personal knowing* is both epistemically true and socially beneficial, in contrast to objective determinism (Marx and Engels) or emotional extremism unconstrained by ethics (Stalin, Hitler).

Several questions raised by Kriszta Sajber in her gracious review deserve a response with explanation. She is concerned that *Recovering Truths* relies so much on the material from *Personal Knowledge* that later developments in Polanyi’s thought are given insufficient attention. I see *PK* as a brilliant but dense work that needs exposition and explanation more than any other of Polanyi’s writings. It contains in at least nascent form most of the core concepts he develops further in later writings plus summaries of many of his earlier insights. No other book he wrote is as comprehensive, systematic, and daring as *PK* (and Sajber seems to grant this). I think it important to focus attention on this central work, believing my selections afford readers access to his most carefully considered and sometimes truly inspired phrasings.

Sajber directs her particular concern to Polanyi’s seemingly triumphalist hierarchical epistemology in which human knowing is superior to the cognition of any other animal. Insofar as occasionally Polanyi seems to suggest that evolution almost purposefully leads to human sovereignty, she is surely right to complain. She is also correct in objecting to a literal reading of Polanyi’s claim that “animals only learn when impelled by desire or fear” (see *Varieties of Human Knowing*, 12). A more liberal interpretation of “desire,” though, might connect “desire” with Polanyi’s claim that “we meet a general alertness of animals, not directed toward any specific satisfaction, but merely exploring what is there” (*PK* 132)—a desire to learn and know.

The reference to learning and knowing leads to subject matter where Sajber and I may have genuinely different understandings. She objects to Polanyi’s view that “animals are incapable of language use” and states that in the past two decades animal scientists have offered “convincing evidence to disprove” this. Setting aside the notion of being “incapable,” which I don’t think comes up in Polanyi’s discussion, he does claim that no other animal makes use of language. While it is certainly true that some species of non-human animals have rich means of communication and may have cognitive and perceptual abilities surpassing human capabilities, I don’t know of any

animal scientist who would claim any other species make use of language. Frans de Waal, to whom Sajber refers as supporting animals' linguistic capability, writes that "I consider us the only linguistic species" (De Waal 2017, 106). Languages have such characteristics as vocabularies that can be used in many ways, grammars that allow words to be combined into more complex meanings than individual words allow, and displacement, that is, reference to ideas and objects not immediately in front of one. Some species have some aspects of language like displacement, but no non-human species have all the qualities of language that have permitted humans to visit the moon, write Shakespearean dramas, or understand evolution.

I share Sajber's appreciation of animal intelligence and implied concern over mistreatment of animals. But I also think Polanyi's discussion of animals' capacity for trick, sign, and latent learning—the section in the Polanyi Reader that Sajber found so surprising—is quite brilliant and stands up well to current research. Trick learning allows for tool use, intention, and cleverness among animals. Ravens' competence in contriving solutions to problems, as mentioned by Bernal, is an example of trick learning. Sign learning is the basis for animals understanding their environment and being at home in their niche—and also the basis for animal communication. Latent learning is about the ability of animals to remember their experience and reorganize key insights for future use. We humans depend on these gifts of evolution; jointly they provide for understanding reality. De Waal denies that language adequately captures a person's intentions, feelings, fears, yearnings, etc. He notes that "even though language assists human thinking by providing categories and concepts, it is not the stuff of thought. We don't actually need language in order to think" (De Waal 2017, 102). Polanyi shares this view. The three types of inarticulate learning he posits provide us with tacit knowing, that is, the irreplaceable cognitive skills and understanding that underlie all linguistic thought. We know more than we can say.

Sajber is uneasy with the hierarchical nature of cognition and ontology in Polanyi's thought. It should be remembered, however, that Polanyi sets his thought within an evolutionary framework in Part IV of PK. This necessarily implies continuity with other animals in his theories of knowing and reality. Within the spectrum of types of cognition, however, new developments *emerge*. Each new level is not reducible to the parts from which it arises. The symbolic nature of linguistic meaning operates according to different rules than sign meaning. Hierarchy exists within overall continuity.

I wish again to thank the three generous reviewers of *Uncovering Truths*, and I hope the work will continue to be useful to those seeking a grasp of Polanyi's important philosophical thought.

## REFERENCES

deWaal, Frans. 2017. *Are We Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals Are?* New York: W.W. Norton, Co..

# MICHAEL POLANYI AND EARLY NEOLIBERALISM



**Martin Beddeleem**

**Keywords:** Friedrich Hayek, Louis Rougier, Michael Polanyi, Mont-Pèlerin Society, neoliberalism, planning, Walter Lippmann

## ABSTRACT<sup>1</sup>

*Between the late 1930s and the 1950s, Michael Polanyi came in close contact with a diverse cast of intellectuals seeking a renewal of the liberal doctrine. The elaboration of this “neoliberalism” happened through a transnational collaboration between economists, philosophers, and social theorists, united in their rejection of central planning. Defining a common agenda for this “early neoliberalism” offered an opportunity to discard the old laissez-faire doctrine and restore a supervisory role of the state. Ultimately, post-war dissensions regarding the direction of these efforts led Polanyi away from the neoliberal core.*

Between the publication of his pamphlet on the failures of economic planning in the Soviet Union in 1936 (*CF*, 61-95) and that of *The Logic of Liberty* in 1951, Michael Polanyi progressively lost interest in chemistry and started to investigate the political and sociological conditions necessary to scientific freedom and the pursuit of truth. During that time, he became involved with a group of scholars who, equally, perceived the democratic collapse of Europe as a wake-up call for a restatement of its liberal tradition. Whereas the values of individual dignity and social progress that liberalism carried were needed then more than ever, they agreed that the *method* to achieve these ideals had become obsolete. Therefore, they focused their efforts on revamping a *science of liberalism*, which could answer the scientific claims of plannism and totalitarian ideologies.

For two decades, Michael Polanyi took part in the inception and the consolidation of “early neoliberalism” (Schulz-Forberg 2018; Beddeleem 2019), a period that predates the later development of neoliberalism from the 1960s onwards. Early neoliberalism owed its scientific imagination to the strong contingent of philosophers of science who participated in its elaboration. Along with Polanyi, other early neoliberals such as Ludwig von Mises, Karl Popper, Friedrich Hayek, Alfred Schutz, and Wilhelm Röpke were all refugees and exiles from Germany, Austria or Hungary, who were immersed in the intellectual and political turmoil of the interwar period. Their formative political experiences in Central Europe durably shaped their views regarding the relationship between political institutions, social progress, and the status of science. In many ways, the preoccupation of early neoliberals with the epistemological situation of science and truth in society, as well as their criticism of unfettered markets and endorsement of state-sponsored social remedies, set them apart from later neoliberals and conservatives in the vein of Milton Friedman who viewed markets and state as incompatible and promoted a positivist epistemology (cf. Burgin 2012, 146-151).

Polanyi attended the two seminal meetings of the nascent neoliberal movement, which took place just before and after the Second World War, the Walter-Lippmann Colloquium in Paris in 1938, and the inauguration of the Mont-Pèlerin Society in Switzerland in 1947. At that time, the agenda of early neoliberalism shared many common grounds with Keynesian economics and middle-of-the-road interventionism; it opposed *laissez-faire* and central economic planning, and promoted a larger role for the state in tackling the social question and establishing a legal framework for a market economy (*FEFT*, ix-x). More importantly, it put the question of knowledge—its tacit and dispersed nature, its relation to belief and truth—at the very core of its institutional thinking. For early neoliberals, what we could do depended on what we could know.

Retracing Michael Polanyi’s orbiting course in and around the neoliberal core, we will focus on his engagement with other early neoliberals. In the first part, we will reconstruct the elaboration of his own liberalism as a critique of scientific and economic planning. Then, we will show that early neoliberalism consolidated itself around their shared critique of the *scientific* claims of collectivism. During the Second World War, Polanyi and other early neoliberals continued to work toward a larger scientific rebuilding of liberalism through fighting common enemies such as the British group *Tots and Quots* and the German Sociologist Karl Mannheim. Finally, Polanyi’s progressive distance from the Mont-Pèlerin Society illustrated the failure of the early neoliberal movement to remain faithful to its inaugural commitments.

## Liberal Failures

It was Michael Polanyi’s visit to the Soviet Union in 1935 that prompted his deeper involvement in the political and economic debates of his times in England. Polanyi met



there with Nikolai Bukharin, who admitted that he saw no contradiction between a comprehensive planning of science and a limited academic freedom; it was to be regarded as “a conscious confirmation of the pre-existing harmony of scientific and social aims” (*CF*, 4).<sup>2</sup> Gathering strength during that period, Lysenkoism epitomized this displacement of truth for propaganda’s sake, and spurred Polanyi’s decision to write publicly about the nature of science and its relation to liberalism (Nye 2011, 210).

During the decade he spent in Berlin, Polanyi had set up a study group dealing with economic and social questions which brought natural scientists and economists together. Once in Manchester, he became a regular visitor at the Economics Department, where he befriended John Jewkes, who also became an ardent anti-planner and, later, a founding member of the Mont-Pèlerin Society (Scott and Moleski 2005, 158-60). Drawing from his many visits to the Soviet Union as a chemist, Polanyi contrasted the “vivid forms of social consciousness” he observed there, which were “invariably destructive,” with the opaque mechanism of a liberal economy in England, which citizens “fail to comprehend” (*CF*, 94). He became critical of the rise in public “fallacies” regarding economics, fallacies which were congenial to a quick rise in the “perplexity” of citizens of industrialized countries.<sup>3</sup> This widespread ignorance about how the economic system operated threatened to make the next century “a modern Dark Age in which the use of rational thought was lost” (in Scott and Moleski 2005, 177).

The therapy Polanyi prescribed to democracies was to foster “a popular understanding of economic matters” (Polanyi 1937b). He developed a film that would explain the workings of the economy to the lay audience. Through the semiotic properties of the motion picture, he hoped that “we should see our social life symbolically projected, happening before us on the screen on an artistic plane of its own, directly significant” (Polanyi 1936). Polanyi’s goal to “embed reliable knowledge of the economic mechanism into the general consciousness” (Scott and Moleski 2005, 162) entailed public intelligibility as the only way to appease the search for more direct and noxious remedies by the masses, and offset the appeal of central planning. Whereas a sense of the moral value of economic activity had been achieved in the Soviet Union through public emotion and propaganda, it ought to be elicited in liberal societies through reason and public education.

Like Polanyi, the Austrian economist Friedrich Hayek also sensed that the obscure workings of market economies demanded both explanation and passivity. The English elite’s infatuation with economic planning during the 1930s (cf. Ritschel 1997) had led him to consider epistemological and methodological questions in a new light. In 1937, Hayek hit upon the “problem of the division of knowledge” as “the really central problem of economics as a social science” (Hayek 1948 [1937], 50). A market-based society was not only superior because it allowed everyone to produce and consume at will, but also because it afforded the greatest scope to acquire, share, and use information.

Since no central control was scientifically possible, Hayek and Polanyi believed that “as in the case of science, the comprehensive view is not an essential view but a superficial view and an ignorant view” (CF, 52). The market itself acted as a method of discovery (Lavoie 1986). Since there was no given system of needs for the economy to fulfil, the market possessed a heuristic function, revealing the latent needs and desires of individuals (CF, 51). Both Hayek and Polanyi rested their case for the market economy on the superiority of the market to access these reservoirs of untapped knowledge, a tacit knowledge that could not be discovered by any other means than the independent initiative of the individual.

Oskar Jászi, a fellow Hungarian émigré, had sent a copy of Polanyi’s *USSR Economics* to the American publicist Walter Lippmann, who complimented Polanyi as an “exceptionally gifted observer” in his 1937 book *The Good Society* (Lippmann 2005 [1937], 78). At that time, Lippmann was corresponding with a wide network of dispersed liberals across the Atlantic, notably Friedrich Hayek and Lionel Robbins in England, Louis Rougier in France, and Wilhelm Röpke and Ludwig von Mises in Switzerland, advocating for a closer cooperation between “genuine” liberals (Burgin 2012, 65-7). The debacle of liberalism in the 1930s, they all reckoned, was the result of a series of intellectual errors, not the expression of its inevitable historical fate (Lippmann 2005, 207). In their works, they identified inconsistencies in the structure of liberal thought that contributed to bring on the disasters of the 20th century.

First, classical liberalism had become stultified and dogmatic, abandoning its commitment to reform and progress. Instead, it had arbitrarily separated society between the realm of law and the realm of the economy. This dichotomy had led to passivity instead of continuous adjustment and reform. Manchester Liberalism relied on a thoroughly obsolete economic science, one that tied up individual psychology (*homo economicus*), economic laws, and market institutions to a fixed human nature. Between *laissez-faire* liberalism and neoliberalism lay a crucial difference; the latter accepted that a market order, far from being natural, depended on constructed political and social institutions. Everywhere, the state had a “supervisory” role, in charge of drawing up and enforcing the rule of law.<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, through their criticism of central economic planning, early neoliberals hit upon the idea that economic activity was so complex that it remained ultimately unknowable as a whole; one could only design a “framework of institutions” through “legal planning” (Robbins 1937, 227). Planning in this sense, Hayek insisted, “means that the direction of production is brought about by the free combination of the knowledge of all participants with prices conveying to each the information which helps him to bring his action in relation to those of others” (Hayek 1997 [1939], 194). Early neoliberals shared this peculiar insight that social knowledge is tacitly embedded in traditions and customs of which we have but a limited awareness. They all pinned the

complexity of the social upon the inexplicit canvas interweaving our daily interactions, habits and practices, a wealth of tacit knowledge that the market artfully and efficiently coordinated. Complete planning, on the other hand, by bringing all the economic processes to the fore, failed to acknowledge the cognitive economy brought about by the division of labor (cf. Lippmann 2005, 29-33). Thus, the belief in scientific politics through an extension of government power betrayed an ignorance of the complexity of the social order and of the foolishness of “rational” interventions.

As a result, economic activity, like scientific activity, happened through “spontaneous,” “dynamic,” or “lateral” adjustments (Polanyi 1941, 435-438). This division between one disordered and arcane universe, and lawful, observable regularities constitutes a methodological trademark of early neoliberalism. It runs throughout the acknowledgement of tacit versus explicit knowledge, the signaling function of prices, and, crucially, the reciprocal bailiwicks of a “humble” economic science and limited the scope of possible political action.

Thirdly, a profound analogy existed between the methodological pursuit of truth and the adoption of a liberal constitution.<sup>5</sup> Polanyi, Hayek, and Lippmann proposed a stark distinction between science and technology—or pure science and applied science. The organization and results of scientific inquiry and of technological engineering modeled two very different modes of political interventions; the former was liberal in nature, as exhibited in the methodical self-organization of science, and the latter authoritarian, fashioned as the application of social technologies to a passive material (Lippmann 2005, 19-20; Polanyi 1941, 450).

Despite some important differences, Hayek, Rougier, Röpke, and Polanyi all traced the origin of the enthusiasm for planning within a perversion of the Western rationalist tradition, which Hayek came to name “the Abuse and Decline of Reason” (Hayek 2010), Louis Rougier the “*mystique libérale*” (Rougier 1938, 71ff), Wilhelm Röpke “scientism” (Röpke 1948 [1944], 43-78) and Polanyi “Continental anti-moralist theories” (Polanyi 1943, 372). In fact, the association between the worldview and methods of the engineers and the promotion of central planning—often attributed to “Saint-Simonism” or “French rationalism”—became a ubiquitous motif for these thinkers. According to them, liberalism rightly understood promised to restore the authority of the scientific method, not as a legitimation for intervention, but as a prophylactic against a hubristic belief in its world-shaping powers.

Finally, early neoliberals defended their brand of liberalism for the same moral motives; to protect the dynamism of free thought and curiosity. Science and liberalism were first and foremost *methodical*, and not a permanent body of ideals and principles which commanded authority. They both guaranteed a well-ordered discovery of the unknown and guided society’s adaptation to new economic and cultural forms. Herein, the market served not only economic functions, but was endowed with the role of

an epistemological guardian of a free society. As such, a liberal order was analogous to a dynamic “society of explorers” (Polanyi 1962). Early neoliberals all believed this posture defined the outlook of Western civilization and the circumstances of its progress that were negated by totalitarian ideologies. Reclaiming the mantle of science from socialist or totalitarian advocates supported the larger claim of the moral superiority of liberalism to achieve a scientific order, one that embraced a new scientific spirit of uncertainty, indeterminism, and empirical testing.

### Common Enemies

A milestone in the history of neoliberalism, the Walter-Lippmann Colloquium was convened by the French philosopher of science Louis Rougier in August 1938. Polanyi was invited to the Colloquium as part of the English contingent, along with Hayek. Very much like Polanyi, Rougier considered the success of the Soviet Union as a wake-up call for liberalism to change its message. Both had been struck by the contradiction between the actual results brought about by the regime and its promises. They had also reached very similar conclusions as to the use of science for propaganda in totalitarian countries and the hazardous situation of academic freedom.<sup>6</sup> The philosophy of science, instead of unifying mankind, had led to further divisions in the name of rival conceptions of the scientific method and political order.

Opening the Colloquium, Rougier aimed to build upon the insights contained in Lippmann’s “Agenda for Liberalism” (Lippmann 2005, 203). Its twin pillars were law as the strong arm of reform and intervention, and markets as the organizing principle of the division of labor and competition. At the end of the proceedings, these two themes fused into one, defining the limits of state intervention within the framework of the price mechanism. On the one hand, the state needed to guarantee its own independence from coalesced interests. On the other hand, it was indispensable that assistance and benefits be provided to those unemployed. The third merit Rougier found in Lippmann’s book did not concern political economy, but his diagnostic of the poor state of a liberal science. During the conference, participants adopted the term “neoliberalism” as a loose moniker for their common outlook in order to distinguish their views from the *laissez-faire* liberalism which, many of them lamented, had abandoned the radical promise of the scientific method, leaving it to collectivists and planners to claim the authority of science for their politics.

Polanyi was one of the few who had undertaken this recovery at the time. The newer version of his economic film entitled “An Outline of the Working of Money” was shown to the participants. His sole recorded intervention tapped into the same educational themes he had vigorously exposed in defense of his movie project. Their feeble apprehension of economic principles had driven the masses to overthrow liberalism and to adopt a “passionate conviction” that economic life ought to be regulated by

force. Civilization was threatened by this “mental derangement” caused by a “permanent state of perplexity” over the unintended consequences of economic interventions. The problem with the invisible hand was precisely its *invisibility* that frustrated the agent’s economic activity from its larger social and moral sense, a void which totalitarian economies fulfilled.<sup>7</sup>

Polanyi was thus at the forefront of the early neoliberal movement. Liberty, he wrote in the preface to *The Contempt of Freedom*, “cannot be saved unless it again becomes a progressive idea. Those who have returned to its defense must now give it all their hearts and gifted minds to make it again a progressive faith” (*CF*, vi). Created for that purpose after the Colloquium, the *Centre International d’Études pour la Rénovation du Libéralisme*, with Polanyi a member, was however short-lived due to the outbreak of the war. Nor was the idea of a “liberal journal” proposed by Polanyi to spread these neoliberal ideas ever to see the light of day. In January 1939, Hayek enthusiastically wrote to Polanyi about his suggestion to create a new publication whose main purpose “would be to discuss what Lippmann has called the Agenda of Liberalism, including of course the question of a future world order. But it would of course discuss all ‘cultural’ problems from a Liberal angle.”<sup>8</sup> Despite Polanyi’s goodwill, the project failed to gather the required funds (Mullins and Jacobs 2015, 6-7).

Polanyi’s activism found a new outlet in the creation in 1941 of the Society for Freedom in Science, which Hayek eventually joined. The SFS called anti-totalitarian scientists to arms, professing that an indissoluble bond existed between liberal institutions and free science. Polanyi confessed to SFS co-founder J. R. Baker<sup>9</sup> in 1940 that, “Events have discredited a purely defensive liberalism... The cultivation of detachment in the face of an advancing foe is a certain way to enslavement” (Wigner and Hodgkin 1977, 427). The nascent sociology of science and knowledge, often promoted by Marxists to support the case for planned science, had triggered in return an epistemological recasting of the relationship between the use of knowledge and a liberal organization of society. For Polanyi and other early neoliberals, the constitution of the scientific community epitomized both our highest civilizational achievement, and the template upon which the good society ought to be modeled.

By the beginning of the Second World War, the collapse of Europe jeopardized this emerging consensus for a scientific reform of liberalism. For neoliberals, many of their worst fears came to be realized; the horizon of a supra-national European federation dissipated, war economies meant widespread state controls, and the rule of law was all but suspended. Worse, liberalism and its failures kept on carrying the blame for the democratic shipwreck in Europe.

An important, and largely forgotten, group that galvanized early neoliberals in England was the *Tots and Quots* dining club, which gathered many prominent English scientists such as J. D. Bernal, C. H. Waddington, J. B. S. Haldane, Joseph Needham,

Hyman Levy, and Lancelot Hogben (Zuckerman 1978, 109). In his *Social Function of Science*, Bernal had declared that the development of science obeyed the same dialectical laws as the development of society, the “freedom” of science was an ideological construction that stemmed from an idealist view of the formation of thought itself. Since the discovery and use of knowledge were bound by the material necessities of his time, the scientist and his genius were merely instrumental in the larger conflict of forces which framed his historical and social position. Following Bukharin, Bernal argued that only in socialism could science take its proper place as the midwife of social reform, organically spurred by material needs to provide remedies for social ills (Bernal 1939, 414-416).

From Waddington’s perspective, totalitarianism represented the next stage of a scientific society. Nazism, Fascism, and Communism, for all their mistakes, represented “three full-sized experiments in possible methods of organising the productive forces of a country” insofar as “the economic organization of the world is going totalitarian, and nothing can stop it” (Waddington 1948 [1941], 152). Learning from these totalitarian experiments, scientists needed to contribute to the diffusion of a scientific outlook dedicated to rational and controlled progress, in line with the accomplishments science had brought to society thus far.

In a letter from July 1, 1941, Hayek explained to Polanyi that he attached “very great importance to these pseudo-scientific arguments on social organization being effectively met and I am getting more and more alarmed by the effects of the propaganda” of the left scientists who “discredit the reputation of science by such escapades.”<sup>10</sup> Hayek was now effectively joining Polanyi’s fight against planned science, writing in *Nature* that the movement for economic planning strongly supported by left scientists and engineers, had now “succeeded in capturing public opinion that what little opposition there is comes almost solely from a small group of economists” (Hayek 1941, 213). Writing to Hayek after the article’s publication, Polanyi reiterated his current commitment to their joint initiative, stating that “the only real aim in my view is the starting of a literary and philosophical movement of our own for the renaissance of Liberalism.”<sup>11</sup> Like Polanyi’s, Hayek’s publications during the writing of his influential *Road to Serfdom*, whose draft was completed as early as 1942, were less directed at socialists or interventionist liberals like Keynes, as they were at *scientists* “who were promoting socialism and planning as the logical extrapolation of a scientific world-view” (Mirowski 2007, 363).

Early neoliberals tirelessly asserted that the progress of science did not rely on a collective effort but on the “free competition of thought, hence on freedom of thought, ultimately in political freedom” (Popper 2002, 83). Direct control over the activities of the individual and the elimination of competition would signify the “end of truth” and thus impede the growth of reason (Hayek 2007, 178). Polanyi, Hayek, and Popper all

embraced science as an ideal marketplace of ideas, one in which these social aspects of scientific research—“atomized sovereignty” (*SFS*, 72), publicity, choice of occupation, low barriers to entry—guaranteed the objectivity of results, and provided, in the last instance, a steadfast justification for political freedom.

Popper, Hayek, and Polanyi all came in contact with Karl Mannheim during his London exile. Hayek and Mannheim were colleagues at the LSE and Mannheim invited Polanyi to participate in the Moot, a Christian discussion circle initiated by J. H. Oldham and attended by T. S. Eliot (Mullins and Jacobs 2006; Clements 2010, 6-17).<sup>12</sup> They all perceived his sociology of knowledge at the service of scientific politics as deeply antagonistic to the neoliberal project which sought to sever the link between scientific expertise and planning. For Popper, uncovering the “social determination of scientific knowledge” annihilated the basis of free discussion and controversy and the quest for scientific objectivity (Popper 2013[1945], 420). Similarly for Hayek, Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge was the latest avatar of “scientism” or “positivism” where the sociological comprehension of the mechanisms of thought would allow the theoretician to predict their development (Hayek 2010, 152). Likewise, Polanyi considered Mannheim’s sociological reductionism antithetical to the development of dynamic orders founded in the personal knowledge of individuals. Whereas truth according to Mannheim can be achieved by the social scientist through a decentering from his initial position, Polanyi remained committed to the notion that it could solely be found at the level of personal beliefs, in a “dark heart” which no sociological light could reveal.<sup>13</sup> Polanyi, Hayek, and Popper all effectively argued that scientific knowledge was a socially situated process, yet an intersubjective one, and not the result of social conditioning. The development of their philosophy of science, valuing the social process of science within dedicated institutions as independent from the scientist’s social position, was in effect an answer to Mannheim’s materialist sociology of knowledge.

## Post-war Disenchantment

Despite the limited success of the *Society for the Freedom in Science*, Polanyi’s ideas were gaining traction in England and in the U.S.A., as he was quickly recognized as the principal exponent of the principles of academic freedom. In addition to his publications, he was a guest on multiple BBC broadcasts (Nye 2011, 207), and his ideas informed the design of American post-war science policy (Hollinger 1990, 909-910; Nye 2007, 432-433). Polanyi’s repeated insistence upon the spiritual dimensions of both science and society lent his liberalism a particular flavor. Yet, his proclamation that the commitment to Western civilization was a matter of faith was echoed by the participants to the Mont-Pèlerin meeting of April 1947. Among the participants, the Swiss economist and diplomat William Rappard also perceived the meeting as a chance

to restore the credibility of a liberal science. “Science cannot be liberal or illiberal,” he declared in his opening address, “in a sense it cannot be anything but liberal.” If a scholar “dogmatically and intolerantly denies the rights of liberty of thought without which there can be no true science, then he is not worthy of being called a man of science.”<sup>14</sup> On the one hand, Rappard felt the ambition of the early neoliberal project to be a scientific rectification of false ideas. On the other hand, he believed that the recovery of truth in science was indispensable to the renewal of liberalism. In his own opening address, Hayek denounced the same “false rationalism” which Polanyi had repeatedly criticized since the end of the 1930s, as leading to a form of “intellectual hubris.” The proper attitude towards the spontaneous orders within society was one of reverence and intellectual humility, akin to the spiritual awe found in religious faiths.

Like Polanyi, Hayek did not believe that positivism or radical skepticism provided solid grounds for a renewed liberalism. “Unless this breach between true liberal and religious convictions can be healed,” he announced, there was “no hope for a revival of liberal forces” (Hayek 1992, 244). Moreover, the constitution of the Mont-Pèlerin Society relied on two fundamental Polanyian assumptions. On the one hand, participants ought to share an “agreement on fundamentals” where “certain basic conceptions are not questioned at every step” (Hayek 1992, 238). On the other hand, adherence to liberalism simply out of habit was insufficient; participants were expected to personally commit to its ideals and to spread them within society. Against the Marxist message of materialism and universalism, neoliberals reaffirmed the importance of a community bonded by shared ideals. Responding to Hayek’s paper on “Intellectuals and Socialism” which intimated that “unless we can make the philosophic foundations of a free society once more a living intellectual issue...the prospects of freedom are indeed dark” (Hayek 1997 [1949], 237), Polanyi admitted there was “hardly a paragraph which hasn’t given me a thrill of pleasure.”<sup>15</sup>

Despite the proximity between Hayek’s vision and his own, Polanyi was disappointed with the Mont-Pèlerin meetings. On the one hand, his participation in the Society allowed him to strike long-lasting friendships with French intellectuals Raymond Aron and Bertrand de Jouvenel, as well as the British historian C. V. Wedgwood. On the other hand, his participation in the initial meeting did not elicit flattering comments and his credentials were not as well assured with the diverse cast of the Society as they were in England. Karl Popper in particular opposed, from the beginning, Polanyi’s project of anchoring liberalism to a metaphysical framework.<sup>16</sup> Polanyi’s tense relationship with the Mont-Pèlerin Society illustrates the hopes and disappointments of many of its early members. At the onset, Mont-Pèlerin Society members had been united more by what they opposed than by a common agenda. Polanyi, for instance, who regarded capitalism and tradition as connected elements of



an anti-rationalist critique of planning, opposed members who conceived the two as incompatible, like the American economist Frank Knight or Karl Popper.

Three elements account for the progressive distance Polanyi felt with the Mont-Pèlerin Society and the neoliberal project as it developed in the late 1950s onward. First was the progressive reluctance of the members to discuss liberalism as a general idea or framework for society as it had been agreed on at the original 1947 meeting. Somehow, the Society relinquished its role as an intellectual center for the development of an alternative account of what liberalism entailed beyond economic freedom. Secondly, the idea of a multidisciplinary academy that Hayek had envisioned quickly faded as economists took the lion's share of new appointments while philosophers declined in numbers. Finally, the Society was perceived as rather closed onto itself, unwilling to commit to its positions publicly. At the conclusion of its first decade, the Mont-Pèlerin Society had substantially moved away from the foundational questions that had motivated its constitution (cf. Hartwell 1995, xiv).

In a letter sent in 1955, Polanyi explained his own misgivings to Hayek about the Mont-Pèlerin Society, where he acknowledged that he “fostered a somewhat different view of liberty and the menaces to liberty than those expounded by [Ludwig von] Mises and [Jacques] Rueff—and sometimes by yourself.”<sup>17</sup> In response, Hayek encouraged Polanyi not to withdraw, as he represented “an extreme wing” in a Society he had never intended to become “homogenous.” Hayek conceded that the original intention of the Society had been somewhat betrayed as the “wider philosophical issues” were not topics for discussions anymore, denting his own interest in participating. Polanyi retreated from any involvement from this point onward, reckoning that Mont-Pèlerin Society had abandoned its inaugural commitment to work towards a comprehensive reform of liberalism. Instead, he devoted his time and efforts to the development of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, founded in West Berlin in 1950. There, Polanyi would be given the means to pursue his agenda of defending the fate of free science against its corruption in totalitarian countries. He organized the ‘Science and Freedom’ conference in Hamburg gathering 119 scientists in 1953 (Nye 2011, 201-213) and became the chair of the CCF Committee on Science and Freedom. Two years later, he sat on the organizing committee of the Milan Conference, ‘The Future of Freedom’ which celebrated the advent of a post-ideological consensus. From then on, Polanyi worked to overcome these ideological sentiments that he felt the Mont-Pèlerin Society only contributed to reinforce.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>This research is funded by the Fonds de Recherche Québécois pour la Société et la Culture (FRQSC). This paper benefitted from the insightful comments from the two anonymous reviewers. I also would like to thank Gilles Christoph for his help with revisions.

<sup>2</sup>The significance of this conversation for Polanyi's intellectual development was such that this anecdote opened *The Tacit Dimension*, published 31 years later in 1966.

<sup>3</sup>"For no real devotion is possible to daily work which is involved in a conundrum of perplexities. No man can be satisfied by thinking of himself only; robbed of clear consciousness of his relations to those with whom he actually co-operates, he feels that the complex structure which thus isolates him is bad, inhuman, revolting." Michael Polanyi, "Notes on a Film" (1936), Michael Polanyi Papers, University of Chicago Library, box 25, folder 10.

<sup>4</sup>Polanyi writes that "the cultivation of liberty under law has been greatly clarified by Walter Lippmann in his *Good Society*" (CF, 36n1). One of the most quoted sentences from Lippmann's book reads: "In a free society the state does not administer the affairs of men. It administers justice among men who conduct their own affairs" (Lippmann 2005, 267).

<sup>5</sup>There existed "a common fate between independent science and political liberty" whereby "the link between science and liberty is completely reciprocal" (Polanyi 1937a, 710).

<sup>6</sup>Among the early whistleblowers, Rougier wrote in 1934 that in Soviet Russia: "science for science's sake, just like art for art's sake, are considered bourgeois heresies. Soviet science is a political science, a class science, which must serve the proletariat and allow them to build socialism. In the current state of affairs, with this prevailing mystique, moral and political sciences are impossible" (Rougier 1934, 622; my translation).

<sup>7</sup>Polanyi's intervention is recorded in Audier (2012, 472-475); translation from the French is mine).

<sup>8</sup>Letter Friedrich Hayek to Michael Polanyi, 28 January 1939, Michael Polanyi Papers, University of Chicago Library, box 3, folder 14.

<sup>9</sup>J. R. Baker would also become a member of the Mont-Pèlerin Society from 1948 to 1952.

<sup>10</sup>Letter Friedrich Hayek to Michael Polanyi, 1 July 1941, Michael Polanyi Papers, University of Chicago Library, box 4, folder 7.

<sup>11</sup>Letter Michael Polanyi to Friedrich Hayek, 18 November 1941, F. A. Hayek Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, box 78, folder 35.

<sup>12</sup>Mullins and Jacobs (2006, 147) explain that the discussions of the Moot "revolved around the topic of *order* and, more particularly, around the problem of how order might be restored in British society and culture in the context of a 'world turned upside down'." For the relationship between Mannheim and Polanyi, see Mullins and Jacobs (2005).

<sup>13</sup>Polanyi wrote personally to Mannheim, "As regards the social analysis of the development of ideas, suffice it to say that I reject all social analysis of history which makes social conditions anything more than opportunities for a development of thought. You seem inclined to consider moral judgments on history as ludicrous, believing apparently that thought is not merely conditioned, but determined by a social or technical situation. I cannot tell you how strongly I reject such a view" (Gábor 2003, letter #244).

<sup>14</sup>William E. Rappard, "Opening Statement, Tuesday 1st, 9.30," in F.A. Hayek Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, box 80, folder 30.

<sup>15</sup>Letter Michael Polanyi to Friedrich Hayek, 14 December 1948, F. A. Hayek Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, box 78, folder 35.

<sup>16</sup>See the minutes from the first meeting of the Mont-Pèlerin Society, especially the session titled “Liberalism and Christianity” in “Mont-Pèlerin Conference, April 4th, 9.30,” MPS Papers, Hoover Institution Archive, box 5, folder 13.

<sup>17</sup>Letter Michael Polanyi to Friedrich Hayek, 9 November 1955, F. A. Hayek Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, box 43, folder 35.

## REFERENCES

- Audier, Serge. 2012. *Aux origines du néo-libéralisme: le colloque Walter-Lippmann*. Lormont: Au Bord de l'Eau.
- Beddeleem, Martin. 2019. “Recoding Liberalism: Philosophy and Sociology of Science Against Planning.” In *The Nine Lives of Neoliberalism*, edited by P. Mirowski, D. Plehwe and Q. Slobodian. London: Verso.
- Bernal, John Desmond. 1939. *The Social Function of Science*. London: Routledge.
- Burgin, Angus. 2012. *The Great Persuasion: Reinventing Free Markets since the Depression*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Clements, Keith, ed. 2010. *The Moot Papers. Faith, Freedom and Society 1938-1944*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.
- Gabor, Eva. 2003. *Selected Correspondence (1911-1946) of Karl Mannheim, Scientist, Philosopher, and Sociologist*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellon Press.
- Hartwell, R. M. 1995. *A History of the Mont Pèlerin Society*. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund.
- Hayek, F. A. 1948. *Individualism and Economic Order*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1992. *The Fortunes of Liberalism: Essays on Austrian Economics and the Ideal of Freedom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1997. *Socialism and War: Essays, Documents, Reviews*. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2007. *The Road to Serfdom*. [italicize title] Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2010. *Studies on the Abuse and Decline of Reason*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hollinger, David A. 1990. “Free Enterprise and Free Inquiry: The Emergence of Laissez-Faire Communitarianism in the Ideology of Science in the United States.” *New Literary History* 21(4): 897-919.
- Lavoie, Don. 1986. “The Market as a Procedure for Discovery and Conveyance of Inarticulate Knowledge.” *Comparative Economic Studies* 28 (Spring):1-19.
- Lippmann, Walter. 2005. *The Good Society*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers. Original edition, 1937.
- Mirowski, Philip. 2007. “Naturalizing the Market on the Road to Revisionism: Bruce Caldwell’s Hayek’s challenge and the challenge of Hayek interpretation.” *Journal of Institutional Economics* 3 (3): 351-372.
- Mullins, Phil, and Struan Jacobs. 2005. “Michael Polanyi and Karl Mannheim.” *Tradition & Discovery* 32 (1): 20-43.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2006. “T.S. Eliot’s Idea of the Clerisy, and its Discussion by Karl Mannheim and Michael Polanyi in the Context of J.H. Oldham’s Moot.” *Journal of Classical Sociology* 6 (2): 147-156.

- Nye, Mary Jo. 2007. "Historical Sources of Science-as-Social-Practice: Michael Polanyi's Berlin." *Historical Studies in the Physical and Biological Sciences* 37 (2): 409-434.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2011. *Michael Polanyi and His Generation: Origins of the Social Construction of Science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Polanyi, Michael. 1936. "Visual Presentation of Social Matters." Michael Polanyi Papers, University of Chicago Library, box 25, folder 09; reprinted in *Tradition and Discovery* 41/2 (2016):13-23.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1937a. "Congrès du Palais de la Découverte." *Nature* 140: 710.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1937b. "On Popular Education in Economics." Michael Polanyi Papers, University of Chicago Library, box 25, folder 09; reprinted in *Tradition and Discovery* 42/3 (2018):18-24.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1940. *The Contempt of Freedom: The Russian Experiment and After*. London: Watts & Co.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1941. "The Growth of Thought in Society." *Economica* VIII: 428-456.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1943. "The English and the Continent." *Political Quarterly* 14 (4): 372-381.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1945. *Full Employment and Free Trade*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1962. "The Republic of Science: Its Political and Economic Theory." *Minerva* 1: 54-74.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1964. *Science, Faith and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Original edition, 1946.
- Popper, Karl. 2002. *The Poverty of Historicism*. London & New York: Routledge. Original edition, 1957.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2013. *The Open Society and its Enemies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Original edition, 1945.
- Ritschel, Daniel. 1997. *The Politics of Planning: The Debate on Economic Planning in Britain in the 1930s*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Robbins, Lionel. 1937. *Economic Planning and International Order*. London: Macmillan.
- Röpke, Wilhelm. 1948. *Civitas Humana. A Humane Order of Society*. London: William Hodge. Original edition, 1944.
- Rougier, Louis. 1934. "La mystique soviétique. Une scolastique nouvelle: le marxisme-léninisme." *La Revue de Paris* 41 (2): 600-629.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1938. *Les mystiques économiques. Comment l'on passe des démocraties libérales aux états totalitaires*. Paris: Éditions de Médicis.
- Schulz-Forberg, Hagen. 2018. "Modern Economic Thought and the 'Good Society'." In *The Cambridge History of Modern Economic Thought*, edited by P. Gordon and W. Breckman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Scott, William Taussig, and Martin X. Moleski. 2005. *Michael Polanyi: Scientist and Philosopher*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Waddington, C. H. 1948. *The Scientific Attitude*. London: Penguin. Original edition, 1941.
- Wigner, E. P., and R. A. Hodgkin. 1977. "Michael Polanyi: 12 March 1891 - 22 February 1976." *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society* 23: 413-448.
- Zuckerman, Solly. 1978. *From Apes to Warlords. An Autobiography 1904-46*. London: Hamish Hamilton.

# MICHAEL POLANYI AND THE SOCIETY OF EXPLORERS



Colin Cordner

**Keywords:** Republic of Science, Society of Explorers, political science, political philosophy, conviviality, spontaneous order, emergence, tradition, reform, authority, economy

## ABSTRACT<sup>1</sup>

*For Polanyi, the Society of Explorers (SoE) describes the ideal form of a free society. He does not, however, provide us with a thick description of such a society. This essay attempts to do so by bringing together his later social and political thoughts with those set forth in his discussion of “Conviviality.”*

## Introduction

The purpose of this essay will be to flesh-out Polanyi’s thoughts on the Society of Explorers (SoE) as the ideal form of a free society, thoughts which he developed out of the concrete exemplar of the Republic of Science (RoS). I perceive that this exercise is necessary for two reasons. Firstly, while suggestive, Polanyi was not thorough in extrapolating the implications of his own political studies. Secondly, while Polanyi spends much time in his writings correcting misunderstandings of science and scientific practice, he does not always explicitly fold those corrections into his writings on the SoE. Consequently, we are left with a haze hovering between us and a definite apprehension of the SoE.

In this essay, I argue it is consistent with Polanyi’s thoughts to say that a free society, at its best, is a SoE. As such, it exemplifies, from its lowest to its highest layers, the dynamic, spontaneous order which is practiced within the RoS. At its uppermost layer, the *noosphere* (which signifies a society’s heritage of the mind), and the *cultural institutions* of the SoE’s borders expand beyond those of the RoS in order to include the

broader plurality of humanity's highest pursuits and endeavours. At its lower levels, it is maintained materially through the spontaneous order of a polycentric *economic system* that is protected and sheltered by a *public power* embodied by magistrates responsible to finding and enforcing the meaning of the law. In between these, one finds also institutions of civic culture that inspire *fellowship* and a *loyalty* to the SoE, which transcends purely parochial submission to the traditional or charismatic power of a group by also cultivating a sense of individual responsibility to transcendent principles, such as truth and excellence. This paradoxical cultivation of civic and individual responsibility thus constitutes the grounds of a civil fellowship grounded in the common enjoyment and delight in the highest and noblest principles. The consequence of Polanyi's thoughts for political theory are conceptions of freedom and pluralism which are based neither on civil religion and sovereign power (as in Hobbes and Rousseau, respectively), or relativism, but instead on common commitment to principles, particularly truth.

The following sections will proceed by rounding out the features of the RoS, before bringing them to bear on our understanding of Polanyi's SoE by bringing together his later social and political thoughts in *KB*, *SM*, and *TD* with those that he earlier set forth in *PK* in the chapter "Conviviality." The end result shall be a clearer image of the SoE as an overlapping series of spontaneous orders, consistent with the four *coefficients of society* that Polanyi delineates in *PK*.

### How to be Civil, Individual, and Cultured Without Even Trying

A given free society's manner of cultivating individuality and excellence is what Polanyi dubbed its *individual culture* and it is this feature which partly defines the character of free societies such as the RoS. By the same token, the RoS, as a free society, is also upheld by a *civic culture* that evokes a community of scientists; transmits and maintains standards of practice; and fosters both cooperation among scientists and a just allocation of honours and resources (as well as blame, dishonour, and penury). This dual culture of science can be further elaborated in terms of Polanyi's four-fold differentiation of the *coefficients of society*: (i) the *sharing of convictions*, (ii) the *sharing of a fellowship*, (iii) *cooperation*, and (iv) *authority* or *coercion* (*PK*, 215).

Furthermore, Polanyi holds that in the specific instances of free, dynamic societies (such as the RoS and SoE by implication), these coefficients tend strongly to be articulated in different sets of more or less distinct *institutions*. This stands in contrast with static (i.e., primitive or highly traditional) societies in which such differentiation is absent, or less pronounced (*PK*, 212). In their most general form, these four sets of institutions consist in (i) institutions of *culture*, which foster shared convictions (e.g., churches, museums, universities, theatres, etc.); (ii) institutions fostering *group loyalty* (e.g., social intercourse, rituals, and common defence); (iii) an *economic system* which

fosters cooperation for the purposes of achieving a joint material advantage, and (iv) *public power* to shelter and control the other institutions of society, through the use of authority and coercion (*PK*, 215-216).

It follows from this that a free society's mores hinge upon the simultaneous cultivation of individual and civic culture based upon a prevailing recognition of the goodness of both individuality and the common weal. However, knowledge and commitment to the common good in a free society is evoked, at the highest level, by convictions that uphold the independent power of thought, along with a passion for truth, excellence, beauty, or justice in general. Conversely, at lower levels, it is bound by the necessities of power and profit (*PK*, 213-216, 224; *KB*, 69).

What this largely amounts to in a healthy free society is the ongoing cultivation of individual excellence, together with a restriction of individual selfishness—particularly moral inversion. The children of a free society are persuaded to overcome the tendency towards selfishness through their enculturation, through which they find expression for the higher passions. On a personal level this is accomplished by initiation into convictions transcending the baser appetites and drives, by the creation of an atmosphere wherein genuine fellowship and conviviality can flourish, and, when necessary, by the imposition of standards of morality through the authority or the coercion of the institutions of public power.<sup>1</sup> Individual excellence will therefore be bound and channeled by the standards and practices of the prevailing institutions of culture.

At the same time, excellence and individuality are in danger of being stifled or left fallow by circumstances arising from injustices, failures, or outright sins originating with the institutions of the economic system or the public power. And yet, in recompense, the prevailing recognition of universal, transcendent standards provides individuals with opportunities to challenge and reform prevailing standards and opinions. Indeed, a free society will reserve its greatest accolades for those persons who have most deeply refined or expanded the *noosphere* in accordance with previously unrecognized intimations of the meaning of its most beloved principles.

## Finding the Authorities

We turn now to the specific example of the civic and individual cultures of the RoS. One outstanding feature of the RoS is that there is a notable absence of a specific authority, either embodied, or abstract. There is no Sultan or Parliament of Science, nor Tablets or a Bill of Science, which effectively command the common enterprises of biologists, physicists, chemists, political scientists, ethnographers, geologists, and the other myriad classes of practicing scientists.

This is a state of affairs that may lead one to surmise that there is no civic authority present in the RoS, but this would be a mistake. The cultivation of individual student or apprentice scientists relies upon the dual authorities of the teacher or master, on the

one hand, and upon the truth of the matter that they intend to understand, on the other. This latter authority is one which is at least tacitly recognized by all classes of scientists, whatever their status or background, and forms the firmament of the firmaments; it is the basic reality from which hangs the moving horizon of the *noosphere* and to which one can appeal when one calls for reformations (including of one's own being and that of one's fellows).

The former, more immediate form of authority, moreover, is, like the latter, one freely elected for; one can never be effectively forced to learn or to see. Like Plato's prisoners bound to the cave bench, one always has the option of ignoring or manhandling anyone attempting to turn one around. Similarly, one either responds to a paradigm or a personal exemplar or not. Arbitrary authority may train a man to avoid the stick, but it cannot educate in him a genuine love and appreciation of a flower; beatings do not make botanists.

These two authorities are personal, and stand above oneself, though the authority of a master may conceivably be lacking if one runs out of teachers. They are, however, one's own personal, specific authorities. When we widen the discussion to the entire community of scientists, though, another authority emerges and this new authority is the *mutual authority* of scientists to judge each other as equals and peers (KB, 56, 84-85). Polanyi describes eight overlapping features of general authority among scientists, four of which can be said to constitute that medium of *public authority* or *public power* which shelters the RoS from internal dissolution, while also serving functions of *cooperation* and inspiring *group loyalty*. The first and most conspicuous of these features is that of *scientific consensus*, denoting the current, settled opinion of scientists regarding the facts and theoretical foundations of matters of interest to the system of science, i.e., broadly speaking, what is true, what is false, and what is plausible or indeterminate.

Just as importantly, scientific consensus plays a role in upholding *scientific standards* by helping to set the general measure of scientific competence and of competent scientific performance and research. Scientific consensus and scientific standards then dovetail to a third coefficient, that of judging the *scientific merit* of those offerings or findings which are published or presented for consideration. The judgement of the *merit* of new facts or theories which are offered to the overall system of science is itself the functional product of that offering's: (1) *plausibility* in the eyes of a plurality of scientists who are competent to render judgement on the matter, (2) *scientific value*, and (3) *originality* of the contribution that surprises scientists in the know (KB, 54). Taken altogether, these criteria of scientific merit, together with the weight of scientific opinion, provide the weight of mutual authority among scientists, and the criteria for apportioning honours within the RoS. Conversely, to be shut-out of the hallowed halls of honour represents a profound vote of non-confidence on the part of the community, and may very well flounder or destroy a career.



What, though, of the question of cooperation among scientists? For Polanyi, such cooperation does not arise from the blind enforcement of prevailing opinions. Rather, it is the case that cooperation and the exercise of authority among scientists rests upon three practices or institutions which constitute the Republic as a *spontaneous order*: i) *self-coordination through mutual adjustment*, ii) *discipline under mutual authority*, and the iii) *principle of overlapping neighbourhoods* (KB, 84).<sup>2</sup>

The self-coordination of scientists is explained by Polanyi using two metaphors. On the one hand, one has a group of women shelling peas or chess-players playing chess and on the other hand, a group of persons attempting to put together a puzzle. In the first case, the mutual isolation of the members would hardly have an effect upon their joint progress towards the end. In the latter case, progress is greatly reduced by mutual isolation, relative to what is possible if members are allowed freely to observe and communicate with one another while attending to the specific problem and the specific clues before each of them.

Furthermore, the task of scientific discovery, or of putting together a puzzle, is impeded if the joint purpose and endeavour is organized under the specific authority of a single “node,” be that a single person or a committee. Indeed, the whole project may even do more poorly than if scientists were kept in mutual isolation, were the central authority itself relatively or totally incompetent, something which has indeed proven to be the case when science has been forced to submit to ideological powers.

Be that as it may, the ability of scientists to make the heuristic breakthroughs needed to comprehend the clues before them in a significant or surprising new way is aided by their ability to draw upon the pieces of the puzzle being handled by others. These clues, in turn, can be found scattered in the surrounding neighbourhood, both in explicit, articulate forms (e.g., in books, publications, speeches, records, and artifacts), but also in the unspoken or relatively tacit clues embodied in their colleagues. Sometimes, the greatest revelations come from debating or arguing-out a problem with a peer, who intends—or has previously intended—to resolve the same question, or one quite similar.

*Discipline under mutual authority* arises as a consequence of the fact that scientists observe each other, judge each other, and try to maintain scientific standards. Put simply, all reputable scientists are masters of some specific domain of knowledge and inquiry. This mastery denotes their high degree of personal judgement and ability to appraise the facts, phenomena, and the findings of others within their field. By exercising their judgement, scientists are intently appraising each other’s work as competent or incompetent, and as a reflection of a true or an erroneous intellectual framework for understanding (PK, 374-378; SM, 87-89).

The dynamic character of that changing, indirect consensus of scientific opinion comes about as a reflection of *the principle of overlapping neighbourhoods*, for it also

happens that the general competencies of any scientist will extend into neighbouring fields of investigation when, for instance, a chemist will often find herself able to judge the plausibility of the data published in a physics paper, or a political scientist a work of economics or sociology. In this way, the RoS can be pictured as a patchwork of overlapping neighbourhoods, with individual scientists continuously exercising their authority on each other and submitting to the same general authority in turn. This spontaneous ordering of affairs differs from the personal authority of the master scientist over the apprentice, in which the master looks down and the apprentice up in judgement, in that this general authority is exercised between scientists mutually recognizing each other as peers and holding each other to common standards bearing on the truth with universal intent.

### The RoS as the Paradigm of the SoE

The features outlined above define the boundary conditions of the RoS and its institutions. Below, it is bound by the limited resources available for scientific pursuits as measured both in terms of time and external goods. On a higher level, it is bound to the joint pursuit of the truth, while shaped by the *noosphere* and by scientific opinion and standards. These give structure to scientific endeavours, provide some sense of grounding and direction, and define the necessary limits to one's calling and responsibility, while also cultivating a tension towards the intimations of a hidden reality which transcends them. Taken together, these features characterize the RoS as a spontaneous order: a society of self-coordinating, free individuals who jointly submit and exercise general authority among themselves, in this case for the purpose of the common pursuit of truth with universal intent. Taken together, then, the RoS's *basic coefficients of society* (§2), can thus be summarized as:

- *A shared conviction* in the truth, and its best reflection in scientific opinion and consensus;
- *A fellowship* founded in participation in common pursuits of truth, and through common gatherings (e.g. conferences, symposia, research projects);
- *Cooperation* in the spontaneous order of science achieved by *self-coordination through mutual adjustment*, the *principle of overlapping neighbourhoods*, and the practical day-to-day matters of organizing scientific endeavours;
- *Authority* to bind, direct, and protect the integrity of the RoS, in the form of *discipline under mutual authority*.

The RoS is the logical arrangement of a society struck between mature, individual scientists exercising their intellectual passions, callings, and responsibilities. However the institutions of the RoS may differ or change from place to place or time to time, the

basic coefficients of the RoS can scarcely be done away with without greatly damaging it; they are the matrix through which science (that is, understanding *qua scientia* or *episteme*) can be jointly pursued and enjoyed convivially with one's peers. The alternative to this arrangement would be the metaphorical scientist, shelling peas alone in his study, or attempting to exercise solitary authority over a pseudo-Republic composed of an army of submissive subordinates.

This description of the RoS as the paradigm of free societies is ideal, in the sense that it outlines a paradigmatic RoS whose members and institutions are, by and large, free of embarrassing or destabilizing self-contradictions and do not, for instance, hold themselves or each other to the strictures of objectivist dogma. The ideal tacitly presumes that most of the citizens of the RoS follow broadly in the shadow of either of the two post-critical figures that figure so prominently in *PK*: the scientist or the post-critical philosopher. It also presumes that most of its members do not follow in the shadow of nihilism or moral-inversion, that is to say that they do not both tacitly and explicitly hold to a strictly absurd idea of reality, conjured by a mindset holding to the implications of Democritean physics and Pyrronian skepticism.<sup>3</sup>

While this existential contradiction may be rendered relatively harmless as long as the practices and institutions of the RoS remain relatively strong, it is not altogether without consequences, two of which require mentioning. First, the distortion of scientific standards and of the judgment of scientific merit induced by positivistic screeds can impair and distort sciences that deal with higher-level phenomena than those of physics and chemistry. Polanyi himself compiled numerous examples of completely absurd statements and publications, emanating, for example, from anthropology, biology, and psychology to make this point. Second, since the RoS comprises an *institution of culture* within wider, surrounding societies, it follows that society will itself be subjected to the disordering influences of objectivist mores when scientists themselves are impaired by positivism or other forms of objectivism. This tendency then opens up the door to the sorts of dynamo-objective couplings that lend themselves to comprehensive ideologies and ideological movements (compare Poirier, 2009).

It follows that these tendencies are exacerbated to whatever degree that the sciences of man are made essentially impossible to conduct well, for to have a science of man is but to use a shorthand to say that there are perennial endeavours to understand the essence of man and learn how to be most fully human. But, as Polanyi points out, the image of man which is consistent with objectivism can only be expressive of whatever "certain," quantifiable, concrete "facts" which survive the solvents of systematic doubt (*PK* 294-298). "Values," too, will be cut-off from the moorings of reason (i.e., one's hard-won understanding and appreciation) by the insistence on perceiving all things in terms of their lower, component parts. This critical habit necessarily diverts one's awareness away from intrinsic meaning, the purpose and reason of comprehensive

entities or of higher-level aspects of reality. Rather one is diverted towards the less meaningful parts and causes of wholes. When turned to one's fellows, this fixed, critical mindset will quite naturally tend to mistake the appetitive drives as the essence of man, for drives can always be conceived as directed to concrete material objects, even if there is no actual limit or end to them.

As a consequence of adopting the objectivist mindset in pursuit of an understanding of humanity, the unpredictable and highly fecund reality of mind will quite naturally be bypassed for the less real, but more concrete immanent tensions of power and libido, and their objects. "Values" will thus tend to be rendered suspect as the hypocritical masks and epiphenomena of power and gain, and politics will tend to be reduced to calculations of who gets what, where, and why. By such a distorted measure, moral and intellectual honesty could only consist in behaving as an enlightened psychopath or a child.

It stands to reason then, that a reformed RoS, reflecting the full spectrum of Polanyi's thoughts, would be disembarassed of objectivism, and broaden itself to openly respect research into emergent, teleological phenomena. This would necessarily include attempts to gain understanding of the most comprehensive and meaningful aspect of human existence: the intents of men's hearts and minds, as well as their bearing on the endless search for communion with the ground of their principles and their beings. As a consequence, the traditional concern with *philosophia peri tes anthropina* would be brought back into the fold with salutary effects for the political and historical sciences. Conversely, if no longer being ignored, the sciences of man would themselves be held to renewed standards of scientific merit. In fewer words, the Republic would become more consistently Socratic, rather than the unfortunate Chimera that it currently is.

What Polanyi means by the freedom or liberties of free societies, by this reading, is both the freedom to uphold the truth from within a culture or tradition and the civic rights required to do so. This would hold true for a vast expanse of endeavours in the case of a SoE, an expanse which is necessarily much vaster in its membership, concerns, plurality, and polycentricity than the RoS. This is what is indicated by his aphorism that man's freedom within a free society is his calling, and his remark in another context that a man's freedom in a free society is "of a positive kind" (*KB*, 70). That freedom is neither the negative nor the positive freedom defined by Isaiah Berlin in his "Two Concepts of Liberty," or the autonomous freedom of a communal will defined by Rousseau (1978, 52-64). Rather, it is more reminiscent of the classical definition freedom or *eleutheria* lived by the sage or the *spoudaios*, as exemplified by the character of Socrates in the works of Plato and Xenophon. It is, in Polanyi's terms, the freedom of self-compulsion in the pursuit of self-set standards, which we may also experience as the paradox that self-discipline and material sacrifice required by higher, non-material

ends (such as the pursuit of truth) may bring about greater joy than concrete objects. In short, it is the paradox of freedom that discipline in service of wisdom or truth brings joy.

## Opening-up the SoE

Society persists to whatever extent to which sufficient conviviality exists among all and sundry to engender not only fellowship, but also loyalty. No earthly society is possible without at least the tacit or passive acceptance by all that the commonwealth is something good in itself, demanding of everyone certain duties, obligations, and even sacrifices up to and including one's own life or external freedoms. But can this understanding be squared with the pluralism of a SoE? It may be objected, as Polanyi himself recognized, that the parochial attitudes that can stem from feelings of brotherhood can threaten to swamp the ship of freedom by subordinating individual culture to civic culture and its demands.<sup>4</sup>

Let us admit, as he did, that this is a danger, and an ineradicable one. In accordance with the logic of emergence, the higher demands and mores of individual culture are challenged and limited by the necessary demands for group loyalty, cooperation, and for a public power capable of sheltering all higher aims. This truth, moreover, is further complicated by individual sins and frailties. Let us say quite frankly that there will always be causes by which any free society, including a SoE, will fall short of the *shared convictions* that direct them and their *institutions of culture*. Such failings may arise from a myriad of sources: the inadequacies of a society's contemporary mores, its institutions, its magistrates, or its transcendental or existential representatives; or they may arise due to more prosaic sins or errors. Let us also be observant of the fact that lower reasons may sometimes be prioritized over higher ones, to tragic effect, as the tale of Antigone's clash with the tyrant Creon in Sophocles' *Antigone* reminds us.

Do these hard truths bind us to say that free society is an illusion or hypocritical mask, and therefore bar us from any discussion of a SoE? Not in the least. This is so, for the logic of the pursuit of higher principles in political affairs is still but a reflection of the general logic of emergence. Within this logic, the elements of lower levels of reality (e.g. the necessities of *public power* and economics) are harnessed and directed by comprehensive principles towards new reasons, purposes, or ends when the proper conditions obtain and only for so long as they obtain. As such, they provide both the underlying conditions for success, but may ultimately be the undermining cause of failure. By this token, the measure of success of a society is the degree to which human maturation is enabled and insured, and to which a spirit of responsibility to standards of truth and excellence prevails. The obstreperous stuff from which success must be won is quite a different affair from the measure itself.

Be that as it may, we are left with the question of the extent to which pluralism dovetails with the logic of the SoE. We can recognize that a very wide plurality of paths and endeavours do in fact already prevail in the RoS, and I have argued that that plurality would only broaden with its reformation (§4). The pluralism of the RoS is expressed in the overlapping neighbourhoods of scientists, with each neighbourhood's members attending to acquiring knowledge and understanding of the subject of their passion, while also paying some attention to neighbouring enterprises. The plurality of pursuits of scientists remain reasonably coordinated, "almost as if by an invisible hand," by virtue of common standards and a common faith in the pursuit of truth under the mutual authority of science. In so far as there is a defect in the enterprise, it has been a reflection of official, though needless, adherence to the idols of the mind preached by positivism. Those idols, if anything, can only impair the pluralism of the otherwise polycentric and ecumenic order of the RoS.

Existing free societies too, are effectively pluralistic, often prioritizing vastly different values, principles, and pursuits. They tolerate or encourage a wide variety of institutions of culture to enrichen, expand, proselytize, or administer the vast ocean of knowledge, opinions, artifacts, and practices that they allow to guide them. As has been said earlier, the character of any society is but a magnified reflection of the shared convictions of its members, the pursuit of which is guided and shaped by cultural institutions; all the while societies are bound together by fellowship and supported by whatever institutions foster that fellow feeling. If, however, we admit that objectivism encourages or enforces the pursuit of false or debased standards and principles that are caustic enough to impair even the standards of the RoS, then one would expect even greater troubles to arise when objectivist views come to guide a much broader society.

By Polanyi's estimation, that is precisely what has occurred—and will occur—in societies in which forms of objectivism have sufficiently dissolved traditional moral restraints and guidance and thereby eliminated common commitment to those higher principles that are capable of fostering common bonds and understanding amidst a plurality of perspectives. Enlightenment rationalism was successful in breaking-up the worst of Europe's medieval idols and in setting into motion whole series of social reforms, the conclusion of which is still to be seen after more than three-hundred years. Yet the strict consequences of combining a blind faith in Democritean and Pyrronian thinking could only be the sort of appetitive individualism premised by both Hobbes and Rousseau—and of a society which could only then be maintained (as they both logically concluded) by the erection of an absolutely Sovereign *public power* capable of artificially organizing, directing, and, in fact, creating order out of chaos. In effect, what both men realized was that power would need to replace principles and fellowship, both of which would also need to be artificially manufactured (*KB*, 6-9). In short, objectivist thought repudiates transcendent principles in favour of the "concrete," and

with that, repudiates the authority of flesh-and-blood human beings to negotiate a commonwealth with higher principles, and also the human freedom to reform said commonwealth's character, representation, and *noosphere*.

To extrapolate from Polanyi's clues, the SoE, by contrast, reflects in theory what existing free societies at their best often do in practice. That is to say, that the SoE is defined by an openness to follow the guidance of a wide range of mutual authorities hailing from a multitude of neighbourhoods of human endeavour, in full understanding that any currently accepted consensus may conceivably be wrong, and that the truth will continue to reveal herself in infinite future manifestations. The SoE's general character would thus be that quintessential mix of confidence and humility, curiosity and conviction that characterize the post-critical philosopher or scientist. I will further suggest, alongside Polanyi, that being free from the absurd demands of objectivism would allow for a rapprochement with tradition and religion in the modern mind.<sup>5</sup>

### The Convivial Structure of the Society

The formal features of a self-consistent SoE can thus be summarized as its spontaneous ordering, its internal dynamism, and its polycentricity. These may imaginably manifest in myriad ways and in varying proportions in any particular time and place (as in fact, we find to be the case in actual free societies, past and present). However, it should be abundantly clear that these features are aspects of freedom as Polanyi understood its meaning. In the following section, I shall turn to the more specific question of relating the general character of the SoE to Polanyi's four convivial *coefficients of society*, in contrast to those of the RoS (§4).

Briefly: freedom is manifested by those who responsibly exercise their calling to encounter, know, and proclaim the truth. This responsibility is upheld in all societies that honour truth, and submit to her guidance. What separates the comparatively conservative character of static societies from the dynamism of free societies is not, in fact, the desire for society to reflect the truth, *per se*. Rather, what differentiates the latter, by Polanyi's estimation, is the degree of honour paid to the critical powers of the mind as a requirement for true understanding and proper reforms in one's being. It also bears on the history of social reform that the heightened moral passions educated by Christianity have provided tremendous energy to the critique of social ills and their remediation, including that of the most ardent atheists. The great moral truths expressed through Christian traditions and other transcendent moral callings have been no less a factor in the freedom and dynamism of our time than the astronomical truths unveiled by Kepler and Galileo.

It is for this reason that the SoE can be thought of as the post-critical philosopher writ large (to borrow a Socratic maxim): it represents a balance in the understanding between critique, faith, and comprehension, moved by the all-pervading desire to

know. Its dynamism is an image, so to speak, of the comfortable embodiment of the post-critical mind, generally accepting an inheritance of articulate culture as its happy dwelling place, while encouraging the emergence of meaningful dissent and reform in response to its principles. Its spontaneous ordering and polycentricity are, in turn, reflective of the emerging control, on a societal scale, of the same principles as help define one's personal knowledge and independent power of thought, along with all of the inevitable human limits, frailties, and failures.<sup>6</sup>

As we have extrapolated, much of the progress, openness, dynamism, and commitment to such principles as truth, which characterize the RoS as an exemplary free society (§4), must hold true as well in a SoE. That being the case, it remains true that the quintessential characteristics of a free society (SoEs necessarily included) would be limited, perhaps fatally, by the imposition of central planning of a society's coefficients by a specific authority, or by organizing individual or collective endeavours like an exercise in pea-shelling. This is a truth that prevails as much for the *cultural* coefficient of any society, as it does for the production and distribution of the external goods of life. In a complex society, the life of the mind and the economy are only effective if they find a spontaneous order through mutual cooperation. A sense of *fellowship* in a SoE, moreover, like in the RoS, is only conceivable through a prevailing desire for the truth, wisdom enough to respect that it will reveal itself in infinite future manifestations, a sense of being at home in the authority of a tradition, and the humility to recognize that no one creed, domain, or tradition will ever more than provide one with foundations and point one in the right direction, at its best.

Moreover, the relationship of the spontaneous order of a free society's *noosphere* to that of its *economic system of cooperation* is analogous to the relationship between one's personal intellectual passions and material appetites. As was observed earlier, our valuation of things is very much a reflection of our due appreciation and understanding of them, that is to say that it is a function of our knowledge and comprehension of the intrinsic and extrinsic meaning of things. The price mechanism of the market, on the other hand, is but an imitation of value; it allows for buyers and sellers to coordinate their actions, "as if by an invisible hand," by providing them with a sign by which to come to rational judgements regarding a multitude of transactions in goods. In this way, an order can arise through mutual self-adjustment in the ineffably complex and extensive network of needs, desires, and production in a dynamic society.<sup>7</sup>

Yet the spontaneous order of a market is, in itself, nearly blind to value, and in fact relies on an antecedent education which evokes an understanding of value, something which can only be supplied by one's individual acculturation within a *noosphere*. A mountain of maize is of no value to a starving man, if he has no experience of it and has not the slightest knowledge to prepare it for consumption. It only follows from this that its price could never be set low enough to stir his interest in it. Similarly, the



Egyptian peasants who for years used volumes of the Nag Hammadi scrolls for kindling had too little relevant knowledge to understand that there may be a market for such priceless cultural artifacts.

Yet this disjunction between price and value is a commonplace that at times becomes farcical (as when attempts are made to dispute the market price of things which are strictly priceless) owing to the fact that such things are the pre-conditions of the existence of a market, of civilized life, or life simply. All of this is merely to point out explicitly that the invisible hand of the markets is always subordinate and dependent upon a properly functioning culture. A great deal more “market value” would be irrevocably destroyed by a collapse of one’s culture into a fixation with purely vulgarian appetites than by the collapse of a stock exchange. The latter would require a re-coordination of finances, debts, and exchanges; the former would see Rembrandt in a fireplace. Yet this simple observation is but another side of the same need to educate the passions that hold at the individual level, and merely goes to show both the ubiquitous power of thought, and the necessity of bringing our understanding and conduct in line with reality as far as we are capable. It also follows from these implications in Polanyi’s work that the spontaneous order of a market is far more dependent upon institutions of culture than is commonly or explicitly recognized. In following the direction of his thoughts, we are therefore compelled to say that the spontaneous order of the *economic system* of a SoE, must necessarily be tethered to and given direction and form by the spontaneous order of its *noosphere*, as embodied in said society’s *institutions of culture*.

I believe that it is in a similar manner that Polanyi sees all free societies, and therefore a SoE, ideally directing the forces of their *public power*. We have seen that within the RoS, the primary means by which scientists exercise their authority on each other and advance their common goals and the common good is through the apportioning of honour, shame, and resources. This occurs as scientists authoritatively judge their peers and their works in conversation with the understanding and contributions of the apprentice-scientists, students, lay-experts and laypersons who greatly outnumber them.

In the much wider life of a SoE, such allocations of punishments and honours can be no less necessary, for the range of sins, moral failings, and irresponsibility that are of importance to any free society is very much greater. In fact, in free societies, the adjudication of right and wrong has generally been made the subject of the expertise of jurists, lawyers, and officers of the peace, who are apportioned the task of determining the law and maintaining the right. It is noteworthy as well that Polanyi particularly approved of the common-law tradition, with its emphasis upon “finding the law,” for this tradition, he judged, much better expressed the living and personal character of the universal intent of law. As such, we would infer too that the public power of the SoE too is a spontaneous order, setting upon all and sundry of the commonwealth, those

boundaries of a moral calling and the duty to exercise responsibility with universal intent. In Platonic terms, it comprises the “thumotic” ordering of the commonwealth (Plato 1968, Bk. III-IV).

## Conclusion

If I am correct in this, and I believe that I am, it would be proper to say the ideally manifest SoE is, in fact, a four-fold, open hierarchy of spontaneous orders, reflecting all four of Polanyi’s *coefficients of society*. Taken together Polanyi’s insights would thus render us with a wholly novel understanding of the essence of an open and free society, the question of which has actively bedevilled political theory since Hobbes and Rousseau. In short, if order emerges in the world through our active pursuit and embodiment of truth, then, contra e.g., Hobbes and Rousseau, the world is not simply an intrinsic chaos of matter in motion nor human beings *simply* a chaos of appetites and will, and the modern drive to *create* and *impose* order through sovereign power and civil religion is founded on a fundamental error.

Such then are the signs and the standards of a Society of Explorers, as I have drawn them out through long dwelling on Polanyi’s meaning and intent, and by contemplating the problems, the questions and the clues which he has left behind. Such too, then, the reasons for affirming that his insights are, essentially, Socratic in kind. The Society can be affirmed to be an image of the truly free man writ large, and he, the *cosmos* writ small, forever in the process of becoming something in light of moving and eternal sources of illumination.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>I have argued elsewhere that fully unpacking what is implied by the structure of commitment reveals it to be no more or less than a deep and confident expression of one’s personal and tacit knowledge, thus making it consistent with Polanyi’s introductory remarks in the *TD* that, by fully working-out what was implied in the theory of tacit knowledge, he had lightened the burden carried by commitment *qua* commitment (Cordner, 2013 and 2017).

<sup>2</sup>C.P. Goodman (2008, n. 63) notes that M.P. first employed the term “spontaneous order” in the essay “Planning and Spontaneous Order” (1948), twelve years before Friedrich Hayek adopted the term from him in 1960. Polanyi thus substituted “spontaneous order” for the term “dynamic order,” which he had used in the 1941 essay “The Growth of Thought in Society” and had likely derived it from the work of Gestalt psychologist Wolfgang Kohler.

<sup>3</sup>Yeager (2002) provides an exhaustive and eminently useful list of twelve components, features, historical antecedents, and other factors that Polanyi, over the course of his career, wrote of as contributing to the character of the age. She passes quite quickly, though, over these two basic seeds of the critical or objective mind and treats them as one, but that is a topic I cannot pursue here.

<sup>4</sup>See, for instance, his thoughts on the necessary tension between individual and civic culture in *PK*, 213-216, 222-224 and similar remarks made in Polanyi (2013, 7–11). See also Gelwick (2014, 26) and Mullins (2013, 4–6).

<sup>5</sup>For Polanyi's stronger statements with regards to a rapprochement between the premises of Western culture, religion, and worship, see *PK*, 280-286, 324; *SM*, 42; *TD*, 90-92.

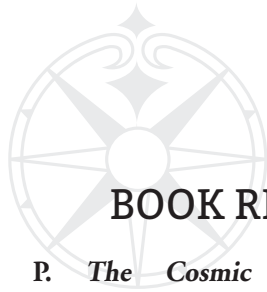
<sup>6</sup>Allen (1998, 185-211) has proposed that Polanyi's theory of the SoE may need to be conjoined with Hayek's concept of the Great Society in order to supplement the weaknesses of both, i.e., the relatively narrow scope of Polanyi's theory, and Hayek's overemphasis upon negative freedoms.

<sup>7</sup>See *KB*, 50-53, 69, 84. Cf. *TD*, 70-73. For a lengthier discussion of Polanyi's thoughts and contributions to economics, see Mitchell (2008), Gulick (2008), and Roberts and Van Cott (1999).

## REFERENCES

- Allen, Richard. 1998. *Beyond Liberalism*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers.
- Berlin, Isaiah. 1969. "Two Concepts of Liberty" in *Four Essays on Liberty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cordner, Colin. 2013. "The Diagnosis of Scientism: Eric Voegelin and Michael Polanyi on Science and Philosophy." *Appraisal* 9/3:3-12.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2017. "Faith, Understanding, and Paradigms in the Works of Michael Polanyi and of Plato." *Appraisal* 11/ 3:26-41.
- Gelwick, Richard. 2014. "A Clue Toward Knowing Truth and God, and Polanyi's 'Forms of Atheism'." *Tradition and Discovery* 40/2: 26-35.
- Goodman, C. P. 2000. "A Free Society: The Polanyian Defence." *Tradition and Discovery* 27/2: 8–25.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2008. "Michael and Karl Polanyi: Conflict and Convergence." *The Political Science Reviewer* 37/1: 13–43.
- Mitchell, Mark. 2008. "The Origins and Implications of Polanyi's Political Economy." *The Political Science Reviewer* 37/1: 44–67.
- Mullins, Phil. 2013. "A Prefatory Note on Polanyi's 'Forms of Atheism'." *Tradition and Discovery* 40/2: 4–6.
- Plato. 1968. *The Republic of Plato*, trans. Allan Bloom. USA: Basic Books.
- Poirier, Maben W. 2009. "Ideology." *Appraisal* 6/2: 10–29.
- Polanyi, Michael. 1962. *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*. London: Routledge & K. Paul.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1959. *The Study of Man*. Chicago : University of Chicago Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1966. *The Tacit Dimension*. Garden City, N.Y : Doubleday.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1967. "Science and Reality." *The British Society for the Philosophy of Science* 18/23: 177-196.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1969. *Knowing and Being*. London, Routledge & K. Paul.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2013. "Forms of Atheism." *Tradition and Discovery* 40/2:7–11.

- . 2014. “Visual Presentation of Social Matters.” *Tradition and Discovery* 41/2: 13–24.
- Roberts, Craig Paul, and Norman Van Cott. 1999. “Polanyi’s Economics.” *Tradition and Discovery* 25/3: 26–31.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1978. *The Social Contract with Geneva Manuscript and Political Economy* ed. Roger D. Masters, trans. Judith R. Masters. USA: St. Martin’s Press.
- Voegelin, Eric. 2000. *Modernity Without Restraint and The Ecumenic Age, Order and History*, v.4. Columbia: University of Missouri Press.
- Yeager, D.M. 2002. “Confronting the Minotaur: Moral Inversion and Polanyi’s Moral Philosophy.” *Tradition and Discovery* 29/1:22–48.



## BOOK REVIEWS

**Scheid, Daniel P. *The Cosmic Common Good: Religious Grounds for Ecological Ethics*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016. 248 + xiv. ISBN 978-0-19-935943-1. \$31.95.**

Daniel Scheid's argument for an interreligious cosmic common good is a worthy, constructive theological effort to "voice a definitive answer to the basic questions of humanity's role on Earth and in the cosmos and of the value of nonhuman creatures" (5).

Driven by an intense sense of peril, this large-hearted first book ambitiously consolidates a decade of reflection (the author acknowledges that "each chapter could be its own book," 181). Within the framework of Roman Catholic social teachings, part one expands the common good to include "non-human creatures and the Earth itself" (43); part two explores the commonalities of this "enlarged" conception with elements of Hinduism, Buddhism, and (guided by the work of George Tinker) American Indian religions.

Although Scheid grounds part one in the creation theologies of Augustine, Aquinas, and Thomas Berry and presents it as a natural outgrowth of "the dynamism of Catholic social thought" (43), his project of lifting commitment to the common good out of the negotiable

context of well-ordered social practice is a bold and not unproblematic venture. This cosmocentric vision of "the numinous origin" and goodness of all creation (re) assigns value. Scheid bridges the gap to the normative by reconceiving the virtue of solidarity to include solidarity with the Earth (chapter five) and augmenting Catholic commitment to human rights with a list of eleven "earth rights," the bearers of which include the Earth, abiota, biota, degraded nature, wild nature, and domesticated nature (chapter six).

Part two—after offering a compact, lucid overview of comparative theology and comparative ecological ethics—pursues a dual purpose. On the one hand, Scheid modestly asks how the valuation of nonhuman nature in the selected other religions might "confirm, challenge, or modify a Catholic vision of the cosmic common good" (116). On the other hand, he advances the much more potent claim that "the cosmic common good emerges as a feasible ground for interreligious ecological ethics" (11)—that is, for a global ethics. He explores Hindu dharmic ecology for its "intense rejection of anthropocentrism" within an alternative theocentrism. His interest in Buddhist traditions lies primarily in dependent co-arising, interdependence, and dynamic "mutually influencing processes" (145).

The Lakota tradition is privileged in three ways not quite symmetrical with the treatment of the other two because in this case dialogue yields not only insights but also “key warnings” (10). Scheid affirms that “indigenous relationships to the Earth still [represent] the closest examples we have to ‘sustainability’ and to the cosmic common good” (164). But in addition the Lakota raise the “voice of the victim,” which must be heard if a Catholic cosmic common good is to be socially as well as ecologically sensitive (164). Moreover, the contrast between Lakota spatiality and “amer-european” temporality, captured in Lakota relationships with the land, functions as a way of resisting the “universalizing tendencies in a cosmic moral vision” (177).

Scheid identifies two specific areas for further exploration. First, he commends on-going exchange among Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and Native Americans “to verify the extent to which the resemblances I have identified in fact hold” (181). Second, he also commends “concrete and specific application of this ethical vision to issues” (ibid.). The latter is especially important because the present argument, proceeding at a high level of abstraction, finesses many issues of conflict, cost, weighting, and selection that will inevitably have to be engaged in situations where action will necessarily realize some goods and not others from among the often staggering array of contending values.

To these two lines of development I would add two others. First, it is not

self-evident that cosmology and morality cohere as neatly as the author assumes; a subset of this issue is the question of whether the author has inadvertently identified the cosmic common good with the particular planetary configuration of interlocking ecosystems existing prior to (roughly) the industrial revolution. Second, there needs to be clearer placement of fear, horror, revulsion, threat, destruction, and cataclysmic change in relation to wonder, harmony, and beauty.

Diane Yeager

Diane.Yeager@georgetown.edu

**Pryor, Adam. *Body of Christ Incarnate for You: Conceptualizing God's Desire for the Flesh*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016. Pp. 213 + xvii. ISBN 978-1-4985-2268-7. \$85.00.**

Adam Pryor's book will be of interest to scholars of Michael Polanyi and William Poteat, given its focus on the body and embodiment or incarnation. Pryor engages in dialogue with an impressive array of thinkers: Patristic theologians and the Council of Chalcedon, Anselm, Luther, Barth, Pannenberg, Moltmann, Gottfried Thomasius, Kierkegaard, David Jensen, Sallie McFague, Bonaventure, Tillich, Rita Nakashima Brock, Merleau-Ponty, Gerald O'Collins, Donna Haraway, Jeanine Thweatt-Bates, Niels Henrik Gregersen, Laurel Schneider, Jean-Luc Marion, and Richard Kearney. Though familiar with many of these figures, I learned more about each through Pryor's analysis (it would have been helpful to have these thinkers listed in the table of contents in some fashion).

While respecting all those with whom he engages, Pryor ultimately does not find all of them equally helpful in forging a viable Christian understanding of the incarnation. As he sees it, the root of the problem lies in the fact that for many theologians incarnation is secondary to soteriology. He confesses that Advent and Christmas, the seasons most oriented to incarnation, are his favorites in the cycle of the church year. Pryor argues salvation comes in the first instance through the very incarnation of God's promiscuous, servant, and liberating love by Jesus

the Christ. In a reversal of the traditional ordering, resurrection hope is secondary as the "doxological" sign or claim (165, 191) of the reality and value of the incarnation.

I agree with Pryor's reordering, and also with his claim that the incarnation of divine love is not limited to Jesus the Christ (111, 119, 149). Perhaps my Methodist roots are evident here, i.e., John Wesley's counter to classical Calvinism's emphasis on total depravity and the affirmation of the possibility of perfection in love. Pryor rejects the two-natures doctrine of Chalcedon, but I would offer in this vein a de-supernaturalized version, wherein a human being can be said to be fully divine in the way that is humanly possible, namely, by incarnating God's love.

Pryor gets concrete about embodiment in his chapter on "Jesus in the Flesh," where he focuses on the temptation, transfiguration, and healings according to Luke's gospel, as Jesus's relationship with God entails that bodily and social power will be used to serve others in mutual relationships (92-111). Following his introduction, Pryor acknowledges Lessing's ditch and the problems of relating ontological and historical truths. Pryor sees the distinctiveness of Jesus's incarnation of divine love as being its uninterrupted and continuous nature over the entirety of his lifetime (152-153, 165). At this point I wish Pryor had referred back to Lessing's ditch and clarified the epistemic basis of such a claim, for this claim of Christ's distinctiveness—which

I myself endorse as a Christian—seems to lack any clear historical evidence. It seems rather to be a profession of the faith of the church, starting with the New Testament portrait of Jesus as the Christ being the bearer of the New Being, to use Tillich's language.

Pryor rightly contends that taking embodiment seriously rules out any simple contrast of subject/object or self/other, world: "The body is the chiasmic location where sensed and sensing cross one another without ever becoming identical or simultaneous" (74). He deals with this issue more theoretically in the chapter entitled, "Being-With in the Flesh," and more concretely in his chapter on "Cyborg Bodies." I found this latter chapter particularly interesting as Pryor shares his knowledge of cases of the interfacing of the human body with technology. While Pryor is absolutely right that no pure subject exists apart from the world or object, nor a pure object apart from its relationships, there is a tendency for him to picture self and world/object as blurring. While one can characterize mystical experiences as involving a fuzzy blurring, things are not that simple for more ordinary experiences. His thinking on the cyborg and on self-world relationships more generally would benefit from incorporation of Polanyi's tacit dimension and the from-to nature of knowledge and action, whereby we rely tacitly on our proximate bodies (and the extension of our bodies through tools, technology, and traditions) in order to attend focally to something distal in the world. Polanyi's

classic example (also used by Merleau-Ponty) of a blind person using a cane to focus on what the end of the cane touches comes readily to mind. Under this model, our embodied subjectivity varies from situation to situation, as we rely on varying forms of embodiment to focus on different objects and different aspects of our natural-social world. Yet the basic biological reality of the organism as distinct from yet consonant with its environment—the rest of the world—is maintained. Pryor sometimes inveighs against "dermal metaphysics," which maintains that our bodies end with our skin (66, 118, 144-146, 152). A Polanyian would agree that we certainly can and do extend our bodies beyond our skin. Yet it is also the case that we die if our skin is breached too extensively.

In considering incarnation and formal sacraments as well as the sacramentality of incarnating divine love in any moment and context, Pryor draws on the thought of Richard Kearney. Pryor finds particularly helpful Kearney's focus on welcoming the stranger as guest. I resonate with Pryor's affirmation of the sacramentality of the in-breaking of divine love when we welcome the other. In appropriating Kearney's "anatheism" ("after God-ism"), Pryor believes he has found "an alternative to either a naïve return to the God of onto-theology or an atheistic rejection of the very notion of God." On my reading of Kearney, however, Kearney retains the word "God" precisely to refer to those instances of welcoming the stranger as guest—



nothing more. Thus, “God” is identified with a part of the world in a non-panthestic naturalism. Pryor, though, seems to want to preserve a notion of God as in some sense the ultimate *source* of the world and of instances of the stranger being welcomed. Additionally, Pryor draws upon Niels Henrik Gregersen’s notion of deep incarnation, which posits the possibility of an eschatological fulfillment of all bodies—not just human ones—through Christ’s incarnation and resurrection (143-147), and mentions in a footnote Robert Russell’s account of the eschatological fulfillment of “the entirety of spacetime” (193). Clearly Gregersen and Russell hold to much more traditional concepts of God and divine power than Kearney’s atheism. All of this is to say I would have appreciated a more extensive exposition of Pryor’s own sense of the God who was incarnate in Christ and may be incarnate in each one of us; Pryor’s previous book, *The God Who Lives*, may cover some of this ground.

I especially appreciate Pryor’s “Conclusion,” subtitled “Incarnational Wild Things” (189-193), a title that draws on Pryor’s experience of reading Maurice Sendak’s *Where the Wild Things Are* to his children. I find Pryor’s account of the wildness of creation and the freedom of individual beings a refreshing reminder of the greatness of God’s creative activity. As Pryor so eloquently puts it, incarnation “is a wild thing that shapes our bodies into ways of being-with one another that otherwise remain impossible possibilities. Pressing us to instantiate the flesh with

loving abandon—to become a chiasm of self and world that is rooted in the persistent advance of love—the incarnation both deep and promiscuous reveals an intertwining of God and creation that cannot be rent apart” (193).

David Nikkel  
David.nikkel@uncp.edu

