

# NEWS AND NOTES

## *Tradition and Discovery 47:2*

### July 2021

The online-only “News and Notes” section of *Tradition and Discovery* includes bibliographic information, calls for papers, annual meeting programs, and any other items possibly of interest to members of the Polanyi Society and other persons working with the thought of Michael Polanyi. Send materials to Phil Mullins at [mullins@missouriwestern.edu](mailto:mullins@missouriwestern.edu).

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### Support the Polanyi Society

Although it is not my favorite job as the President of the Polanyi Society Board of Directors, let me continue to press anyone interested in Michael Polanyi’s thought to consider a donation to the Polanyi Society.

Several Society members have made recent donations and for these funds I am genuinely appreciative. Our Endowment is slowly building, and we continue to be a very frugal 501C-3 not-for-profit organization. But I am also mindful that we seem to be entering a new era in which small professional societies like the Polanyi Society are increasingly an endangered species. Historically, groups like the Polanyi Society could depend on colleges and universities with stable faculties and interest in broad-based education to support academic professional groups. In the post-pandemic world, it appears that this will be less and less the case. If ideas matter in society—as Michael Polanyi contended—groups like the Society that support interdisciplinary projects that cultivate ideas must find new resources to support program development. So please consider making new gifts to the Polanyi Society. Send a check payable to the Polanyi Society to The Polanyi Society, c/o Charles Lowney, Treasurer, 10 Jordan Street, Lexington, VA 14450. Or use your credit card to donate via PayPal at <http://polanysisociety.org/register/join-renew.php> (a secure site).

Phil Mullins, President  
Polanyi Society Board of Directors  
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## Recent Zoom Presentations/Discussions and Plans for Future Zoom Presentations/Discussions

One Polanyi Society response to the recent pandemic was to move from sponsoring in-person meetings to online events. In ways unexpected, Zoom presentations/discussions have turned out to be intellectually stimulating gatherings that engaged a number of those interested in Michael Polanyi's thought. Most sessions have had 25-35 participants from a wide variety of places; sessions have been recorded and some report they viewed recordings when there they could not participate in a session. Since the publication of the February 2021 TAD, the following Zoom sessions have been held:

March 5, 2021. Session 1: "Is Polanyi's ethic of discovery corrupted in contemporary science?" Stephen Turner and Daryl Chubin with a comment from Ted Brown. Session 2: "The Relevance of Sigmund Koch's 'Millian Hypothesis' and Polanyi's Understanding of Commitment to Social Psychology." Collin D. Barnes.

March 6, 2021. Session 1: "Object-Oriented Ontology and Michael Polanyi's Post-Critical Thought." Martin Turkis. Session 2: "Michael Polanyi and the Relation of Fields to Discovery and Problem Solving." Walter B. Gulick with a comment from Jon Fennell.

May 15, 22 and 29, 2021. Presentations/discussions on the topic "Polanyi's Liberalism in the Forties." For each day's session, a set of short archival and published Polanyi materials from this period was posted.

June 11, 2021. Session 1: "A Polanyian Appraisal of Likert-Scale Measurement in Social Psychology." Collin D. Barnes. Session 2: "Gregory Bateson and Michael Polanyi on Minds, Nature and Beauty." Charles Lowney.

June 12, 2021. Session 1: 1. "A Polanyian Encounter with John 3:16-21." Jon Fennell. Session 2: "The Critical to Post-Critical Shift: What It Means and Why It's Important." Dale Cannon.

The present plan is for the Society to continue to sponsor Zoom presentations/discussions. Normally, such events are advertised on the Polanyi Society discussion list ([michael-polanyi-discussion-list@googlegroups.com](mailto:michael-polanyi-discussion-list@googlegroups.com)) as well as on the Society's webpages ([polanyisociety.org](http://polanyisociety.org)). Anyone interested can participate. To register, send an e-mail to both Gus Breytspraak ([gus.breytspraak@ottawa.edu](mailto:gus.breytspraak@ottawa.edu)) and Phil Mullins ([mullins@missouriwestern.edu](mailto:mullins@missouriwestern.edu)) and your e-mail address will be added to the list of those who receive a link for the session early in the week of the session and a reminder just prior to the session. After the session is completed, everyone on the sign-up list also receives a link for the recording that is online.

If you are interested in making a zoom presentation, contact Walt Gulick ([WGulick@msubillings.edu](mailto:WGulick@msubillings.edu)), chair of the Program Committee. Anyone who sends a paragraph proposal outlining a possible Zoom topic will receive feedback from the Program Committee. As

the diversity of topics noted above suggests, the Program Committee is interested in sponsoring presentations/discussions on a wide range of topics.

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## **Repository for Recordings and Other Materials from Zoom Sessions**

The recently created Links for Recordings of Polanyi Society Zoom Presentations/Discussions can always be accessed from [polanyisociety.org](http://polanyisociety.org). Under this link, you will find other links for most materials used in the several Polanyi Society-sponsored online events of the last year. There are materials from six sets of Zoom presentations/discussions. Soon after Zoom events, links for papers, outlines and/or PowerPoints, responses to papers, and recordings of sessions are moved to this site and consolidated. But you can find anything of interest (e.g., an essay written by a particular person) simply by opening the top-level link for a set of Zoom sessions (usually listed by date). Since some materials used in sessions are copyrighted material and some may eventually be published in TAD or other journals, some materials may eventually be removed from this site. In most cases, there is a link for the recording of a session which is on the Zoom cloud as well as a link for the same recording stored on the Polanyi Society webpages. Eventually, the Zoom cloud space (temporarily rented) will be reclaimed by Zoom, but you should still have access to the recording stored on the Polanyi Society website, using the media player on your local machine rather than the more sophisticated player on the Zoom cloud. Inquiries about materials can be sent to Phil Mullins ([mullins@missouriwestern.edu](mailto:mullins@missouriwestern.edu)).

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## **In-Person Polanyi Society Meetings in 2021 and 2022**

The Polanyi Society will **not** sponsor an in-person annual meeting in late November 2021 in San Antonio, TX, in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR). Excepting the pandemic year of 2020 in which there was no in-person AAR annual meeting, the Society has held a meeting featuring academic papers at the AAR continuously for almost fifty years. Although some Society members were interested in an in-person San Antonio meeting, it does not appear that we have the critical mass necessary to justify the planning of and expense of an in-person meeting. In fact, the AAR seems to be anticipating a smaller annual meeting with some electronic options, although these options are not yet clear. The Society was recently re-approved as a “related scholarly organization” which allows the Society to hold an in-person meeting at future AAR gatherings.

The spring 2021 Nashotah Conference was cancelled due to the pandemic. Andrew Grosso, who has put together the recent Nashotah Conferences, has discussed with the Nashotah House staff options for a spring 2022 in-person conference. The Society has worked out a tentative

agreement for a two or three-day conference between Tuesday, 31 May, and Friday, 3 June 2022. Several people made inquiries or sent paper proposals for the cancelled spring 2021 Nashotah Conference. **If you are interested in presenting a paper or simply attending a Nashotah Conference, please e-mail Andrew Grosso ([atgrosso@icloud.com](mailto:atgrosso@icloud.com)). The conference will likely be Wednesday, 1 June through Friday noon, 3 June 2022.** We are assembling a mailing list and hope to put together a preliminary head count of conference participants. More information about this future Nashotah Conference will be forthcoming in future issues of TAD and in postings on the Polanyi Society discussion list ([michael-polanyi-discussion-list@googlegroups.com](mailto:michael-polanyi-discussion-list@googlegroups.com)) and on [polanyisociety.org](http://polanyisociety.org).

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## **Budapest Workshop on Philosophy of Technology 2021 ( BudPT21)**

### **Call for Papers**

The third Budapest Workshop on Philosophy of Technology will be held December 9-10, 2021, at Budapest University of Technology and Economics. Proposal abstracts are due by 31 August 2021. Instructions and details are online: <https://www.budpt.eu/>. There are no fees of any kind.

As in 2019, the presenters will be offered an opportunity to publish a full paper in the WoS SSCI-indexed **InfTars** ("Information Society": [infmars.infonia.hu](http://infmars.infonia.hu)) journal after the workshop. At [budpt.eu](http://budpt.eu) you can browse a selection of the papers from BudPT19.

BudPT21 hopes to be an in-person conference. This displays our trust in medical technology as well as a certain amount of optimistic bias. However, should any accepted participants become unable to attend, they will still be able to publish the full paper (but we will not transition to a hybrid conference). See the details at the event website. Please only submit with the intent of travelling to Budapest but delay all hard expenses as long as you can. While on-line events are great because of their flexibility and low barrier of entry, the atmosphere of a face-to-face event can never be fully replicated, and this is exactly what we are trying to create. Thank you for your understanding. Inquiries can be directed to Mihály Héder ([Mihaly.Heder@filozofia.bme.hu](mailto:Mihaly.Heder@filozofia.bme.hu)).

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### **Polanyi Society Website Additions**

Polanyi's short and provocative 1946 essay "Social Capitalism" has been added to the [collection of primary materials](#) on the Polanyi Society website. This essay was posted originally for discussion in a Zoom session on 12 June 2020 and there is a link to the recording of this

discussion as well as links to essays by Phil Mullins and Alessio Tartaro on the essay that were recently published in [Polanyiana 28](#).

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## Gene Thursby (1939-2021)

Gene Robert Thursby, age 81, died on Friday, January 15th, 2021, in Haven Hospice in Gainesville, Fl. He was born on May 8th, 1939, in Akron, Ohio. He was a member of the Department of Religion at the University of Florida from 1970 until his retirement in 2007. He was a friend and colleague of Taylor Scott at UF. It was through Taylor that I got to know Gene.

Taylor's favorite philosopher, Hannah Arendt, was fond of talking about the web of human relationships. This web started getting woven between Gene and Taylor and with many others, including myself, by various threads of historical contingency. One such thread in this web was our common link to our beloved teacher Bill Poteat. And don't such links always go deeper than we sometimes realize? For Gene, one link began with the fact that he and Bill were both graduates of Oberlin. The threads would expand as he and Taylor would study with Bill at Duke. Both shared Bill's influence with their students of UF. As the web continued to grow, Taylor became my colleague and friend and introduced me to Gene. As I learned, Gene's life and career, like most of Bill's students, was profoundly shaped by the work of Michael Polanyi. And this is what wove Gene's life and career into the web of the Polanyi Society. Although his teaching was centered on matters of comparative religion, he later developed an abiding interest in what Houston Smith called perennial philosophy. It was abundantly clear to me when we talked about this development of his interests that his intellectual framework was deeply shaped by Polanyi's concept of tacit knowing. Gene steadfastly supported the Polanyi Society and kept abreast of articles published in *Tradition and Discovery*. I have found that those who have found a friend in Polanyi are also liable to be good people. Gene was a shining example.

His wife Pam Hunt left us with his parting advice: "You never know where grace and love are going to break in. If you can, be open to it. Be able to have a little quiet within yourself. If you can become a center of calm, all the better."

Ron Hall

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## Academic Papers, Blogs, Dissertations, and Publications

Martin Beddeleem, 2020. “Fragile Knowledge, Moral Pitfalls: Early Neoliberalism and Its Demise”. *KNOW: A Journal on the Formation of Knowledge* 4:2, 175-202.

Abstract: This article proposes an interpretation of the intellectual origins of neoliberalism. Influenced by scientific modernism, its founders held that knowledge, being indeterminate and uncertain, was fragile. They feared that the authority of science could be corrupted and made to serve political aims opposed to liberal values. As a result, early neoliberals endeavored to rebuild the principles of liberalism from a moral-epistemological position. They put forward a moral and legal framework that could stabilize the market economy and embed liberal values in the process of science. Later neoliberals, however, set forth a more instrumental vision of morality and knowledge that unraveled the early neoliberal project.

Jon Fennell and Tim Simpson. “A Polanyian rationale for a liberal arts core curriculum” *Theory and Research in Education* v. 19, no. 1. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477878521996237>.

Abstract: What would we have the school teach? To what end? In the name of democracy, and building on the pioneering epistemology of Michael Polanyi, Harry S. Broudy, a leading voice in philosophy of education during the twentieth century, calls for a liberal arts core curriculum for all. The envisioned product of such schooling is a certain sort of person. Anticipating the predictable relativistic challenge so much on display in our own time, Broudy justifies the selection of subject matter (and thus the envisioned character formation and cultivation of moral imagination) by reference to the authority of experts in the disciplines. This response fails to fully repel the assault, thereby revealing the need for a dimension of Polanyi’s thought whose significance exceeds even that of the epistemology that Broudy so effectively invokes.

Keywords: Harry Broudy, justification, liberal arts, Michael Polanyi, moral imagination, tacit knowledge

Walter B. Gulick, “Toward a Comprehensive Interpretation of Aesthetics.” *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 41:2-3 (May-September 2020), 151-174.

Abstract: In recent decades, an understanding of aesthetics expanded beyond its role in artistic creation and appreciation has again been voiced by a varied group of often disconnected philosophers. However, little has been written to integrate attention to such themes as aesthetics in everyday experience, in the experience of the natural world, in sports, or in shaping reflection. Nor has the recent broader appreciation been connected with care to the historical treatment of aesthetics as found in the thought of such thinkers as Plato, Aristotle, Shaftsbury, Kant, Nietzsche, Peirce, Dewey, and Polanyi. In this essay I begin such a comprehensive treatment of aesthetics, integrating the so-called aesthetic

attitude, aesthetic creation, and aesthetic judgment in a theory I call situational aesthetics. Situational aesthetics grounds aesthetic sensitivity in pre-reflective animal experience and thematizes its cultural expression in a four-level phenomenologically based structure of creation and evaluation. Arising in perception, attested to in feeling, and articulated in language, image, and action, aesthetics has inspirational and organizational powers worthy of wider recognition and greater honor than often accorded it.

Martin X. Moleski, S. J. 2013 (Sept.-Dec.). "At Home in the Universe Again: Doing Justice to Polanyi's Theological Intuitions." *Ultimate Reality and Meaning*." V. 36, No. 3-5: 160-175. Published 2020. <https://utpjournals.press/doi/full/10.3138/uram.36.3-4.160>.

Abstract: In this article, the author offers a reappraisal of Michael Polanyi's understanding of ultimate reality and meaning, dropping the charge that Polanyi was functionally an atheist and assembling fresh material from primary sources in order to reach a more just assessment of the quality of his faith in a divine reality. In the second part of the article, the author takes a fresh look at the theological implications of Polanyi's epistemology of tacit knowing and personal knowledge, no longer treating his assertions about ultimate reality as ill-fitting elements of an essentially secular philosophy but truly as the focal point of Polanyi's most important insights.

Two essays (listed immediately below) in the March 2021 Routledge collection [Science, Freedom and Democracy](#), edited by Péter Hartl and Adam Tamas Tuboly (ISBN: 978-0-367-41817-5), directly treat Polanyi's ideas:

Péter Hartl. "The Ethos of Science and Central Planning: Merton and Michael Polanyi on the Autonomy of Science," 39-67.

Abstract: This paper presents Robert K. Merton's and Michael Polanyi's accounts of academic freedom and reconstructs their criticism of centralized and totalitarian control of science. It will discuss in historical context how their conceptions of values, norms and traditions in science (i.e., 'the ethos of science') produced their defense of academic freedom and free society. The main thesis is that Merton's and Polanyi's defenses of freedom of science and a free society against totalitarianism have much in common, even though Polanyi himself was critical of Merton's sociology. Both thinkers argue that freedom of science and a free society depend on each other, and both share the idea that the ethos of science exemplifies the values of a free society as a whole. In general, neither defends academic freedom and liberty in individualistic terms. The paper reconstructs Polanyi's specific arguments against the central planning of science: namely his argument based on the nature of scientific authority, his argument that tacit knowledge in science is indispensable, as well as his argument that scientific inquiry is a spontaneous order whose development would be paralyzed by a central and hierarchic organization. This paper also highlights a few shortcomings of both Merton's and Polanyi's views and suggests some modifications thereof. Nevertheless, it concludes by arguing that their warnings offer valuable

lessons for the present day, as the motives underlying the attempts by governments to control science are still with us in the context of populist and authoritarian politics.

Keywords: academic freedom, central planning, democracy, the ethos of science, liberty, Robert Merton, Michael Polanyi, totalitarianism

Phil Mullins. “Michael Polanyi’s Post-Critical Philosophical Vision of Science and Society,” 15-38.

Abstract: This essay outlines the contours of both Michael Polanyi’s critical and his constructive philosophical ideas, focusing on his social and political perspective and its interface with his account of science. Polanyi contended the modern turn in philosophy was a misstep leading ultimately to a false narrative about science whose cultural impact has brought nihilism, violence, and totalitarianism in the twentieth century. Polanyi’s constructive “post-critical” alternative perspective focused on a discovery-centered account of science and a broadly reframed understanding of the activity of human knowing and the nature of human knowledge. But Polanyi wove with his account of science clear ideas about the social and political organization of society which could best promote science and a modern society shaped by science. Ultimately, he outlined a vision for what he termed a “society of explorers”.

Keywords: Michael Polanyi’s post-critical philosophy

On February 22 and 23 of this year, four Polanyi scholars participated in the National Symposium for Classical Education (an online event with more than 500 participants that this year focused on the teaching of natural science). In a panel titled “The Nature of Science and the Character of Discovery: Notes from a Scientist-Philosopher,” Matthew Young (a physical chemist), Collin Barnes (a psychologist), and Tim Simpson and Jon Fennell (both philosophers of education), addressed the following topics:

- Polanyi’s life and the political and intellectual context out of which he arose and to which he was responding;
- Polanyi’s central contributions to our understanding of science
- How acquaintance with Polanyi affects teaching in the science classroom as well as in the lab;
- Polanyi’s special significance for K-12 classical education;
- Why someone today should read Polanyi;
- Where to start in coming to understand Polanyi.

The recorded exchange, which runs approximately 40 minutes, was broadcast on both days of the symposium, followed by a different live Q & A for each session. The panel discussion as well as the Q & A is preserved for viewing by interested parties. Readers who would like to view the panel should contact Jon Fennell at [jfennell@hillsdale.edu](mailto:jfennell@hillsdale.edu).



## **The Travel, Grants, and Projects Fund and the Endowment**

To simplify our accounting, the Polanyi Society recently consolidated several old funds into the Travel, Grants, and Projects Fund. Disbursements from this new consolidated fund may be made in memory of particular persons. The fund will also continue to support the participation of younger scholars in Society (in-person) meetings. Some new awards and projects aimed at younger scholars may soon be added.

The Polanyi Society Endowment was established a few years ago with a gift from the late Ann Herbert Scott, the widow of William T. Scott, the original Polanyi biographer. The Walter B. Mead estate in 2019 provided a substantial contribution to the Endowment. The Polanyi Society Endowment is slowly growing, and each year modest distribution help cover expenses.

Please support the Travel, Grants, and Projects Fund and the Polanyi Society Endowment by sending a tax-deductible contribution to The Polanyi Society, C/O Charles Lowney, 10 Jordan Street, Lexington, VA, 24450. Bequests and large donations are very important to the Society, but the many smaller donations to the Society, often made in conjunction with dues payment, are also significant and appreciated. Checks should be made out to the Polanyi Society and, if so intended, marked Travel, Grants, and Projects or Endowment. Unmarked donations will go toward general operating expenses. You can also directly access the Polanyi Society PayPal button (with accompanying tutorial) to make a donation:

<http://polanyisociety.org/paypal/donate.html>

All actual PayPal transactions for the Polanyi Society are is handled on the secure PayPal site.

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## **Back Issues of *TAD* Available for Purchase**

A limited number of back printed issues of *TAD* are available for purchase as long as supplies last. The cost for a copy of issues up to and including Vol. 41:3 is \$5.00. A copy of issues from 42:1 through 46:1 (the final printed issue) is \$7.00. All prices include shipping and handling. For issues up to and including Vol. 39:2, contact Phil Mullins ([mullins@missouriwestern.edu](mailto:mullins@missouriwestern.edu)). For issues from 39:3 to 46: 1, contact Paul Lewis ([lewis\\_pa@mercer.edu](mailto:lewis_pa@mercer.edu)). Payment should be sent to The Polanyi Society, C/O Charles Lowney, 10 Jordan Street, Lexington, VA, 24450. Checks should be made out to the Polanyi Society and earmarked for back issues.