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# REVIEWS

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*Editor's Note: The following is an appreciative comment that Richard Gelwick submitted in a letter soon after listening to the entire tape which he and others in the Polanyi Society helped shape.*

When I began working with Michael Polanyi in 1962 as the first person to compile his social and philosophical bibliography and to write a dissertation on his thought, I was alone. There were only a few brief reviews of *Personal Knowledge*. There were no critical essays, books, or bibliography of Polanyi's social and philosophical thought. Now the Mars Hill audio publication of "Tacit Knowing, Truthful Knowing, The Life And Thought Of Michael Polanyi" has brought the study of Polanyi to a new level of public discussion. With this audiotape, the complex thought of Polanyi and a generation of scholarship on Polanyi has opened up Polanyi's theory of knowledge to the serious but non-academic inquirers of our time. Writer Andrew Witmer and co-hosts Ken Meyers and Kate Burke have reached out to many who knew Polanyi and have creatively used master violin makers and scientist's testimonies to illustrate Polanyi's ideas. For the first time, there is a handy tool for a quick yet deep introduction for those unlikely to labor through Polanyi's works. Students, scientists, pastors, journalists, artists and poets will find a key to unlock the puzzle of beliefs in a world of cynicism and doubt. Even philosophers who have misunderstood Polanyi may see grounds for reconsidering their criticisms. The Mars Hill leadership is especially to be commended for helping the listener understand why the problem of knowledge is important and the revolutionary importance of Polanyi's thought. Now teachers and inquirers have a new tool that will open up the important philosophical contribution of Polanyi. For the first time, I have a ready means of showing to others in a global collection of interpreters and the voice of Polanyi himself the significance of "personal knowledge" and "tacit knowing." This excellently prepared and produced audiotape is a must for all that want to teach and to share the ideas of Michael Polanyi.

Richard Gelwick

Mars Hill Audio Report, *Tacit Knowing, Truthful Knowing: The Life and Thought of Michael Polanyi*. Written and ed. by Andrew Witmer, produced by Ken Myers, 1999. Information: phone (800) 331-6407, e-mail [tapes@MarsHillAudio.org](mailto:tapes@MarsHillAudio.org)

Ken Myers, producer of this audio cassette featuring Michael Polanyi, provides a form of access to Polanyi not previously available. Now one can offer a person with some interest in Polanyi's thought, but not the time to read one of the good secondary sources available (much less *Personal Knowledge*), this two and a half hours' worth of description and interviews to listen to while traveling or during free moments at home. And one can be confident that the two highly professional tapes are accurate and enticing.

In suggesting that *Tacit Knowing, Truthful Knowing* would make a good gift for those who know only a little about Polanyi, I am indicating the audience I think will most benefit from the material provided. Those with a sophisticated understanding of Polanyi's thought will also find some helpful information on these tapes. It is good to hear Michael's voice on tape two, side two. Marjorie Grene's reflections about work with Michael are important historical nuggets. But essentially the tapes are introductory in nature.

Much of the first tape sets forth an historical overview of Michael's career. Marty Moleski and Richard Gelwick are key individuals interviewed to supply telling insights about various key incidents during Polanyi's career. Both Polanyi's scientific accomplishments and his philosophical developments are dealt with in the second tape. Gerald Holton and Dudley Herschbach make interesting contributions with regard to the domain of science, while Gelwick, Grene, Moleski, Thomas Torrance, Ruel Tyson and Steven Garber help illuminate the implications of Polanyi's thought in philosophy and theology.

Large portions of the first part of the second tape are devoted to discussion of tacit knowing. I found the protracted interview with violin makers Peter and Wendy Moes to be less productive than other commentary. That expert violin making is a craft requiring tacit skills is a significant but not too difficult concept to comprehend.

The tapes concentrate on tacit knowing and the place of value in a world also made intelligible through science. Many facets of Polanyi's thought are not touched upon. The notions of emergence and the evolutionary growth of knowledge are not mentioned. Ideas from *Meaning* are not discussed. Controversies that have emerged in Polanyian scholarship are also not broached. But what is covered is covered well. Bibliographical information about Polanyi's works and secondary books are cited in the written material, and contact information about the Polanyi Society is provided. In sum, these tapes provide a reliable and most welcome addition to the resources for finding out about, as the subtitle indicates, the life and thought of Michael Polanyi.

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Matthew Forstater, "Working Backwards: Instrumental Analysis As a Policy Discovery Procedure," *Review of Political Economy* 11:1 (1999): 5-18.

Adolph Lowe, an economist who studied industrial capitalism earlier in the century, proposed an "instrumental method" for economics whereby economics was to focus attention on inventing means to desired ends. Although Lowe did not much develop his idea that economics must be oriented to discovery procedures, he did note that Polya's work on heuristics, Charles S. Peirce's work on abduction, and Michael Polanyi's work on tacit knowing and discovery were relevant to economic problem solving (i.e., inventing means to desired means). Matthew Forstater's essay reviews the work of Polya, Peirce, and Polanyi to try and extend Lowe's notion of instrumental analysis as

a policy discovery procedure. Forstater provides an interesting comparison of Polya, Peirce and Polanyi. Especially using Polanyi's ideas, he offers some suggestions about how economics can develop the procedure of instrumental analysis in methodological terms. The essay concludes by noting that some economists are today rediscovering and using ideas of Mises, Hayek and, secondarily, Polanyi in post Soviet era critiques of centrally planned economies. In sum, this is an interesting article, which, like some recent *TAD* essays, that suggests the critical and constructive thought of Polanyi is being rediscovered by economists and social scientists.

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## WWW Polanyi Resources

**The Polanyi Society has a World Wide Web site at <http://www.mwsc.edu/~polanyi/>. In addition to information about Polanyi Society membership and meetings, the site contains the following: (1) the history of Polanyi Society publications, including a listing of issues by date and volume with a table of contents for recent issues of *Tradition and Discovery*; (2) a comprehensive listing of *Tradition and Discovery* authors, reviews and reviewers; (3) information on locating early publications; (4) information on *Appraisal* and *Polanyiana*, two sister journals with special interest in Polanyi's thought; (5) the "Guide to the Papers of Michael Polanyi" which provides an orientation to archival material housed in the Department of Special Collections of the University of Chicago Library; (6) photographs of Michael Polanyi.**