

The Polanyi Society

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Preface

This issue of *TAD* recognizes the contributions of Harry Prosch who died last March. Almost since its publication, there has been speculation about Prosch's role in putting together *Meaning* from the lectures on which it was based. This discussion has been complicated by another controversy regarding how to interpret Polanyi's ideas about the objects of transnatural integration. Harry Prosch made his views quite clear in reviews, essays and in his *Michael Polanyi, A Critical Exposition*. What is included in this issue will not resolve the difficult questions. The short obituary notice I have written, with the help of Harry's friends and family, seeks simply to provide a more rounded view of Prosch's life than Polanyians know. "Harry Prosch: A Memorial Re-Appraisal of the *Meaning* Controversy," which Marty Moleski and I wrote, seeks to offer one more perspective on Prosch and Polanyi's collaboration. The interesting essays by Tony Clark ("Polanyi on Religion") and Esther L Meek ("Learning to See: The Role of Authoritative Guides in Knowing") began their lives as papers presented at recent annual meetings of the Polanyi Society. In addition to the essays, there are three reviews, including one on an important new collection of essays on Polanyi's thought.

Be sure you also take a look at the plans for the 2006 Polanyi Society meeting next November in San Diego and the call for papers at that meeting. The official business of the Society is laid out in the minutes on the November 19, 2005 meeting and the financial statement. News and Notes includes some bibliography and other items that may be of interest. If you tried recently to access the new *TAD* digital archives and had difficulty, please try again and notify me about any further problems. There was, in fact, a small glitch in the code that prevented some from downloading material but that has now been fixed.

Phil Mullins

Tradition and Discovery is indexed selectively in *The Philosopher's Index* and *Religious and Theological Abstracts* and is included in the EBSCO online database of academic and research journals.

NEWS AND NOTES

The Polanyi Society has a Travel Fund, thanks to donations from several people. While this is not yet a large fund, it is intended to help support students interested in Polanyi and/or scholars beginning work on Polanyi. Funds can be requested to attend the annual meeting of the Polanyi Society. Faculty who might know of potentially interested students or scholars should forward names and addresses to Walter Mead (wbmead@ilstu.edu).

Searchable TAD Digital Archives Are Open Access

The digital archives for *TAD* (accessed from a link on the Polanyi Society web page at <http://www.missouriwestern.edu/orgs/polanyi/>) were recently unavailable due to a glitch in the code. If you have had trouble entering the archives and/or downloading an issue of *TAD*, try again. The Google search engine for the Polanyi Society site (located at the bottom of the page) should now be working. You no longer need a password to download a full issue or a particular article from the table of contents in any issue from the present back to Volume 17, Numbers 1 & 2 (1990-1991).

Albert Bagood writes that in the 2005-2006 academic year he is teaching a course entitled "The Image of Man in the Philosophy of Michael Polanyi." His article, "The Complexity of A Passionate Scientific Researcher: The Holistic Approach to St. Thomas and M. Polanyi," appeared in *Angelicum*, 81 (2004): 593-614.

Stephen Henry has recently published an article using Polanyi's philosophy as a platform for critiquing a new medical licensing examination: Henry, Stephen G., "Playing Doctor." *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 294 no. 17 (November 2, 2005): 2138-2140.

TAD 31: 3 featured articles on *Longing to Know: The Philosophy of Knowledge for Ordinary People* by Dale Cannon and David Rutledge with a response from author Esther L. Meek. An interesting recent interview of Meek is posted on Common Grounds Online; there is also a link here to a review of the book by Scott Phillips (http://commongroundsonline.typepad.com/common_grounds_online/2005/10/by_doug_serven.html).

Polanyi Society WWW Site

For anyone who did not see the earlier notice, the Polanyi web site now has links to 14 Polanyi articles. Also added to the site is a brief statement about "Polanyi and Intelligent Design." This addition clarifies the history of the now defunct "Michael Polanyi Center" at Baylor and provides links to other sites with more detailed information.

SPCPS Conference

The annual SPCPS Conference (formerly the *Appraisal/Polanyi Conference*) is scheduled for April 7 and 8 at The University of Nottingham. This conference operates as a round-table seminar, providing much time for each paper. For information about fees and a schedule of presentations, contact Richard Allen (rt.allen@ntlworld.com).

Electronic Discussion List

The Polanyi Society supports an electronic discussion group that explores implications of the thought of Michael Polanyi. Anyone interested can join. To join yourself, go to the following address: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/polanyi_list/join. If you have difficulty, send an e-mail to Doug Masini (masini@etsu.edu) and someone will see that you are added to the list.

2006 Polanyi Society Annual Meeting

Call for Papers

This year's annual meeting of the Polanyi Society will be held in Washington, DC, November 17 and 18, 2006. Once again each of our sessions will be held as an "Additional Meeting" in conjunction with the annual meetings of the American Academy of Religion and the Society for Biblical Literature. The request to the AAR/SBL for space is pending, but as usual we anticipate having both a Friday night session from 9:00-11:00 p.m. and a Saturday morning session from 9:00-11:30 a.m.

Two sorts of proposals are especially sought this year. One of our sessions will feature a paper by Blythe Clinchy, co-author of the widely influential book, *Women's Ways of Knowing*. She will be developing an essay that explicates some of her feminist epistemology as it bears on ideas set forth by Polanyi. Dale Cannon, who initiated correspondence with Clinchy about her Polyanian interests, will serve as one respondent. We seek one or two other individuals as respondents. It would be helpful if those willing to serve as respondents would indicate something of their interest in and or/ experience with the literature in psychology, feminist studies, and/or epistemology that Clinchy's work touches upon. Ideally the respondents would represent a broad array of interests related to Clinchy's work.

The second sort of proposals are those that would fit under the broad rubric of "Polyanian Heuristic Theologies and Philosophies of Religion." There are two kinds of papers that might be offered. One might seek to clarify Polanyi's own philosophy of religion. The other would seek to build on Polanyi's thought and offer a constructive theological vision or a creative philosophical interpretation of the place and significance of religion. Based on the level of interest demonstrated in this topic, this topic might be repeated in future calls for papers with the objective of bringing together the essays generated into a book

format. At the very least, *Tradition and Discovery* would be highly interested in publishing articles on this subject matter.

Review of proposals will begin April 5, but earlier submissions are appreciated. Proposals for serving as a respondent need not be longer than a paragraph. Proposals for the theology and philosophy of religion session should ideally be 300 to 500 words in length, although full-length papers may also be submitted for consideration. Send proposals (e-mail attachments preferred!) to:

Walter Gulick, wgulick@msubillings.edu
Telephone: (406) 657-2904. Fax: (406) 657-1671.

Minutes of Polanyi Society Annual Meeting of November 19, 2005

Walter Gulick called the meeting to order at 11:15 a.m.

1. Ann Scott announced that she was sending to the Polanyi Society some of the unused funds that have supported the writing of the biography. Gulick expressed thanks for the Society.
2. Election: the terms on the board of the following individuals have expired: Phil Mullins, John Puddefoot, David Rutledge. The following replacements were elected unanimously: Dale Cannon, Wally Mead, Chris Goodman.
3. Gulick reported that two proposals for new AAR units will be submitted by December 1: (a) Richard Gelwick is preparing a proposal for a Seminar on Polanyi's heuristic philosophy of religion; (b) A proposal to establish a Group assessing methodologies for studying religion (including post-critical approaches) is being submitted by Dale Cannon and Walter Gulick.
4. The group discussed the possibility of organizing a summer seminar on science and religion. This is the kind of topic that the Templeton Foundation supports.

[Subsequently it was decided to target summer 2007 when the Polanyi Reader should be ready for use.] It was also noted that the Berkeley Center for the Study of Science and Theology may offer grants to bring together philosophers, theologians and scientists.

5. Cannon gave a report on the successful Rocky Mountain Retreat and circulated the proposed outline for a Polanyi Reader.

6. Mullins reported archived issues of *TAD* back to 1991 are available on the Polanyi website, and that he and Rutledge are working to get *TAD* included in sets of electronic journals which companies known as aggregators now provide to libraries.

7. Gulick noted that scholarships are available to help young scholars attend our annual meetings. Wally Mead will take the lead in recruiting candidates and chairing an *ad hoc* committee to determine each year's recipient.

8. The IRAS annual meeting on Star Island is featuring a conference on "Emergence" in late July, 2006 and again in summer, 2007.

9. The Polanyi Society is considering hosting a summer conference in 2008 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *Personal Knowledge*.

10. Wally Mead has arranged for the re-publication of *The Tacit Dimension* by Eerdmans. When the book is available, the Polanyi Society will see what it can do to obtain the book in bulk for its members. Mead was to ensure if possible that selections from the book would be available for use in the Polanyi Reader at no (or little) charge.

11. Possible topics for the 2006 meeting in Washington were discussed: (a) Blythe Clinchy, one of the authors of *Women's Ways of Knowing*, and much interested in Polanyi, will be asked to do a lead paper to which there would be respondents. Nancy Tuana was mentioned as a possible respondent. (b) There could be an interesting session on "Disputed Ques-

tions," for instance, intelligent design. (c) There could be a session on Polanyi and pedagogy, treating how we learn and know in the classroom and teach writing. (d) There was support for a Polanyian philosophy of religion session (if the proposed Seminar is not approved).

12. The question was raised, but not resolved, as to whether the Society should have just a single session if the AAR approves the Seminar and/or Group. With AAR now offering competing sessions on Saturday morning, there is increasing pressure on our traditional time slots. [Neither proposal for a new unit was approved by the AAR.]

Martin Moleski, Secretary

Polanyi Society Financial Statement

September 1, 2004 – August 31, 2005

Beginning Bal. Checking	\$919.60
Income-membership dues, gifts	\$3500.00
Expenses	
Annual meeting (Moleski)	\$200.00
<i>TAD</i> (30, #3)	\$894.45
<i>TAD</i> (31, #1)	\$848.76
<i>TAD</i> (31, #2)	\$791.14
Total expenses	\$2734.35
Year End Checking	\$1685.25
<hr/>	
Beginning Bal. Savings	\$2080.27
Income Interest	\$14.06
Gift (for travel fund)	\$300.00
Expenses	-0-
Year End Savings	\$2394.33

John V. Apczynski, Treasurer

Harry Prosch 1917-2005¹

Phil Mullins

ABSTRACT Key Words: Harry Prosch, Michael Polanyi

This is an obituary notice for Harry Prosch, the American philosopher who collaborated with Michael Polanyi to publish Meaning in 1975.

Harry Prosch died peacefully on the morning of March 11, 2005, in Saratoga Springs, New York, where he lived in retirement after 25 years as a Skidmore College faculty member. In May 1991, not long after the Kent State Polanyi Conference, Prosch had a debilitating stroke and was unable to continue his scholarly work.

Prosch was born on May 4, 1917, in Logansport, Indiana, the son of an independent grocer. He was disappointed to learn, when he registered for high school in Logansport, that he was not eligible for the college preparatory class because he had not studied Latin. He was placed in the Industrial Arts program from which he graduated in 1935 and became an apprentice pattern-maker at a machine company where he worked for several years. Later he worked as a clerk at the local post office until he entered the army in 1942. Prosch served in the Pacific in New Guinea and the Philippines as a supply sergeant in World War II. Prosch's widow Doris reports that he often spoke of the joy he felt when as a soldier he heard the news about the new G. I. Bill, which meant he could realize his dream of attending college.

After the war, Prosch became a student at the University of Chicago where he earned an AB with honors (in 1948), an AM (in 1950, the year Michael Polanyi first visited the University of Chicago) and finally a Ph. D. in Philosophy in 1955. His master's thesis was titled "Methodological Pre-Requisites for a Practical Social Science" and his doctoral dissertation, "The Current Impasse in Ethics." At Chicago, Prosch became interested in the thought of Michael Polanyi. Prosch taught at Idaho State College, Shimer College and Southern Methodist University before joining the faculty in 1962 at Skidmore College. He served as the Chair of the Philosophy Department for a total of 15 years before he retired from Skidmore in 1987.

Prosch's former colleagues and students report that he was a committed and talented philosophy teacher. Two of his colleagues remembered his special approach to teaching Plato. In a seminar when treating Symposium, Prosch invited his senior students (of legal age) to his home for a true Greek-style symposium, where they were served retsina, which the students did not like. One of his fellow philosophers mused that this was Harry's way of warning students not to overindulge. One of Prosch's former students who did graduate work in philosophy, Cynthia Ai, offered the following tribute to Prosch's pedagogy and his influence:

I will remember him as the fine, brilliant, generous teacher he was. His gentle, yet firm, method of sharing knowledge, his kindness to us students, his sense of humor, and gentle chuckle—all this will remain. In direct and in subtle ways, Harry influenced our lives. Because of his example, I pursued studies in philosophy with a love of learning and exploration I never experienced elsewhere. In large measure, whatever I have become is due to having studied with Harry for whose friendship I shall always be grateful.

Another former student, Susan Jennings, commented in a similar vein:

After thirty years, I still value the lessons he taught me. He was a wonderful teacher, a man who approached life's mysteries with great moral seriousness and a wry sense of humor. While concerned about the state of the world and the modern mind's muddled thinking about it, he nevertheless evinced a deep faith that somehow, in the very long run, reason and goodness would prevail.

In 1968, Harry Prosch took a sabbatical in England; he came to learn more about Polanyi's philosophical ideas. This year of work with Polanyi significantly reshaped his life as a scholar. Prosch's publications and many of his public engagements thereafter focused on Polanyi. Because one of the articles that follows in this issue of *TAD* treats in some detail the nature of Prosch's work with Polanyi, including his collaboration on *Meaning*, remarks here are abbreviated. It is worth emphasizing, however, that without Prosch's diligence and commitment, *Meaning* never would have been published. With Prosch's unflagging interest in interpreting Polanyi's ideas, good questions might never have been raised. Without Prosch's energetic involvement in programs like the 1973 Polanyi Society meeting at Skidmore at which he took on the role of disciplinary coordinator for philosophy, Polanyi studies would have been poorer.

Endnotes

¹ Thanks go to Doris Prosch and her family as well as Joel Smith from Skidmore College who provided rich material about Harry Prosch, including reflections of former students, local newspaper obituaries and the announcement about Harry's death that the President of Skidmore, Philip Glotzback, sent to the Skidmore community. This obituary has borrowed generously from this material.

² Phil Mullins and Marty Moleski, S. J. , "Harry Prosch: A Memorial Re-Appraisal of the *Meaning* Controversy," *Tradition and Discovery: The Polanyi Society Periodical*, 32:2 (2005-2006): 8-24.

WWW Polanyi Resources

The Polanyi Society has a World Wide Web site at <http://www.missouriwestern.edu/orgs/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) digital archives containing many past issues of *Tradition and Discovery*; (4) information on locating early publications not in the archive; (5) information on *Appraisal* and *Polanyiana*, two sister journals with special interest in Polanyi's thought; (6) 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; (7) photographs of Polanyi; (8) links to a number of essays by Polanyi.

Harry Prosch: A Memorial Re-Appraisal of the *Meaning* Controversy¹

Phil Mullins and Marty Moleski, S. J.

ABSTRACT Key Words: Harry Prosch and Michael Polanyi, *Meaning*
This essay traces the history of Harry Prosch's work with Michael Polanyi. It analyzes the Prosch-Polanyi archival correspondence as well as other correspondence records in an effort to make clear the scope and nature of Prosch's work in their collaboration on Meaning, a book published under both names at a late stage of Polanyi's life when his mental capacities were diminished.

This essay intends to honor Harry Prosch and, in this journal, that can be done best by providing a reconsideration of his collaboration with Polanyi and the subsequent criticism of the book that resulted. We believe that all Polanyians are indebted to Prosch's self-effacing, patient, and reasonable efforts to help the aging Polanyi develop the capstone of his philosophical career.

Prosch's Early Work with Polanyi

Although Prosch first discovered Polanyi's thought when he was a graduate student in the early fifties,² it was not until the late sixties that he began to work in earnest on scholarly projects related to Polanyi. During the sixties, Prosch's scholarly articles were focused on issues in ethics. He produced several essays on topics concerned with law, justice and civil disobedience.³ In 1966, he published *The Genesis of Twentieth Century Philosophy*; as its subtitle (*The Evolution of Thought from Copernicus to the Present*) implies, the book is an historically-oriented effort to put contemporary philosophy in perspective.⁴ Polanyi is not mentioned in the book, although *The Logic of Liberty* is included in the appended list of books that represent contemporary philosophical movements.

By 1967, Prosch was beginning to work on Polanyi. The earliest letter from Prosch to Polanyi in the Polanyi archives is dated June 29, 1967. It suggests that Prosch had recently talked with Polanyi by phone when he was in Chicago. The main concern of the letter is to confirm that Prosch was "still planning to come to England during the academic year of 1968-69 in connection with the work I wish to do on your philosophy."⁵ In fact Harry, his wife and children did come to Oxford in late summer 1968 and stayed until the spring of 1969 and these nine months reshaped Harry's professional life. In preparation for his sabbatical, Prosch tried to read everything Polanyi had ever written. In his letter, he commented on the difficulty of locating Polanyi publications and asked if Polanyi could supply a list of his publications.⁶

The sabbatical provided Prosch opportunities to dig deeply into Polanyi's thought and discuss issues with Polanyi; clearly, he also came to know and like Michael and Magda Polanyi. His respect and appreciation for Polanyi are evident in a letter written to Polanyi (who was visiting in the U.S.) late in his sabbatical year: "I would like to say that associating with you for these months has been a great experience for me. I feel I have learned a lot from you and also that I have met a decent and admirable human being—of which I'm afraid the world is not very plentifully supplied."⁷ Many years later, in the Introduction to his own book, *Michael Polanyi, A Critical Exposition*, Prosch described his sabbatical year as something like a conversion experience:

This book had its origin in a sabbatical leave I spent with Michael Polanyi in Oxford, England, during 1968-69. I had come as an interested but rather critical spectator, intending to assess coolly what this strange interloper into philosophy was doing, and to analyze his thought into its fundamental grounds and principles. I left a fellow participant in an active effort to develop an adequate contemporary philosophy, wholly convinced that Polanyi was on to something tremendously fundamental, sound, and healthy for the modern mind, but not yet wholly convinced that he had got it all perfectly straight.⁸

The correspondence between Polanyi and Prosch in the first years after Prosch's sabbatical show how Harry was drawn into many kinds of Polanyi projects, only some of which reached the desired conclusion. Polanyi wanted Prosch to be the editor of a proposed two-volume re-issue of *The Logic of Liberty* that would also include extra essays.⁹ Polanyi got Prosch appointed as a spring 1970 semester lecturer on Polanyi's thought at the University of Chicago where Polanyi gave four lectures.¹⁰ Polanyi encouraged Prosch to write a rebuttal (which he did, although it was never published) to Richard Zaffron's severely critical review¹¹ of *Knowing and Being in Science*.¹² Not only Harry Prosch's great respect for Michael Polanyi, but also his kindness and common decency, and his lack of ego, are apparent in the Prosch-Polanyi letters in both this early and later periods.

As we have noted above, Prosch came to work with Polanyi in Oxford in order better to understand Polanyi's work and decided in 1968-69 that he wanted to write a book about Polanyi's thought. The letters from 1969 and 1970 indicate Prosch was already drafting material and Polanyi was reviewing some of it. From first to last, Prosch felt that the organization of the material had to be guided by Polanyi's desire to clear the way for a religious renaissance:

And in the last chapter, one which I could not have written without the capstone to your thought you have provided in your Texas and Chicago lectures of last spring, the healthy soul will complete itself in the myths and rituals of a religion that is at last possible, given the reformation of secular thought developed in the book. I believe this is in agreement, in general, with your views and with what you have been doing. I have in mind your remark to me that the problem must be attacked not through the attempts first to engender a re-birth of religious belief, but rather through the reform of secular thought, on the basis of which such a re-birth of religion would become possible. But I will be trying to show, eventually, that the capacity to enjoy a religious life is, in a sense, the final goal of the reform. The reform, however, is related at each step to the achievement of greater truth and adequacy—of greater comprehensibility of understanding—not by its agreement with a preconceived religious commitment, or else it would fail to carry the reader along to a conversion. ... It can indeed be said that this religious commitment is never absent from your thoughts and is never in opposition to science and adequate thought—indeed is always illustrated by science in its actual conduct and in its essential implications.

I hope I can bring this all out adequately in the book. At least this is what I see you to be doing, so that I shall have failed, if I do not bring this out.¹³

Prosch sent Polanyi his draft introduction, noting that his book would be organized around Polanyi's "notion of what he thinks ails the modern mind and how he thinks it can be cured."¹⁴ Prosch projected breaking up the book into sections called "Diagnosis, Prescription, Treatment and Evaluation." It is this scheme that

is employed in Prosch's *Michael Polanyi, A Critical Exposition*, a book published finally in 1986. As both Harry and his spouse testify, his work on his book about Polanyi was delayed, first by the sort of smaller scale Polanyi projects described above and then by the *Meaning* project.¹⁵ As Prosch's work on his book slowly developed, even during the *Meaning* project, he also began to produce other scholarly work about Polanyi. In 1971, he gave a Skidmore College Faculty Research Lecture titled "Cooling the Modern Mind: Polanyi's Mission" and in 1972 his essay titled "Polanyi's Ethics" was published in *Ethics*.¹⁶ The Skidmore lecture ended, as so many of Polanyi's own essays did, with a vision of how Polanyi's philosophy reached toward the threshold of religion:

Religion would then presumably consist of a sort of final integration of incompatibles. But we do not need to spell out here the complexities of such an integration. Religion, as such, does not shape the meanings achieved in morality. Nor do the moral imperatives depend upon the power of a God. Religion appears, in Polanyi's view, to be connected with morality only by making us better able to live with our necessarily limited morality. Those of us who discover how to dwell in that fullest integration of the most incompatible of incompatibles, the Kingdom of Heaven, may indeed find how our transcendent hunger and thirst after righteousness can at last be filled.¹⁷

Prosch sent Polanyi a copy of this lecture.¹⁸ Polanyi wrote Gelwick, "Harry Prosch has composed an admirable summary of my recently developed work on the life of knowledge linked to the arts. ... you could write to Harry yourself, just telling him how profoundly pleased I am with this work by him."¹⁹

The *Meaning* Project

At the May, 1972 Dayton conference on Polanyi's thought, Polanyi asked Prosch to help with *Meaning*²⁰ rather than pursue his own scholarly agenda. The correspondence reflecting the context makes very clear that the initiative was Polanyi's. In the early spring of 1972, Polanyi apparently complained about difficulty getting his work together and Prosch noted that he wished he could come to Oxford in the summer to help.²¹ In April of 1972, Polanyi wondered out loud whether Prosch could come for another stay similar to his 1968-69 sabbatical²² and he wrote to the President of Skidmore in late May so "that my work might well be saved from loss in my receding hand, if I could obtain once more the presence of Harry Prosch in Oxford during the coming academic year."²³ In June of 1972, Polanyi wrote to Prosch "my hopes of ending the book depend pity [*sic pretty?*] well on your coming."²⁴ Harry worked out a leave of absence at Skidmore and in the summer and fall of 1972 began the task of seeking funding to go to England.²⁵ In November, 1972, Prosch learned that he was to receive an NEH Senior Fellowship for the spring of 1973²⁶ and he began to work out his travel and housing plans thereafter, even though it was not clear that he would have enough support for his maintenance in Oxford.²⁷ Prosch arrived in Oxford in early February, 1973 to begin working in earnest with Polanyi on the Chicago and Austin lecture material that was to become *Meaning*.²⁸

Although Polanyi and Prosch met and worked on a plan for *Meaning* for about a month, Prosch left Oxford earlier than he had expected to in the first week of March. It is somewhat unclear why Prosch departed early, but apparently Polanyi gave Prosch some indication that he did not want further collaboration at the moment:

I derived a great deal from our talks together and I only wish I had not got the erroneous idea from your remarks that you wanted our association together there to be of such limited

duration. This is an almost incredible misunderstanding. And, believe me, I should still like to remedy it by any means in my power. *I want that book you have in mind to see the light of day!* And it does not matter to me what role I actually play in helping you to get it out—whether a large or small one, an equal or a subordinate one. Whether my name does or does not appear with yours as author is also, as you know, *not* of importance.²⁹

What the correspondence makes absolutely indubitable is that Polanyi's mental agility and his capacity to work were progressively diminishing. But letters also show that Polanyi's own appraisal of his capacities vacillated. At his best, he recognized his waning strength and growing inability to write clear and coherent prose, but he also hoped to publish a last great book and he often entertained (and was carried away by) vague ideas and unrealistic expectations about joining previous publications with new material to produce the final synthesis. At various times, Polanyi tried to enlist a number of different people to help him with the project: Lady Drusilla Scott, Marjorie Grene, William T. Scott, Paul Craig Roberts, William H. Poteat, and Richard Gelwick. In fact when Bill Scott told Prosch in April, 1994 about Polanyi's many efforts to enlist collaborators, he wryly commented, "I . . . did not know that he had tried to get so many other people to help him bring out his last book. Poor soul! Finally had to put up with me!"³⁰

Almost immediately after Prosch departed for the U.S. in early March, 1973, Polanyi wrote to Prosch "it has become more clear to me how inflexible I am for any work of my own, perhaps to its damage;" he reported that upon re-reading some things he has written, he had to discard them.³¹ Less than a week later, he wrote "I wrote to you a week ago in some pleasure about starting my work. But by this time, I am realizing that I must give up this task. I simply have not got the strength any more. I have sent you a cable about this and hope that you can accept and get going as fast as possible."³² Three days later, he wrote "I think the situation is decisive, for my faculties are declining. But I would like still to help to devise the further tasks, and I shall start on this immediately."³³ Subsequently, Polanyi outlined a two-part approach to the material in which he was to work on an introduction while Prosch developed the material called "works of imagination."³⁴

By the end of April, 1973, Prosch had substantially completed four chapters of "works of the imagination" and reported to Polanyi "I think you will like the way it is turning out. Most of the words are yours. I do not have a great many pages of my own explication."³⁵ Although he acknowledged doing some editing and clarifying of the original material, he noted "I think your lectures were well-planned and well executed and they form the solid basis for a really important work. They do not need a lot of work done on them."³⁶ In early May, Polanyi acknowledged that he was not capable of producing the introduction:

I have come to the conclusion that I cannot effectively support your work on our book from here. This is due quite simply to the troubles growing with my age. My powers are insufficient. . . .

To put it in a different way, the efforts of my task with you are now too complex for me. They make me go round without success. I have reached the final conclusion that I must leave the substance of our task to you and limit myself to observations by word or writing.³⁷

Prosch proceeded with his effort to complete what was originally his section. In a June 7, 1973 letter, he provided an interesting note on his progress:

Finally, I have got the 'Acceptance of Religion' (Chapter Seven) put in some sort of shape.

This one is very much reorganized in its actual shape. But it follows the points that you were making. I have supplemented it with more examples and with what else you have written about religion. From the conversations we had I would think you would approve of the general form of this—maybe, I hope, of its precise text. But we shall see.”³⁸

In mid August, 1973, Prosch completed his section and sent it to Polanyi for review.³⁹ On August 21, Polanyi sent Prosch a telegram: “Text of book very promising. Can you accept my project of 9 August. This is very important.”⁴⁰ On August 24, Polanyi wrote, “Just a line to tell you about my delight about your section on religion.”⁴¹

Although Prosch focused his energy on the *Meaning* project, he continued to take on other Polanyi-related projects. He corresponded with some of the people Polanyi asked him to contact; when Polanyi sent him a *London Times* Sunday Color Supplement piece on Karl Popper, he wrote a letter to the editor criticizing Popper and praising Polanyi. He made plans to return to the University of Chicago in October to give a lecture on Polanyi’s thought. His own article, “Polanyi’s Tacit Knowing in the ‘Classic’ Philosophers” was accepted for publication in *The Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*.⁴² Polanyi was so pleased with the article that he suggested that a revised form of the essay should be added to *Meaning*: “It is no mere break in our studies; it is of the essence. And so it marks an entry—in the fourth year—a recognition of our substance. ... It is an extension of my original framework to include a great step from the origins in Greece up to the grounds of modern phenomenology.”⁴³

By this time, Polanyi also clearly looked to Prosch to provide leadership in what Polanyi perceived as growing interest in post-critical perspectives: “The spreading of participations evokes the need for shaping the ways in our camp, and I am coming to you now in the hope that you will take on a leading part.” Later in the same letter, Polanyi noted his confidence in Prosch: “I am coming to you in this way because you are at the heart of the work and are a master of it.”⁴⁴ But Harry Prosch’s humility and his reluctance to speak for Polanyi are also clear in the correspondence:

I feel reticent to set myself up as your official representative. My position of leadership among what you have called “our company,” if it ever comes to pass, must arise only because others come to acknowledge it on the basis of what their opinion is of what I have done. I cannot *assert* it, nor do I think you can either—in so many words. I recognize that there does seem to be a need for someone to take the lead, now that you are no longer able to stand the strain. But I think things will work themselves out in time. For the moment it looks as though no one is tending the store. Actually *lots* of people are tending the store. More every day.⁴⁵

In the late summer and fall of 1973, Polanyi read (or perhaps partially read) the ten chapters that Prosch had sent to him. His few comments seem a mixture of praise and criticism, although it is very difficult to discern what Polanyi was suggesting to improve the draft.⁴⁶ Polanyi in fact seemed at times to doubt his own power to provide criticism:

I am coming more and more to doubts as to advising you in your work. Much of the material we could consider for publication by ourselves seems open to choices, in which I do not effectively want to advise you. The main point is that your decision is so much nearer to our present material that I am tending to refrain from giving effective advices.⁴⁷

Prosch's work in finishing up the introduction (the first three chapters of *Meaning*) was somewhat delayed by the death of his father, but he assured Polanyi that the introduction would treat some of the matters Polanyi seemed anxious about.⁴⁸ In early October, Prosch sent Polanyi the three introductory chapters, along with a careful description of which earlier Polanyi publications he had adapted to frame these chapters; he also proposed the title "meaning" for the book.⁴⁹ In the fall of 1973, Polanyi's letters become extraordinarily confusing documents, suggesting a further decline of Polanyi's mental capacities. At this stage, Polanyi seemed increasingly hesitant to make any decisions; he seemed sometimes to have ideas but they remain vague and he put them forth very tentatively. Sometimes Polanyi seemed to be suggesting that Prosch publish *Meaning* under his own name;⁵⁰ sometimes he seemed to suggest further revisions to the text, but it is not clear what precisely Polanyi intended Prosch to correct or modify. In late November, Polanyi cabled Prosch "have read your excellent manuscript and wish to be its fellow author."⁵¹ But just four days later, Polanyi wrote: "You have introduced in your last chapter a treatment similar to my own, but essentially departing to a way of yours. I mean your image of residual conceptions open to a further perspective. This differs essentially from my way of handling such an important unfinished element."⁵² The effect on Prosch of Polanyi's changes of perspective and the incoherence of Polanyi's articulation must have been maddening, though no trace of frustration appears in any of Prosch's letters or interviews.⁵³ What is clear in Prosch's letters to Polanyi during the fall of 1973 and thereafter is that Harry recognized that he was now dealing with a friend and collaborator whose capacities were very seriously diminished. Prosch was infinitely patient with Polanyi, assuring him he could take extra time to study the manuscript and assuring him that he would help him with the new collection of his essays that Polanyi now seemed to be contemplating. He repeated explanations offered in earlier letters about the organization and sources of material in *Meaning*, since Polanyi seemed to have forgotten or to be confused about such matters.⁵⁴ In late November, Prosch proposed that he approach the University of Chicago Press about publishing *Meaning*.⁵⁵

By December of 1973, Polanyi had apparently made up his mind to start fresh with another collaborator. He invited Richard Gelwick to "work out for a book an ultimate material of my own. ... The work of Harry Prosch should be included, but not treated at this stage."⁵⁶ Gelwick objected that this would not be fair to Prosch. Polanyi replied,

I am turning to you because the work of more than two past months has failed to reach a satisfactory solution. I have written to Prosch that I am turning to you for help. ... There is a majority of his text which I would not sign, and there is another part also which I feel to lack sufficient penetration. ... The essence of the fact is that the text of Prosch as it now stands has not got my full acceptance, and in other parts does rely on essential features which he can speak for with my cordial agreement.⁵⁷

Nothing in the extant Prosch-Polanyi correspondence shows which part was which.

Gelwick was in Cambridge at this time on sabbatical studying with Peacocke and dutifully began meeting with Polanyi, providing detailed notes on their conversations, and beginning the process of pulling Polanyi's articles, notes, and oral instructions into a coherent whole. In February, Polanyi reported to Prosch, "My project, in which Richard Gelwick is somewhat helping me, is getting on well. I have completed about half of the manuscript. It contains two pieces, one an introduction on general conditions of mental actions, and the other the re-working of my essay including five articles produced in Chicago in 1969 and subsequent

years ...”⁵⁸ But within a month, Polanyi put the project on hold: “I want to postpone our own joint work for another week or so before renewing our meetings. This detachment is called upon by the major demands of my comprehensive work on religion. This requires a careful battle of thought by myself which may extend over a week or so.”⁵⁹ The battle was too much for Polanyi’s diminished strength. In May, Magda wrote Gelwick, “I find him increasingly difficult to follow and rapidly deteriorating. He has written a letter to Bill Poteat to express his pleasure and appreciation, but the letter is such that it cannot be sent, not even to Bill. It is heartbreaking for me to talk about this, but shall have to explain to Bill why M. has become silent.”⁶⁰

Prosch was not able to make much sense out of Polanyi’s letters about his collaboration with Gelwick and what it meant for the work Prosch had already done. At one point, early in 1974, when Polanyi speculated about a possible trip to Toronto with a stopover in Saratoga Springs, Prosch replied, “I need to talk with you, since I am not sure I understand fully what you have been telling me in your last letters.”⁶¹ In mid April, Prosch advised Polanyi he had good news “for our joint project, but I cannot tell you about it as yet. As soon as something more definite comes through I will communicate with you about it.”⁶² In midsummer, Polanyi seems to have been reading a draft of Prosch’s book on Polanyi (which Prosch had sent to him much earlier) and was excited by it. He wanted to use this text to launch some further work (either on *Meaning*, the separate collection of essays he had begun assembling with Gelwick, or Prosch’s book itself) and he asked if Prosch could come to England for another six months.⁶³ On July 19, 1974, Prosch wrote to Polanyi telling him he would be coming to Oxford for two weeks at the end of the month: “I am excited at the prospect of seeing you again after so long a time. I am excited also about something of considerable significance for both of us that I want to lay before you.”⁶⁴

Prosch apparently had in hand the contract for *Meaning* from the University of Chicago Press. But on July 20, before he received Prosch’s July 19th letter, Polanyi cabled Prosch, “Have developed grave doubts whether our collaboration feasible.”⁶⁵ A follow-up letter on July 22, however, tells Prosch “the work on our joint efforts has been redeemed today with the effective assistance of my secretary Miss Argyle.”⁶⁶ On July 23, after receiving Prosch’s July 19th letter, he sent a second cable advising Prosch to disregard the first cable! Polanyi was very often very confused at this stage. Magda was very grateful for Prosch’s visit: “Harry Prosch has been here for a fortnight, staying at Summertown House. He and I are trying to straighten out M.’s affairs. ... [He] will be leaving tomorrow, alas. He and Michael have completed the book—based on Michael’s lectures, to be entitled ‘Meaning.’ I am delighted.”⁶⁷

During this visit, Prosch presented the contract for *Meaning* to Polanyi and he signed it.⁶⁸ *Michael Polanyi, Scientist and Philosopher*, relying on Bill Scott’s interview with Prosch in April of 1994, reports that Prosch had difficulty getting Polanyi to address the matter of the contract until, on Prosch’s final day in Oxford, Polanyi signed the contract only after realizing how much the prospect of his not doing so disheartened Prosch. Although Magda was initially pleased that the work had been completed, she began to have second thoughts. She wrote Gelwick, “I find it difficult to tell you that Harry Prosch and Michael have finished ‘Meaning’ and will publish it jointly with the Chicago Press. ... All this is good, but what about all the work you have done with Michael? He, poor man, is unable to tell me what you had been working on. At my urgent request, Prosch has promised to get in touch with you over this.”⁶⁹ Three weeks later, she wrote again:

I fear that you might be upset about “Meaning,” to be published by Polanyi and Prosch jointly. So am I, though I cannot think that Harry has acted in bad faith. He may not have realized the seriousness of Michael’s condition and would have assumed Michael’s full agreement, since no hint of opposition

to his acting was forthcoming. Yet poor Michael now voices objections and cannot understand my saying that it is too late for that. And *I* cannot understand why I wasn't told until after the signing and mailing of the Contract, what the two of them were doing upstairs. ... I don't know Prosch well and I am not accusing him of anything. But had I known of the matter before it became too late, I would certainly have asked you of your opinion in the matter.⁷⁰

Prosch knew nothing of these regrets on Michael and Magda's part. Magda decided not to raise the question of Michael's doubts with Prosch and regretted that she had mentioned Michael's doubts to Gelwick:

Nothing can be done or should be done about "Meaning" and I haven't said a word to Prosch about M.'s belated—and obviously superficial—doubts about their joint publication. You are absolutely right; M. was going to publish on his own and let Prosch get on independently. But his memory being as it is—and deteriorating rapidly, alas—he no longer remembers anything of that. He no longer remembers even a word about "Meaning" and I am unable to convey to him that a joint publication with Prosch will be forthcoming. The doubts he raised at the time I wrote you are equally forgotten; nor can he remember Prosch's visit here. We have to let the matter rest as it is and Prosch had better not be told anything. I myself am now convinced that it would have been better not to have mentioned a word to you about M's remarks.⁷¹

The very last phase of Prosch's work with Polanyi on *Meaning* has a sad and somewhat surreal quality. Prosch was the victim of Polanyi's failing mind. The Prosch-Polanyi correspondence as a whole shows beyond a doubt that Harry Prosch salvaged the *Meaning* project. As the biography puts it, "the very weaknesses of mind and memory that necessitated collaboration also rendered Polanyi incapable of true partnership in the work."⁷² Prosch took on more and more responsibility for the book after his foreshortened visit to Oxford in the spring of 1973. As Polanyi's powers of thought and articulation decreased, Prosch's role in shaping material increased. Nevertheless, Prosch was at every step extraordinarily respectful of and attentive to Polanyi, even though it was increasingly clear that Polanyi could neither write anything by himself nor edit Prosch's text. Despite the time and energy he had invested in the project, Prosch was willing to let Polanyi have the final say:

I know that you must be conscious of the great distance between my poor work and what you see in your imagination that it should be, and that it is difficult for you to let it go out in this shape. I am sorry I could not make it better. If you can do so—great!! I will be so pleased. If not, maybe it would be better the work saw the light of day in *some* form or other—even in *this* poor form—rather than not at all. But this is a matter for your own judgment. So let me know when you have made your decisions and, as I said, I stand ready to help you in every way I possibly can with whatever time I have at my disposal.⁷³

In sum, his careful and compassionate work with Michael Polanyi on the *Meaning* project shows that Harry Prosch was a person of great integrity, patience, and generosity.

Harry Prosch and the Post-*Meaning* Discussions

After the completion of *Meaning*, Harry Prosch continued to write to Michael Polanyi and to take on scholarly projects related to Polanyi's thought. Prosch's last letter in the archival correspondence collection

is dated February 9, 1975⁷⁴ but there are indications that Prosch continued to monitor Polanyi's health during the last year of Polanyi's life, even after Polanyi was institutionalized.⁷⁵ *Meaning* was published in 1975 and in that same year "Truth in Myths," a chapter of *Meaning* was also published in *Cross Currents*.⁷⁶ In 1977, Prosch published another essay in *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, "Biology and Behaviorism in Polanyi."⁷⁷ In 1979, he contributed a biographical piece on Polanyi to the *Biographical Supplement of The International Encyclopedia for the Social Sciences*.⁷⁸ He also wrote, in 1979, a five-page review for *Ethics* of Richard Gelwick's *The Way of Discovery*.⁷⁹ In 1981, Prosch contributed an essay to the special issue of *Pre-Text* on Polanyi.⁸⁰

Prosch's review of Gelwick's book was the beginning of the discussion between Gelwick and Prosch and the more general discussion about *Meaning* among Polanyi scholars.⁸¹ The Consultation on the Thought of Michael Polanyi at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in 1980 included several papers on *Meaning* and these were published as a set of articles in *Zygon* in 1982. Prosch's contribution was "Polanyi's View of Religion in *Personal Knowledge: A Response to Richard Gelwick*."⁸² Both his review and his article raised questions about how to regard the ontological status of realities known in "transnatural" integrations. When Drusilla Scott published *Everyman Revived: The Common Sense of Michael Polanyi*,⁸³ Prosch wrote a very positive review, but raised the same questions that emerged in his earlier review of Gelwick's book.⁸⁴ In his April, 1994 interview with Scott, Prosch said,

Polanyi was concerned about his treatment of creation myths. He didn't think that most people who were religious would care much about his theory of incompatibles—if they really believed, they would not want to think of God as a unity of incompatibles but as a person or a being. ... Polanyi got a lot of static from members of the Polanyi Society who thought that he was more of an orthodox believer than he ever was. Tillich told him, "You really say what I am thinking about religion. I have to inform people who are going to be ministers of what they can say in their churches and can't be completely frank about everything."

For Prosch, this remark was his "bulwark against criticism that I have read (including Lady Scott)."

In 1986, Prosch's own book *Michael Polanyi, A Critical Exposition* was finally published. While the book generally was a careful and thorough treatment of Polanyi's thought, it also provided an opportunity for Prosch to comment critically on interpretations of Polanyi's thought put forth by Rom Harre, Marjorie Grene, Thomas Torrance, Sheldon Richmond and Ron Hall. The criticisms of Torrance, Richmond and Hall were similar to criticism in the reviews of the Gelwick and Scott books; that is, they were concerned with the ontological status of realities known in "transnatural" integrations.⁸⁵ The publication of *Michael Polanyi, A Critical Edition* elicited further discussion on both sides of the Atlantic among Polanyi scholars interested in how Polanyi's ideas about art and religion should be read.⁸⁶ Prosch singled out one review that came a bit later in Maben Poirier's essay, "Harry Prosch's Modernism."⁸⁷ His point-by-point rebuttal, "Those Missing 'Objects,'" is especially interesting because Prosch here offers some speculations about Polanyi's metaphysical claims for "objects" in the noosphere; such "objects" are not merely "projections of our subjective psychological needs" nor are they empirical realities, "a mere thing among things."⁸⁸

What is left is, it seem to me, the very Polanyian position that the reality of God is an item of personal knowledge (with universal intent and thus with objectivity) established by our creative imagination *in* the religious framework of thought—that is, *from* the wealth of

subsidiary clues provided by the history, myths, worship, doctrine, rites, etc. of our religion, *in* which He exists “to be worshipped and obeyed.” God is not established in the frameworks of science, art, ethics, or mathematics. They each have their own “core,” or trajectory of meaning. And none of the frameworks of thought provide us with merely “second-rate” knowledge. Nor are any of their own realities second-rate. The reality of God, as founded uniquely in religion, could only be denigrated as a second-rate reality by those whose attitude of mind makes them regard *empirical* realities as the only “real” ones, the truly first-rate ones. Neither Polanyi nor I (nor Plato), I submit, ever thought such a thing. If we thought there were any “lower-place” realities, I’m sure the three of us would think that this “honor” belonged rather to the empirical sort.”⁸⁹

In talking with Bill Scott in his 1994 interview, Prosch insisted that he was faithful to Polanyi’s view of religion: “The more I thought about his views on religion, the more fond I became of them. . . . I knew quite clearly—it came to make sense to me—what is in the book is genuinely what he said, and I accepted it, too.”

Prosch offered the following criticism of Drusilla’s Scott’s account of Polanyi’s ideas about religion in *Everyman Revived*: “To the extent that Drusilla Scott leaves us with the impression that Polanyi agreed—or did *once agree*—with her conviction that these things of the mind, including God, exists independently of our thought, just as do the realities investigated by our science, I believe she is wrong.”⁹⁰ In 1986, Thomas Torrance responded sharply to these criticisms. Torrance asserted that it was “Harry Prosch who is *wrong, and very wrong indeed*, about Michael Polanyi’s convictions about God.”⁹¹ Further Torrance proclaimed, “After Michael read my book *Theological Science* in which I argued at length for the scientific objectivity of our knowledge of God, who exists independently of our conceiving of him, he asked me to act as his Literary Executor after he had died.”⁹² Torrance contended that Polanyi, after reading the jointly authored, published version of *Meaning*, said “he would not like to have his ideas bowdlerized after his death as had sometimes happened with Einstein’s ideas after his death.”⁹³ Torrance’s rather dramatic account in terms of Polanyi’s interest in Torrance’s theological writing appears to be quite self-serving and it elicited from Prosch a coolly rational response. In response to Torrance’s allegations of “bowdlerization,” he pointed out that by the time Polanyi could have read the published version of *Meaning* (December, 1975), he was institutionalized and a few months from death. Reports from John Brennen to Prosch suggested that Polanyi’s condition made it difficult for anyone to carry on an intelligent conversation, at this stage, with Polanyi.⁹⁴ Prosch also recounted his view of his discussions with Polanyi about work on *Meaning*, which the correspondence treated above bears out, but which is not the only account, as correspondence with Gelwick shows. Prosch invited Torrance or anyone else to check the material in *Meaning* against the Chicago and Texas lecture materials now in the University of Chicago archives. We suspect Thomas Torrance never looked at this material and that he did not look at the Prosch-Polanyi correspondence before making his claims against Prosch.⁹⁵ Moreover, the decision to choose Torrance as Polanyi’s literary executor was not an endorsement of Torrance’s Polyanian theology against Prosch’s account. After some difficulties in negotiations about the Polanyi papers with representatives in Toronto, Torrance was selected due to his geographical proximity, his experience as Karl Barth’s literary executor, and the availability of Torrance’s two sons, both engaged in academics, to assist him in sorting Polanyi’s papers.⁹⁶ In this same letter, Magda reports that Michael “sits all day upstairs, looking at old photographs—that’s all. I myself should have known better than letting him confer with Prosch—neither then, nor since has he realized that a joint book of theirs will be coming out and that he has signed a contract to make that possible.” Polanyi was clearly in no position to appoint Torrance—or anyone else—as his

theological representative. It was Magda Polanyi who chose Torrance as the literary executor.

What does Prosch's scholarship and interaction with other scholars show in the period after the publication of *Meaning*? Like his work with the living Polanyi, his late writing reflects the seriousness of his commitment to promoting Polanyian ideas. It also shows that Harry Prosch was a scholar who recognized his obligations to continuing conversation with the scholarly community interested in Polanyi, even if what he had to say often met resistance. Prosch's questions and his carefully articulated views about Polanyi's ontological claims, now more than twenty years old, continue to be debated in Polanyi scholarship, as recent discussions of topics such as Polanyi's realism show.

In looking back at the *Zygon* debate, Prosch felt that "nobody convinced the other what were Polanyi's views."⁹⁷ Prosch clearly shared Polanyi's sense of mission to diagnose and treat the sickness of our culture that, in turn, cripples religious expression. In 1964, Polanyi wrote Joseph Oldham about his hopes for the healing power that might be released through his work in philosophy: "Our scientific culture is getting under fire for falsifying the nature of things. The beliefs which we shall thus re-capture will eventually culminate in religious faith. Nothing short of that would make us at home in the universe again."⁹⁸ With Polanyi, Prosch worked as best he knew how in order to make room for faith and to fill the universe with meaning.

Endnotes

¹ This essay relies upon both archival correspondence in the Special Collection of Polanyi Papers and correspondence with or collected by William T. Scott. The archival correspondence is noted by box and folder. Other correspondence is noted only by writer and recipient and date. Use is also made of William T. Scott's interview notes that were a part of his research for *Michael Polanyi, Scientist and Philosopher*. If the text makes clear that Scott's interviews were the source, no note is provided.

² Prosch notes in his 1991 Kent State Polanyi Conference paper, "My first introduction to Polanyi's thought was to his views on economics and freedom in my reading of his *The Logic of Liberty* which had just then come out." ("Polanyi's Economics and the New Start in Europe," *From Polanyi to the 21st Century: Proceedings of A Centennial Conference, Kent State University, April 11-13, 1991*, Ed. Richard Gelwick: 295).

³ "The Problem of Ultimate Justification," *Ethics*, 71, April 1961, pp. 155-74. "'Law' and 'Justice,'" *Politeia*, 1, April 1964, pp. 44-52. "Limits to the Moral Claim in Civil Disobedience," *Ethics*, 75, January, 1965, pp. 103-11. "Towards an Ethics of Civil Disobedience," *Ethics*, 77, April, 1967, pp. 176-92. "More About Civil Disobedience," *Ethics*, 77, July, 1967, pp. 311-12.

⁴ *The Genesis of Twentieth Century Philosophy*, Garden City: Doubleday and Co., Inc. 1966.

⁵ Prosch to Polanyi, June 29, 1967, Box 16, Folder 10. This and future references in this shortened format are to materials in the Polanyi Collection held in the Department of Special Collections at the Regenstein Library of the University of Chicago; quotations are used with permission.

⁶ Subsequent letters indicate Polanyi did supply Prosch with many articles, but he also referred him to William Poteat as a source of potential information about his publication. The letters also implied that Polanyi often did not know exactly what had been published where. Richard's Gelwick's comments also indicate Polanyi did not really have records about his own scholarly work. The publication of Gelwick's bibliography in *Intellect and Hope* (1968) was helpful to Prosch.

⁷ Prosch to Polanyi, April 17, 1969, Box 16, Folder 10.

⁸ Harry Prosch, *Michael Polanyi, A Critical Exposition*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986): 1.

⁹ See Polanyi to Prosch, July 31, 1969 and Prosch to Polanyi, August 5, 1969, Box 16, Folder 10. Prosch's response to Polanyi's request is typical of his many gracious efforts to take on whatever Polanyi thought important to make Polanyi's work more mainstream: "I would be very pleased and honored indeed to edit the two volumes you would like to make out of *The Logic of Liberty*."

¹⁰ Several letters, beginning with Polanyi to Prosch, 17th July, 1969, in Box 16, Folders 10 and 11 are concerned with setting up this program at Chicago and with defining what Polanyi's role would be and what Prosch's role would be. Prosch bends over backward to accommodate Polanyi who wants Prosch to handle a class on Polanyi's ideas. Marjorie Grene had in an earlier visit to Chicago taught what was apparently a similar course.

¹¹ Richard Zaffron, "On Understanding What We Don't Know How We Know," *Science* 168 (1970):1440-1442. Prosch's reply, "Polanyi Explicitly Mis-Read," a ten-page typescript, is in Box 16, Folder 15.

¹² There are several letters, beginning with Polanyi to Prosch, July 27, 1970, Box 16, Folder 11 concerning this rebuttal. Polanyi apparently earlier thought Marjorie Grene or Bill Scott would do a rebuttal, but when he found they would not, he turned to Prosch. Prosch immediately wrote a reply to the review by Zaffron and sent it to *Science* (who rejected it) and to Polanyi who suggested a much more extensive statement about Polanyi's philosophy and its relation to other contemporary philosophy of science (Polanyi to Prosch, 12th August, 1970). Interestingly, Polanyi suggests to Prosch that in the new introduction ("Background and Prospect," p. 12) to the 1964 reprint of *SFS*, he has given a "rough guide" indicating which contemporary philosophers of science are particularly important. He admits that he has never himself written anything linking to or distinguishing his thought from these philosophers of science "for the simple reason that I have not taken the trouble to read my successors Toulmin, N. R. Hanson, Thomas Kuhn and one or two others who would belong to this group." Prosch responds positively to Polanyi's suggestion for a more extensive rebuttal article, but points out that his areas are ethics and social and political philosophy, and history of philosophy. He acknowledges that he needs to extend his own reading in philosophy of science: "I have realized, as I got into my writing about you, and as, I saw the problem shaping up at Chicago, that I shall have to do some more serious reading in their works. I am planning, therefore, to get this done as soon as I can. For it will have to be done for the book" (Prosch to Polanyi, September 27, 1970, Box 16, Folder 11). The book in question, as we discuss below, is what eventually becomes Prosch's *Michael Polanyi, A Critical Exposition*, published sixteen years later.

¹³ Prosch to Polanyi, October 12, 1969. Box 16, Folder 10.

¹⁴ Prosch to Polanyi, Sept. 21, 1969 (Box 16, Folder 10) notes that Prosch is enclosing a rough draft of an introduction to Prosch's book on Polanyi. The draft is in the archival material (Box 16, Folder 10); the quotation is from page 10. Polanyi to Prosch, October 7, 1967 (Box 16, Folder 10) responds to the draft saying "you do give a picture, which I welcome, later when you emphasise the extension of my interests, indeed their predominance, outside the accepted pursuits of academic philosophy." Polanyi mildly criticizes Prosch's architectonic in two respects; he does not much like being linked with Heidegger and Tillich who are also mentioned as, like Polanyi, concerned with affairs of history and culture. He wants Prosch to assure that the sickness-to-health metaphor is not read merely as criticism and dissent from Freudian ideas.

¹⁵ Prosch comments in his Introduction (p. 1) to *Michael Polanyi, A Critical Exposition* that he started his book while on sabbatical, but its development was delayed first by his work with Polanyi at the University of Chicago in 1970 and then by his work on *Meaning*. In a phone recent phone conversation (11/2/05) with Phil Mullins, Doris Prosch, noted that Harry essentially put aside his own work on Polanyi in order to work on *Meaning*.

¹⁶ “Cooling the Modern Mind: Polanyi’s Mission” was published in *Skidmore College Bulletin*, vol. 56, no. 4 (August 1971): 5-39. “Polanyi’s Ethics,” *Ethics*, no. 82 (January 1972): 91-113.

¹⁷ *Skidmore College Bulletin* 56:4 (1971) 33.

¹⁸ Prosch to Polanyi, September 27, 1971, Box 16, Folder 11. In Prosch to Polanyi, October 17, 1971 (Box 16, Folder 11), Prosch says, “Thank you both for your kind words about my printed lecture. I am tremendously pleased that you both liked it. . . . So with your enthusiastic reception of this effort ringing in my ears my inspiration has been renewed to re-double my efforts to get on with our work.”

¹⁹ Polanyi to Gelwick, October 25, 1971.

²⁰ Prosch notes in the Preface to *Meaning* (ix) that Polanyi asked him in the spring of 1972 if he would help him prepare the lectures from 1969, 1970 and 1971 from the University of Chicago and University of Texas for publication.

²¹ Prosch to Polanyi March 22, 1972, Box 16, Folder 12.

²² Polanyi to Prosch, April, 24, 1972, Box 16, Folder 12.

²³ Polanyi to Joseph Palamountain, Jr. May 25, 1972, Box 16, Folder 12.

²⁴ Polanyi to Prosch, June 5, 1972, Box 16, Folder 12.

²⁵ Prosch as well as Skidmore applied to a number of foundations and other sources. The applications as well as Polanyi’s letters of reference are included in Box 16, Folder 12. Prosch’s letters to Polanyi indicate he was quite self conscious about asking for support for a project in which he might appear an equal co-author with Polanyi; he says about one proposal, “But I do want you to know that in no way do I consider myself co-equal with you in it and please ignore any of my remarks in the description that might lead you to think I am assigning too important a role to myself. My position will be simply to help you in any way I can. I do consider it *your* book” (Prosch to Polanyi, June 14, 1972, Box 16, Folder 12). While making his applications, Prosch continued to do some work on his own book on Polanyi (Prosch to Polanyi, August 30, 1972, Box 16, Folder 12).

²⁶ Prosch to Polanyi, November 6, 1972, Box 16, Folder 12.

²⁷ Prosch to Polanyi, November 25, 1972, Box 16, Folder 12.

²⁸ Prosch projects he will arrive, get settled and meet with Polanyi on February 5, 1972 (Prosch to Polanyi, January 13, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13).

²⁹ Prosch to Polanyi, March 8, 1972, Box 16, Folder 13. Prosch’s good will toward Polanyi has no bounds. In this letter, he returns \$1000 which Polanyi has given to him for expenses. He offers to give “editorial assistance” to Polanyi in cleaning up anything he puts together. He offers to return to Oxford if Polanyi reaches the point in the future that he wants to work together with Prosch. He offers to come to Toronto when Polanyi is visiting in order to read through whatever Polanyi has written.

³⁰ Prosch to Scott (interview), April 25, 1994.

³¹ Polanyi to Prosch, March 8, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13.

³² Polanyi to Prosch, March 12, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13.

³³ Polanyi to Prosch, March 15, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13.

³⁴ Polanyi to Prosch, March 19, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13. He failed to provide Prosch with information about what “works of imagination” was to include, as subsequent letters show, although Prosch managed to discern what Polanyi had in mind. By this time, Prosch seems to know almost all Polanyi’s writing, early and late, and can second-guess many of Polanyi’s poorly articulated desires.

³⁵ Prosch to Polanyi, April 29, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13.

³⁶ Prosch to Polanyi, April 29, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13. Prosch notes that he is keeping a list of matters that should be treated in Polanyi’s introduction if Polanyi’s section is indeed to introduce what Prosch has woven together. Prosch seems to know that Polanyi will never produce his promised introduction or, if he does,

it will need to be recast as the two sections of the full text are fitted together.

³⁷ Polanyi to Prosch, May 3, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13. Prosch acknowledged Polanyi's final admission: "As I understand these last three letters, you are leaving the drafting of the manuscript to me and you will assist, as you say, with your observations by word and writing" (Prosch to Polanyi, May 14, 1973, 16, 13.). In the same letter, he offers to come to Oxford after he sends Polanyi the final draft and Polanyi has digested it: ". . . I will come again and we will spend what time I then have left talking over the work with a view toward making it closer to what you really want to say."

³⁸ Prosch to Polanyi, June 7, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13.

³⁹ Prosch to Polanyi, August 13, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13.

⁴⁰ Polanyi to Prosch (cable text), August 21, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13. Although the project referred to in Polanyi to Prosch, August 9, 1973 (Box 16, Folder 13) is not altogether clear, it seems to concern an idea Polanyi has to move forward in organizing the movement promoting Polanyi's thought. Polanyi apparently was asking for confirmation from Prosch that Prosch would play a central role.

⁴¹ Polanyi to Prosch, August 24, 1973. Copy of letter provided by Prosch to Bill Scott.

⁴² All of these matters are treated in July and August, 1973 letters (Box 16, Folder 13). Polanyi clearly is looking to Prosch to provide leadership in what Polanyi perceives as growing interest in Polanyi's philosophy: "The spreading of participations evokes the need for shaping the ways in our camp, and I am coming to you now in the hope that you will take on a leading part." Later in this letter Polanyi notes his confidence in Prosch: "I am coming to you in this way because you are at the heart of the work and are a master of it" (Polanyi to Prosch, August 9, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13). The *London Times* Supplement article on Popper was from June 3, 1973. See especially Prosch to Polanyi, July 18, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13 in which there are notes about several Polanyi-related Prosch endeavors, plus a progress report on work on *Meaning*: "Work here is proceeding well. I think everything is going to work out. I have had to do a good bit of new writing on the "Order" part." Prosch's "Polanyi's Tacit Knowing in the 'Classic' Philosophers" is in *The Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 4 (October 1973): 201-216.

⁴³ Polanyi to Prosch, October 22, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13.

⁴⁴ Polanyi to Prosch, August 9, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13.

⁴⁵ Prosch to Polanyi, August 19, 1973, Folder 16, Folder 13.

⁴⁶ For example, the following is from Polanyi to Prosch, September 6, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13: "I find your first seven pieces very good, but have doubts about the other three. These parts should be tremendously striking for hitherto breathless ways of man. And this should set the boundless tragedy of our terrible achievements." In a later letter, Polanyi says more clearly that he wants the book to have a more "vigorous ending" (Polanyi to Prosch, September 13, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13). See also Polanyi to Prosch, September 20, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13.

⁴⁷ Polanyi to Prosch, September 10, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13.

⁴⁸ Prosch to Polanyi, September 16, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13. Some of Polanyi's letters in this period suggest that he does not always remember that he has not read part of the text.

⁴⁹ Prosch to Polanyi, October 2, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13.

⁵⁰ Polanyi to Prosch, October 22, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13. In Prosch to Polanyi, November 6, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13, Prosch at least infers from Polanyi's earlier letter that Polanyi is suggesting that he publish *Meaning* under his own name. Prosch points out that if Polanyi wants him to do this, he must provide a note granting him permission to do so. Prosch notes that if the book is under his name only, he will nevertheless give full credit to Polanyi for all the parts that came from Polanyi's works (Prosch to Polanyi, November 6, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13).

⁵¹ Polanyi to Prosch (cable text), November 22, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13. In the letter that followed

explaining the cable, Polanyi tried to explain his vacillation about the manuscript: “It is only now that I have read most of your main part (starting from chapter 4) that I got to know your main ideas. I realized that the technical procedure of my work, to which I gave much attention, was secondary to you. And I realized to my profound joy that you had taken up and swept over the daring vision of recovering the true powers of thought away from technical reductions.”(Polanyi to Prosch, November 22, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13).

⁵²Polanyi to Prosch, November 26, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13.

⁵³ In Polanyi to Prosch, September 10 (Box 16, Folder 13), Polanyi mentioned “material for another publication, which could follow the one which you have now in hand.” Later in the fall (Polanyi to Prosch, November 13, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13), Polanyi outlined what seems to be a collection of essays (four previously published plus some of the lecture materials from Chicago and Austin) he wanted to publish apparently with Prosch’s help: “I hope that I can get some of your help for this task; but I will be happy if it is only a response.” By this time, Polanyi seemed to envision publishing *Meaning* under Prosch’s name and this collection of essays under his name at the same time. It seems likely that this collection of essays is the same material that Polanyi was also seeking help from Richard Gelwick to organize in late 1973. See the discussion below.

⁵⁴ Prosch to Polanyi, November 26, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13. See also Prosch to Polanyi, December 1, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13. Interestingly, Polanyi’s letters mention two other scholars, Paul Craig Roberts and Richard Gelwick, who seem to be trying to help Polanyi (Polanyi to Prosch, December 11, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13, and Polanyi to Prosch, December 21, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13).

⁵⁵ Prosch to Polanyi, November 27, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13.

⁵⁶ Polanyi to Gelwick, December 11, 1973.

⁵⁷ Polanyi To Gelwick, December 13, 1973. Concerning the work with Gelwick, see Polanyi to Prosch, December 11, 1973 (Box 16, Folder 13), which says “I hope I can get help from Richard Gelwick, who has come essentially for such work.”

⁵⁸ Polanyi to Prosch, February 21, 1974, Box 16, Folder 13.

⁵⁹ Polanyi to Gelwick, March 18, 1974.

⁶⁰ Magda Polanyi to Gelwick, May 18, 1974.

⁶¹ Prosch to Polanyi, February 11, 1974, Box 16, Folder 14.

⁶² Prosch to Polanyi, April 18, 1974, Box 16, Folder 14.

⁶³ Polanyi to Prosch, July 15, 1974, Box 16, Folder 14.

⁶⁴ Polanyi to Prosch, July 19, 1974, Box 16, Folder 14.

⁶⁵ Polanyi to Prosch (cable), July 20, 1974, Box 16, Folder 14. Some notes in the same folder identified as notes for a letter to be dictated on the Monday following July 20 indicate that Polanyi wants his name to be listed “as supporter of your text without any connection to your views.”

⁶⁶ Polanyi to Prosch, July 22, 1974, Box 16, Folder 14.

⁶⁷ Magda Polanyi to Scott; the letter was begun on July 22 and concluded on August 11, 1974.

⁶⁸ The evidence for this in the archival correspondence is Prosch to Polanyi, August 29, 1974, Box 16, Folder 14 and Prosch to Polanyi, September 15, 1974, Box 16, Folder 14. These are letters Prosch wrote after returning home in response to a letter from the Polanyis. The letter sets forth some details related to the publication such as that Prosch will handle the indexing and provide a list of Polanyi publications from which materials were drawn.

⁶⁹ Magda Polanyi to Gelwick, August 17, 1974.

⁷⁰ Magda Polanyi to Gelwick, September 9, 1974.

⁷¹ Magda Polanyi to Gelwick, October 2, 1974.

⁷² *Michael Polanyi, Scientist and Philosopher*, 286.

⁷³ Prosch to Polanyi, October 25, 1973, Box 16, Folder 13.

⁷⁴ Prosch to Polanyi, February 9, 1975, Box 16, Folder 14.

⁷⁵ See the comments on Polanyi's last days in Prosch's response to Thomas Torrance's accusations in a short article titled "Postscript to *Meaning*: Prosch Responds to Torrance's Letter," *Tradition and Discovery: The Polanyi Society Periodical*, vol. xv, no. 1 (Winter, 87-88): 24-25.

⁷⁶ with Michael Polanyi, "Truth in Myths," *Cross Currents*, 25, Summer, 1975.

⁷⁷ *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 8, (October, 1977): 178-191,

⁷⁸ *Biographical Supplement of The International Encyclopedia for the Social Sciences*, 18 (New York and London, 1979): 640-642.

⁷⁹ Review of Richard Gelwick's *The Way of Discovery, Ethics*, 82 (January, 1979): 211-216.

⁸⁰ "Polanyi and Rhetoric," *Pre-Text*, 2 (Spring-Fall, 1981): 189-196.

⁸¹ Although this is the beginning of these discussions, the articulation of Prosch's perspective in the debate comes earlier. His 1972 article "Polanyi's Ethics" puts Prosch's view this way: "Michael Polanyi holds that morality is analogous to art and religion in terms of its reality status, its structure, and the sort of involvement of our selves that it entails. The unique level of reality in which the objects of morality, art, and religion exist is what he calls the cultural stratum. This stratum includes for him, in fact, all the works of man's thought" (92).

⁸² "Polanyi's View of Religion in *Personal Knowledge*," *Zygon*, 17 (March, 1982): 41-48.

⁸³ Drusilla Scott, *Everyman Revived, The Common Sense of Michael Polanyi* (Lewes, Sussex: The Book Guild Limited, 1985).

⁸⁴ Harry Prosch, Review of *Everyman Revived, Tradition and Discovery: The Polanyi Society Periodical*, vol. xiii, no. 2 (Spring, 1985-86): 20-22.

⁸⁵ Although critical of Prosch's approach, for a review that attempts concisely and accurately to summarize the approach, as well as his criticisms of Harre, Grene, Torrance and the *Zygon* writers, see Phil Mullins, Review of Harry Prosch, *Michael Polanyi: A Critical Exposition, Zygon*, vol 23, no. 2 (June, 1988): 215-220.

⁸⁶ Three very interesting responses to Prosch are included in *Tradition and Discovery: The Polanyi Society Periodical*, vol. xv, no. 1 (Winter, 1987-88). This issue was not published until 1988. John Apczynski's "Are Religion and Science Distinct or Dichotomous Realms? Reflection on Prosch's Interpretation of Polanyi" (pp.4-14, originally a December, 1987 American Academy of Religion Roundtable Paper) is a fine effort to understand Prosch's approach to Polanyi and show how it is different than his own perspective. Essentially, Apczynski argues Prosch makes some assumptions common in earlier American naturalistic philosophy and in much contemporary philosophy. Apczynski concludes that Prosch's exposition is consistent but he thinks the assumptions underlying the exposition are not what he believes appropriate. He concludes "it would appear that any analysis of the implications of Polanyi's thought must take into account reflectively the fundamental assumptions of the interpreter and how they enter into the reading of the texts. Prosch has shown us, in brief, that Polanyi's is not a settled system and that to be faithful to Polanyi requires going beyond him"(11). Also interesting are Drusilla Scott's "Quality But Bristling With Difficulties On Polanyi's View of Reality" (pp. 14-17) and Joan Crewdson's "Nature and the Noosphere: Two Realities or One?" (pp. 18-24). Both the Scott and Crewdson essays were first published in *Convivium*, no. 24 (March, 1987).

⁸⁷ Maben Poirier, "Harry Prosch's Modernism," *Tradition and Discovery: The Polanyi Society Periodical*, vol. xvi, no.2 (Spring, 1988-1989): 32-39.

⁸⁸ Harry Prosch, "Those Missing 'Objects,'" *Tradition and Discovery: The Polanyi Society Periodical*, vol. xvii, nos. 1 & 2 (1991-1992): 21.

⁸⁹ Prosch, "Those Missing 'Objects,'" 21.

⁹⁰ Harry Prosch, Review of *Everyman Revived, Tradition and Discovery*, vol. xiii, no. 2 (Spring, 1985-

86): 22.

⁹¹ Thomas Torrance, "Letters to the Editor: Torrance Answers Prosch on Polanyi's Convictions about God," *Tradition and Discovery: The Polanyi Society Periodical*, vol. xiv, no. 1 (Fall, 1986-87): 30.

⁹² Thomas Torrance, 30.

⁹³ Thomas Torrance, 30.

⁹⁴ Harry Prosch, "Prosch Replies to Torrance's Letter: Postscript to *Meaning*," *Tradition and Discovery: The Polanyi Society Periodical*, vol. xv, no. 1, (Winter, 1987-1988): 24-25.

⁹⁵ *Michael Polanyi, Scientist and Philosopher*, 280, note 22 cites John Puddefoot's November 2, 1994 letter to Robin Hodgkin as evidence that Polanyi chose Torrance as literary executor because of Torrance's excellent credentials and "to avoid the kind of difficulties he experienced working with Prosch" (286). This letter which came to Bill Scott was written about twenty years after the publication of *Meaning* and several years after the controversy treated here appeared in *Tradition and Discovery*. The letter does no more than report the ideas appearing here that Torrance had already circulated about his appointment as literary executor.

⁹⁶ Magda Polanyi to Gelwick, November 24, 1974.

⁹⁷ Scott interview; April, 1994.

⁹⁸ Oldham to Polanyi, August 16, 1964; Box 15, Folder 5.

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Polanyi on Religion

Tony Clark

Abstract Keywords: religion, theology, Christianity, God, reality, science and religion, practice, Michael Polanyi, Richard Gelwick, Harry Prosch.

This article explores Polanyi's views on religion. Reviewing the debate on his understanding of religion, which originated in Richard Gelwick and Harry Prosch's conflicting readings of Polanyi on the theme, the article proposes that there are ambiguities within his writings on the theme which cannot be resolved. There is a weakness in Polanyi's work on religion which reflects his limited experience of religious practices and theological traditions. Nevertheless, his insight that religious knowledge is rooted in the practices of religious worship is one from which theology has much to learn.

Polanyi's writings on religion present scholars seeking to expound and interpret his work with a conundrum.¹ While what he writes on this theme is woven into the fabric of his work and brought into juxtaposition with his most acute epistemological insights, most commentators believe that his grasp of the subject matter of religion lacks the surefootedness and penetration which marks his treatment of scientific themes. He has some fascinating things to say, but these are mixed up with ideas which are – to a greater or lesser degree – misconceived, confused and often betray an insufficient familiarity with religious practice and theological articulation. Martin Moleski is undoubtedly correct when he writes, "Because of Polanyi's lack of formal training in theology and because of his independence from any particular Christian tradition, it may be somewhat unfair to expect precision and clarity from him in his reflection on religious issues."²

A good number of theologians have adopted Polanyi's broader epistemological insights into their work, and one might anticipate many further developments of this kind. But, given their considerable limitations, do Polanyi's writings *on religion* have a contribution to make to theology? I believe that they do, although it is clear to me that a positive take-up of this strand of his thought must be highly selective and sensitive to the problematical nature of this aspect of his work. In this article I shall consider how this might be done.

I will start by offering a brief reconsideration of the kinds of disagreement which have emerged between Polanyi scholars in their interpretations of his writings on religion. These are a result not only of the lack of clarity, but also a marked inconsistency of development to be found in his writing. Anyone approaching this aspect of Polanyi's work expecting to find a consistent and coherent core will be disappointed. This is the negative aspect of what I want to say. Positively, I will suggest that, notwithstanding some substantial weaknesses, Polanyi has a creative contribution to make to the work of theology and religious understanding. In particular, he helps us to see that religious knowledge is established through participation within religious communities, and the many varied practices which constitute their life, and that the explicit articulation of religious belief is rooted in participation within such communities.

Polanyi on Religion: the Debate

The degree of ambiguity in Polanyi's writing on religion is indicated by the disagreement between commentators about whether Polanyi believed in the existence of God, apart from the integrating processes of

the human imagination. This was the point at issue in the debate between Richard Gelwick and Harry Prosch in the late 1970s and early 80s.³

In his review of Richard Gelwick's *The Way of Discovery*⁴ Prosch claims that Gelwick fails to take account of certain distinctions which Polanyi makes between science and what he came to call 'works of the imagination' (such as symbols, metaphors, poems, dramas, art, myth, ritual, and religion).⁵ Prosch believes that these distinctions become 'very subtle' but that Gelwick's failure to recognise them leads his interpretation of Polanyi astray. Prosch admits that the distinctions are most fully articulated in *Meaning*, where he represents the distinctions by way of contrasting pairs: 'self-centred' as opposed to 'self-giving' and 'natural integrations' as opposed to 'transnatural integrations'. But he claims that they are already present in *Personal Knowledge*. In the latter Polanyi speaks of *verification* in connection with perception and science, and *validation* with respect to other 'acceptances'.⁶ Prosch writes of Polanyi:

Although he held that *all* meanings are *created* by minds in their activity of integrating subsidiary clues into focal wholes through a dwelling in these subsidiary clues looking toward the focal wholes, the meanings achieved in science are understood by us to be intimations of realities that exist independently of ourselves. This is part of our universal intent with respect to our perception and thought of them and why we can claim that our thought of them is *true*. We also expect these realities to manifest themselves in unpredictable ways in the future, so that, of course, we do not ever know that we know any of these realities at any moment fully and wholly just as they are.⁷

Discovery is a paradigm for scientific knowing because the object of our knowledge is a rational coherence in nature understood by us to have been in existence before our discovery of it. This, Prosch claims, is not the case with works of the imagination: "Polanyi was very clear... that, in contrast to the above situation, the works of our imagination are created by us. They do not exist independently of us. Their meanings *become* realities; but the existence of these meanings always depends not only upon the fact that they were initially creations of man but also, and more importantly, in that their validity depends upon their *continuing* to be created out of incompatibles... by acts of imagination on the part of these [sic] who continue to be moved by them."⁸ Consequently such integrations are and remain 'transnatural' constructions which may be *valid*⁹ but, to quote Prosch again, "they can never assume the same status ontologically as the natural realities or meanings aimed at in perception and science. Thus any *verification* of them is simply out of the question."¹⁰ Prosch will allow that transnatural constructions may be regarded as discoveries, "but not of an independently existing reality or of a further dimension of such a reality not available to 'science.'"¹¹ Prosch claims that Gelwick tends to submerge differences and to imply that art and religion expand our horizon of realities as though they were dealing with the same kind of things that are discovered in science – while being beyond that which science can discover. Prosch insists that for Polanyi we are dealing with two very different kinds of reality.

Gelwick responds to Prosch by denying any such sharp distinction. Not only this, but he sees the introduction of such a distinction as a serious threat to the substance of Polanyi's broader project. Gelwick warns that "The consequence of Prosch's view is extremely serious. It would mean that, while Polanyi restored the role of faith in all knowing, he had done it only to believe in God as a figment of our imagination. Such a purpose... was never held by Polanyi. Indeed, he did intend to renew our ability to believe in the truth and reality of God known in our Jewish and Christian heritage."¹²

Gelwick believes that as we speak of the scientist's ever-deepening knowledge of nature, "so also is the theologian called to ever-deepening knowledge of God through the *logos* of the Christian revelation."¹³ Gelwick acknowledges the distinction which Polanyi makes between validation and verification in *Personal Knowledge*. He also acknowledges that our personal participation is generally greater in a validation than it is in verification, as the 'emotional coefficient of assertion' is intensified as we pass from the sciences into the neighbouring domains of thought. But both verification and validation are everywhere an acknowledgement of a commitment: they claim the presence of something real and external to the speaker.¹⁴ The distinction here, in Gelwick's view, is one of degree – the degree of personal participation in the act of knowing. It is not the case that we can have verification of things that exist independently and validation of those things which do not. Gelwick comments: "To put my criticism of Prosch sharply, it seems that he has taken a positivist stance on what is real. Prosch's statement seems to imply that science has a superior status because its meanings or ideas can be tested by perceived facts, and only ideas so tested indicate external reality. Such a position not only contradicts Polanyi's views of reality but the purpose of his epistemological program."¹⁵

Gelwick is concerned that Prosch is once again leading us towards a separation of fact and value in his insistence upon dichotomising the kinds of integration which are achieved in science and the arts. He also points out that if Prosch wishes to imply that verification represents superior ontological status, this is in contradiction to Polanyi's view of the hierarchy of ontological levels. Transnatural integrations occur at a higher level of ontology and, all the more emphatically, bear on external realities. Gelwick writes:

When Polanyi spoke of reality, he spoke of it in a very inclusive way, not confined to tangibles or to the levels of empirical verification. He defined reality as that which has the power to manifest itself in indeterminate and unexpected ways in the future. The capacity of an entity to reveal itself in unexpected ways in the future is an indication that it is an aspect of reality "possessing a significance that is not exhausted by our conception of any single aspect." This conception holds as much, perhaps more, for religion and theology as for perceptual observations and science.¹⁶

The debate between Gelwick and Prosch is extended in Prosch's response to Gelwick in the same number of *Zygon*.¹⁷ Here Prosch seeks to show that religion for Polanyi is a reality *according to Polanyi's definition of reality*, which is to say: "that from which we expect indeterminate properties to arise in the future, properties of which we have not yet dreamed."¹⁸ He goes on to say, "These properties have, as it were, a life and development of their own which we can neither control nor anticipate; they are not products of our subjective whims or fancies."¹⁹ Prosch is saying, in essence, that in Polanyi's scheme we can talk about 'religious realities' without implying any external referent (existing independently of human imagination) or reducing religion to subjectivity. Prosch clarifies the point when he writes, "the only shred of reality, in the sense of existence independently of us, that God has in Polanyi's later thought is the gradient of deeper meaning which seems to evoke the achievement of greater meaning in all life and thought."²⁰ In an intriguing biographical note Prosch discloses:

I recall trying, myself, upon several occasions (once when he was preparing some of the lectures on which *Meaning* was later based) to convince Polanyi that no religion could be founded without its including somewhere in its lore the notion of its own *real* supernatural origin and that the supernatural was therefore a necessary feature of any religion which became a "going concern." I was never able to succeed in getting him to admit this. He really

had a difficult time understanding a belief in the factual reality of the religiously supernatural as anything much more than magic or superstition.²¹

If this is indeed what Polanyi's view was towards the end of his life it must be noted that it seems to contradict his discussion of the 'supernatural' in *Personal Knowledge* (see *PK* 284).²² But Prosch claims that Polanyi "was enthralled by the imaginative, transnatural union of incompatibles involved in Christianity and did not seem to find the supernatural elements in this vision to be any more necessary to hold as statements of fact or of reality than he found the "story" in poems and plays necessary to hold as statements of fact or reality."²³

Many other Polanyi scholars have debated his view on religion, as I have noted, and opinion is divided about what he really thought. Colin Weightman, like Prosch, is of the view that Polanyi had no belief in a God who exists independently of human imagination. Nevertheless, he offers some advice that should be heeded: "I am conscious myself of the need for caution since all commentators on Polanyi are agreed (I think) that Polanyi is the opposite of open and clear about his own religious commitments. Even those who confidently venture an assessment should at the very least admit that his "view" on "God" needs to be carefully teased out or perhaps carefully extrapolated from clues in the text since it is definitely not "up front"."²⁴

The disagreement expressed in the debate about Polanyi's views on religion is only compounded by his reluctance to express his own personal religious beliefs. Close collaborators came to quite different conclusions about Polanyi's *personal* Christian convictions and this is illustrated by the comments of T. F. Torrance, who became Polanyi's literary executor, and Harry Prosch with whom Polanyi co-authored *Meaning*.²⁵ On the one hand Torrance writes of Polanyi's "deep Christian commitment influenced particularly by St Paul's teaching about redemption and Augustine's stress upon faith as the door to understanding."²⁶ On the other hand Prosch comments: "At one point Polanyi did seem to think of himself as a fully practising Christian. When I knew him he obviously was not one."²⁷

The debate about Polanyi's views on religion reflects a substantial uncertainty about whether the God of whom Polanyi speaks has an existence which is independent of human imagination. The secondary literature only serves to show that Polanyi's position on this question is far from clear.

The Roots of Disagreement

The roots of the disagreement surely go back to ambiguities in Polanyi's own work. While religion is not one of the central themes in his writing he does have a good deal to say on the subject.²⁸ *Meaning*, in that it is co-authored with Prosch, introduces an additional difficulty. Prosch claims, in the preface to the book, that "these are...[Polanyi's] ideas, expressed for the greatest part in his own language." (*M* x) But Prosch is not editor but co-author of the book, and the significance of his hand cannot be ignored.²⁹ For this reason it may be appropriate to put the greater emphasis upon the material to be found in *Personal Knowledge*.³⁰ A complete commentary on Polanyi's writings on religion is not possible within the limited scope of this article. The comments which follow presuppose some familiarity with Polanyi's treatment of the theme.³¹

The first thing to be said is that Polanyi's discussion of religion in *Personal Knowledge* is marked by the oddity of its approach. It resembles neither the descriptive work of the religious anthropologist, nor the confessional, doctrinal or systematising approaches of the theologian or liturgist. It represents something of

a ‘scatter-shot’ approach, picking up various themes which, while providing many intriguing insights, fail to offer a satisfying and consistent picture of either religious practice or a justification of religious knowing. There appear to be two substantial reasons for this. The first, which I noted at the outset, is that Polanyi was insufficiently integrated, in a personal way, into the life and practice of any particular religious community. The second is that when he confronts religious themes, he invariably does so by marshalling epistemological strategies which he has established *primarily* in the realm of science.³² Clearly these insights *do* have implications beyond science. But if the strength of Polanyi’s theory of knowledge derives from his rootedness in scientific practice, it follows that the effectiveness of any adaptation of these insights in other spheres of practice and reflection will be dependent, to some considerable degree, upon its rootedness *in* those other spheres of life.³³

It is my view that Polanyi shifts from a predominantly *a posteriori* approach with respect to science, to a predominantly *a priori* approach to religion and theology. There is, in Polanyi’s work, a desire to generalise which has the potential to weaken his most acute insights. Polanyi *is* concerned to establish the significance of his epistemological themes across a broad range of concerns. This can be seen in the ‘articulate systems’ of *Personal Knowledge* and the ‘integration of incompatibles’ of *Meaning*. To offer two examples: in the first passage of *Personal Knowledge* in which Polanyi deals with religious themes³⁴, he considers mystical contemplation as a particular case of the general phenomenon of ‘breaking out’ of an articulate system. He has generated this insight in his reflections upon the phenomenon of scientific discovery; now he is looking to apply it in other spheres. In the second passage³⁵ he considers the nature of doubt and indwelling in relation to Christian worship, having reflected on the theme of belief and doubt in terms of its significance in scientific progress.

Polanyi is, among other things, a systematiser, and he comes to religion with a generalising scheme in hand – a scheme which is, more often than not, derived from his work in science.³⁶ He does not *start* with ‘religion’, ‘religious belief’, or ‘Christianity’ as a phenomenon, nor does he appear to derive his generalising schemes (or interpretive frameworks) from an indwelling of the religious life. Polanyi typically starts with the nature of scientific knowledge and it is here that his most incisive ideas are formed.

Polanyi gives the appearance of being wary of dealing with the phenomena of religious faith, practice and tradition in a direct way. When he refers to religion he is generally either following up, or expanding upon, a theme which has already been established in another context, or demonstrating substantially unacknowledged continuities in the way in which we come to know things in science and religion.³⁷ In both endeavours the phenomena of religious belief and practice are typically overlooked in all but the sketchiest of detail.

In *Personal Knowledge*, Polanyi describes the search for God in terms of his theory of heuristic passion. But the desire to ‘discover’ God must be distinguished from others because it is a desire which cannot be fulfilled. It is ‘the discovery that can never be made’. I do not deny that this may have some resonances with the kinds of things that might be said from within the religious traditions but, as it stands, it is woefully inadequate. For example, from within the Christian tradition, the theme of ongoing pilgrimage must be balanced by others, such as God’s acceptance, the forgiveness of sins and the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

If we are to take Polanyi’s comments on religion to refer primarily to the Christian faith, a further set of issues come into focus. Where, in Polanyi’s exposition, do we hear of incarnation? Where do we find an acknowledgement of the God of revelation, or pneumatology? Where does Polanyi explore the authority of Holy

Scripture, the creeds and the confessions of the church? He may touch on such matters in passing, but most of the time they play little or no formative part in his analysis of religion. As I noted in the footnote above, Polanyi appears to subsume Christianity under a generic ‘religion’.

In view of the way in which Polanyi approaches religion it is not surprising that there is a considerable degree of ambiguity about what he held to be true. The form of a debate – such as the one which took place between Harry Prosch and Richard Gelwick – is posited upon an assumption that it is possible to get to the bottom of what Polanyi really thought about the existence of God. However, the little biographical information that is bequeathed to us suggests that even those who were close to him – certainly in the latter part of his life – drew very different conclusions about his personal religious convictions. He was, for whatever reasons, secretive about such beliefs.

In his writings a particular kind of ambiguity arises in that the major ‘tools’ which he deploys in his discussions of religion (‘articulate systems’, ‘indwelling’, the ‘integration of incompatibles’, etc.) appear to ‘work’ on the basis of *either* a realist *or* a non-realist understanding of God. While some specific comments may tell in favour of a realist view, others may suggest a non-realist God. But the great bulk of what he writes appears to be substantially consistent with either view. I contend, therefore, that there is very little evidence available which might settle the debate – certainly if it is cast in the form of a choice between these two alternatives. Maybe this is how Polanyi *intended* to leave the matter.

Polanyi’s Own View of the Contribution of his Thought to Religion

Despite the ambiguity and unevenness which mark his writings on religion, it is apparent that Polanyi sees his own philosophical contribution standing in significant relation to religious practice and theological thought.

Polanyi’s epistemology illuminates the commonalities of the ways in which things are known in science and religion. The triadic structure of knowing, comprising of subsidiary knowledge, focal knowledge and the person, is evident in both spheres of human knowing – as it is in all others. In both cases, knowledge is linked to a participatory indwelling in which both fiduciary and tacit components are intrinsic to its achievement. Thus Polanyi sees one key aspect of his contribution to religious understanding as the identification of particular continuities between religious and scientific knowing.

Also of significance for his understanding of religion is his hierarchical ontology in which religion occupies the highest position. This ontology affirms an essentially meaningful universe, and that meaning is profoundly bound up with the meanings which are established in religion. For Polanyi perhaps *the* key to religion is its affirmation, in its narrative myths, of the meaningfulness of the world and of the place of humanity within it. Such a task is beyond the scope of scientific knowledge: if it is to be established it must be the achievement of religion.

It is also important to note that Polanyi sees religion, in his time, as disempowered; but he entertains the thought that if the distortions of modernity are corrected it may once more emerge as a force. This view is expressed in the last paragraph of *The Tacit Dimension*. Polanyi, reflecting upon humanity’s need for a purpose bearing on eternity, writes, “Perhaps this problem cannot be resolved on secular grounds alone. But

its religious solution should become more feasible once religious faith is released from pressure by an absurd vision of the universe, and so there will open up instead a meaningful world which could resound to religion.” (TD 92) Polanyi sees his own work as a modest ‘paving of the way’, for religion. The theme recurs in *Meaning*. Polanyi concludes his consideration of religion here by commenting, “this present work is not directed toward effecting conversions to any religion. At the most, it is directed toward unstopping our ears so that we may hear the liturgical summons should one ever come our way.” (M 180)

An affirmation of religion is, in Polanyi’s view, an affirmation of religion’s claim that the universe is meaningful. In the light of this he believes that (in an indeterminate and indirect way) he is working in the service of the emancipation of religion. As such it is, perhaps, unsurprising that Polanyi is happy to speak about religion without distinguishing between different religions, and speak, specifically, of the Christian faith while paying scant attention to its traditions of practice and doctrine. R. L. Hall is concerned that the ‘reality’ of religion so conceived is overly aesthetic and insufficiently attuned to its ‘historical’ origins. He writes, “If we are thinking of religion in the historical sense, that is, of the western experience, especially the Judaeo-Christian tradition, then Polanyi’s account of religion simply will not do.”³⁸ Polanyi, in his comments on religion, falls short of recognising the historical events which Judaism and Christianity, as two pertinent and central examples, regard as pivotal to their own self understanding.³⁹ Hall continues, “In historical religious encounters, personal relationships of dialogue and revelation replace the poetic anonymity of the aesthetic encounter. Polanyi has not adequately recognized this historical dimension of religious experience. He has, as a consequence, poeticized religion”.⁴⁰ Polanyi’s discussion of the theme of meaning – in its relation to religion – is certainly an interesting one but provides another example of how he can offer insightful comments on the theme of religion while failing to grasp issues which are central to its life and self-understanding.

A Re-evaluation of Polanyi’s Contribution to Religion

My evaluation of Polanyi’s writing on religion and theology has, so far, been substantially negative. The heart of my criticism flows from what I think is an essentially Polanyian insight: to make a substantial contribution in a particular sphere of human life it is necessary to participate within a community of practice which corresponds to that sphere. As we have noted, Polanyi was neither a theologian nor an established churchman – even if he did converse with theologians (notably Paul Tillich) and attend Christian worship during periods of his life. Polanyi’s indwelling of the scientific community was a profound one; apart from this he could not have written as he did of the theory of knowledge. But his indwelling of any religious community was by no means of the same order, and it is inevitable that his comments on religion, though not without interest, lack the consistency and penetration that we find in the writings which draw upon the rich veins of his scientific knowledge.

There is a general methodological point to be made here. Any discipline must allow its methods to be formed and to develop in response to the object of its concern.⁴¹ Theology, too, must develop methodologies wherein it is faithful to its object.⁴² Karl Barth suggests that “The *only* way which theology has of proving its scientific character is to devote itself to the task of knowledge as determined by its actual theme and thus to show what it means by true science.”⁴³ As such theology does not forsake its theme by subjugating or correlating it to the concerns of the natural sciences but ascribes the epithet of ‘science’ to theology precisely because it is faithful to its ‘object’ and is so in a rigorous and *a posteriori* way. This is its task and, in my view, it is beyond doubt that Polanyi’s work provides invaluable tools for theologians who are engaged in such a task.

Polanyi's best insights are established in relation to the concerns of the scientific community, but part of what they do is to illuminate philosophical distortions deeply rooted in the contours of western thought. But such distortions, which blighted the work of the philosophers of science, do not cease to have force at the doors of the church or the desk of the theologian. Polanyi may not have been well placed to establish the significance of his epistemological insights in theology and religion but, as I have already noted, there is considerable potential in such an undertaking.

In bringing this article to a conclusion I do not want to make some general remarks about how theologians might appropriately commandeer Polanyi's insights into the maladies of modernism and his prescribed remedies, but to make a strong affirmation of one of the themes in his writing on religion: his discussion of Christian worship. I do not want to explore it in detail, as it suffers, in many respects, from the kinds problems that I have already noted. But it also contains an insight in which he makes a profound connexion between the theory of knowledge, as he developed it, the religious life, and theology, as a second order reflection upon it.

In *Personal Knowledge* Polanyi draws a clear and important distinction between the 'logical rules' of science and the 'scientific outlook'. The former offers what Polanyi calls a 'highly attenuated summary' of the latter.⁴⁴ Conceived in this way it is clear that "science is not established by the acceptance of a formula, but is part of our mental life, shared out for cultivation among many thousands of specialized scientists throughout the world, and shared receptively, at second-hand, by many millions. And we shall realize that any sincere account of the reasons for which we too share in this mental life must necessarily be given as part of this life." (PK 171)

To *become* a scientist one must be nurtured within this outlook or tradition: one must entrust oneself to it. To *participate* in the life of science one must continue to *trust* in this outlook in which one has been nurtured. Scientific discovery will, inevitably, challenge this outlook, but it will do so in respect of a specific aspect of it, and never will it challenge the tradition in a *general* way. One learns to be a scientist and one practices as a scientist on the basis of a *belief* in the scientific outlook, as this has been established within the scientific community. Polanyi commends a return to the insights of St Augustine who "taught that all knowledge was a gift of grace, for which we must strive under the guidance of antecedent belief: *nisi credideritis, non intelligitis*." (PK 266)⁴⁵ Our knowledge is possible because of commitments and beliefs which can be neither fully articulated, nor fully defended.

While it is clear that there are some distinctions to be made, the significance of this insight has important consequences for religion and theology. If the articulate expressions of scientific knowledge are rooted in participation within the scientific community, the theological and dogmatic expressions of the church must be understood as rooted in the forms of life in which the church participates. This is an insight which has been significantly underplayed in modern Protestant theology, influenced as it has been by many of the strands of Enlightenment thought with which Polanyi contended. As such it has been weak in acknowledging the link between the life-practice of faith communities and theological 'systems'. But it is an insight which Polanyi does establish in his specific comments on religion. Part of his treatment of religion in *Personal Knowledge* – despite the many shortcomings which attend it – is a description of the religious life conceived as 'knowledge through participation'. He puts considerable emphasis upon the components of worship showing that it is not our focal knowledge of these which is of primary importance, but our indwelling of them. It is through such an indwelling

that the religious vision emerges. “The words of prayer and confession, the actions of the ritual, the lesson, the sermon, the church itself, are the clues of the worshipper’s striving towards God.” (PK 281)

There is also something of a puzzle here. In speaking of religious indwelling Polanyi points to the *particular* practices which comprise the believer’s participation in the religious community. However awkward his descriptions may be, he attempts to tie ‘religious indwelling’ to particular religious practices (which he describes in some detail). Despite his own greater familiarity with the life of science, Polanyi is, in certain respects, less explicit in his description of the life of science in terms of *particular* practices. For example, in his work we find very little about what it is like to work in a scientific laboratory, despite the wealth of experience he had working in such an environment, and the importance of that work in his scientific career. I do not wish to speculate about this here,⁴⁶ but I do want to suggest that Polanyi’s intuition to pay attention to the components of religious practice as providing the subsidiary clues for religious understanding is a profound and important one.⁴⁷

Theology – and Protestant theology in particular – has much to learn from this. Too much theology – even in our supposedly ‘post-modern’ context – retains a strong rationalistic strand in that what is expressed within it is inadequately ‘rooted’ in the forms of life out of which it must necessarily emerge. The ideas and ‘systems’ which it expresses fly too free of the *realities* which they claim to articulate – rooted as they are – *and must be* – in human life. The task of theology is not, as Barth noted, to “give orders in the church”.⁴⁸ The task of theology is firstly to *acknowledge* what is known in the church, through its life and practice, and to *serve* the church in seeking to articulate this in the language and concepts of the contemporary world. Thus its task is not to tell the church what it must believe, but to ‘purify the dialect of the tribe’.⁴⁹ In developing its vocation along these lines there is still much to be learned from Polanyi’s understanding of indwelling and the importance of tacit knowledge – rooted in communities of practice – and, indeed, some of his explicit comments on religion.

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Endnotes

¹ Polanyi tends to subsume 'Christianity' under a generic 'religion' (despite his assertion in *Meaning* that there can be no religion "in general" (M 179). Most of his comments on religion relate to Christianity but, somewhat problematically, he does not clearly differentiate the two designations. In this article my concerns will focus on Christian theology and the church without, in any way, denying the significance of this line of inquiry for other religious traditions.

² Martin X. Moleski, *Personal Catholicism: The Theological Epistemologies of John Henry Newman and Michael Polanyi* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2000). p. 142.

³ Other Polanyi scholars have debated such issues. See Terence Kennedy, *The Morality of Knowledge: Transcendence and the Intellectual Life in the Thought of Michael Polanyi* (Rome: Pontifica Universitas Lateranensis, 1979). pp. 139-144; Andy F. Sanders, *Michael Polanyi's Post-Critical Epistemology: A Reconstruction of Some Aspects of "Tacit Knowing"* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988). pp. 227-264; William T. Scott, "The Question of a Religious Reality," *Zygon* 17 (1982). pp. 83-87.; R. T. Allen, *Transcendence and Immanence in the Philosophy of Michael Polanyi and Christian Theism* (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press for Rutherford House/Edinburgh, 1992). pp. 31-74; and Drusilla Scott, *Michael Polanyi* (London: SPCK, 1996). pp. 180-199.

⁴ Richard Gelwick, *The Way of Discovery: An Introduction to the Thought of Michael Polanyi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

⁵ See Harry Prosch, "Review of *the Way of Discovery: An Introduction to the Thought of Michael Polanyi*. By Richard Gelwick," *Ethics* 89 (1978/9).

⁶ Polanyi lists 'mathematics, religion and the various arts'. See *PK* p. 202.

⁷ Prosch. p. 213 Prosch's emphasis.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 214 Prosch's emphasis.

⁹ Prosch is drawing here on the distinction which Polanyi makes in *PK* p. 202.

¹⁰ Prosch. p. 214 Prosch's emphasis.

- ¹¹ Ibid. p.214 Prosch's emphasis. One wonders in what sense something could be 'discovered' on these terms.
- ¹² Richard Gelwick, "Science and Reality, Religion and God: A Reply to Harry Prosch [*Ethics* 89: Pp 211-216, January 1979; Rejoinder.]," *Zygon* 17 (1982). p. 26.
- ¹³ Ibid. p. 27.
- ¹⁴ Although one wonders how this might be so in the case of mathematics, for example.
- ¹⁵ Richard Gelwick, "Science and Reality, Religion and God: A Reply to Harry Prosch," *Zygon* 17 (1982). p. 30.
- ¹⁶ Ibid. p. 34.
- ¹⁷ Harry Prosch, "Polanyi's View of Religion in *Personal Knowledge: A Response to Richard Gelwick*," *Zygon* 17 (1982).
- ¹⁸ Ibid. p. 41.
- ¹⁹ Ibid. p. 41.
- ²⁰ Ibid. p. 42.
- ²¹ Ibid. pp. 45f. Prosch's emphasis.
- ²² Unless we take this to be a discussion of 'logical possibilities' in a frame of reference which he actually rejects – which would seem to be an extremely convoluted interpretation.
- ²³ Prosch, "Polanyi's View of Religion in *Personal Knowledge: A Response to Richard Gelwick*." p. 46.
- ²⁴ Colin Weightman, "Polanyi and Mathematics, Torrance and Philosophy of Science: A Response to Apczynski's Review," *Tradition and Discovery* 24, no. 1 (1997-98). p. 35 Weightman's emphasis.
- ²⁵ Both reflecting upon Polanyi when he was living in Oxford in his 70s.
- ²⁶ T. F. Torrance, "Michael Polanyi and the Christian Faith - a Personal Report," *Tradition and Discovery* 27:2 (2000-2001).p. 28.
- ²⁷ Prosch, "Polanyi's View of Religion in *Personal Knowledge: A Response to Richard Gelwick*." pp. 46f.
- ²⁸ See *PK* pp. 195-202 and *M* pp. 148-181. See, also, Michael Polanyi, "Faith and Reason," *Journal of Religion* 41 (1961). (subsequently re-published in Michael Polanyi, *Scientific Thought and Social Reality: Essays* (New York: International Universities Press, 1974)., and Michael Polanyi, "Science and Religion: Separate Dimensions or Common Ground?," *Philosophy Today* 7 (1963).
- ²⁹ Much of the material in chapter 10 of *Meaning* is not to be found in the lecture manuscript (Texas and Chicago series, 1969) also entitled "Acceptance of Religion" on which the chapter was based. [See "Polanyi Collection: Regenstein Library, University of Chicago." Box 40, Folder 1] I am unaware of similar material in any of Polanyi's published or unpublished work. It is striking that Polanyi's lecture manuscript contains only six paragraphs at the end of the piece which deal directly with religious matters. In *Meaning*, however, we find a large amount of material about the Holy Communion, praise, prayer, ritual and worship. It seems reasonable to surmise that this material is attributable to Prosch's hand.
- ³⁰ In addition to the question of authorship, it is appropriate to recognise that *Personal Knowledge* was written at the height of Polanyi's powers, while *Meaning* was conceived at a time when Polanyi was struggling with problems of memory loss and difficulties with concentration.
- ³¹ For a work of commentary on this theme as it is expressed in *Personal Knowledge* see Phil Mullins, "Religious Meaning in Polanyi's Personal Knowledge," *Polanyiana: The Periodical of the Michael Polanyi Liberal Philosophical Association* 2:4 (1992).
- ³² Polanyi's concentration upon science is indicated at the outset in the preface to *Personal Knowledge*: "This is primarily an enquiry into the nature and justification of scientific knowledge. But my

reconsideration of scientific knowledge leads on to a wide range of questions outside science.” (PK vii)

³³ The significance of Polanyi’s profound participation in science in establishing a new theory of knowledge was noted by his collaborator, Marjorie Grene: “[H]e came to the problem, raised it and grappled with it from within the life of science. It was knowledge in the concrete context of existence, the existence of science and scientists, that he was concerned to vindicate. What resulted was often obscure, sometimes mistaken, and couched in a rhetoric that most professional philosophers find hard to tolerate; but it was a philosophy rooted in reality, neither the clever gymnastics of analysis, nor the prophylactic debate of a philosophy of science based on a grave misconception of, and almost entirely out of contact with its alleged subject matter.” Marjorie Grene, “Tacit Knowing: Grounds for a Revolution in Philosophy,” *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 8, no. 3 (1977). pp. 166f.

³⁴ See PK pp. 195-202.

³⁵ See PK pp. 279-286.

³⁶ In his latter writing, especially in *Meaning*, certain forms of schematisation are drawn from his comparatively brief (though by no means insignificant) engagement with the study of metaphor, art and myth.

³⁷ This comes out with particular force in Polanyi, “Science and Religion: Separate Dimensions or Common Ground?.”

³⁸ Ronald L. Hall, “Michael Polanyi on Art and Religion,” *Zygon* 17 (1982). p. 17.

³⁹ Nor is the pneumatological aspect of such knowledge taken into account by Polanyi.

⁴⁰ Hall. p. 17.

⁴¹ This is perspicuously absent in Polanyi’s approach to religion.

⁴² In Gelwick’s terminology: “the *logos* of the Christian revelation.” Gelwick, “Science and Reality, Religion and God: A Reply to Harry Prosch [Ethics 89: pp. 211-216, January 1979; Rejoinder.]” p. 27.

⁴³ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God I.1*, trans. G. W. Bromiley, 2nd ed., *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975). p. 10. My emphasis.

⁴⁴ I would question whether ‘summary’ is an appropriate word in this context. What Polanyi is wanting to say is that what can be articulated by the scientist – in terms of theories, formulae, descriptions, and the like – is dependent upon a much broader knowledge (substantially tacit) which is established through the scientist’s participation within the scientific community. What is articulated is not a ‘summary’ of all that is known.

⁴⁵ In this instance Polanyi commandeers the language of the church in the service of scientific knowledge.

⁴⁶ Although I do think that the observation merits further reflection.

⁴⁷ Notwithstanding all the difficulties which attend the language he uses in order to make this point.

⁴⁸ Barth. p. 86.

⁴⁹ I have concerned myself with the Christian church, but, as I have already implied, it is clear that something similar might be said in relation to other faith communities.

Submissions for Publication

Articles, meeting notices and notes likely to be of interest to persons interested in the thought of Michael Polanyi are welcomed. Review suggestions and book reviews should be sent to Walter Gulick (see addresses listed below). Manuscripts, notices and notes should be sent to Phil Mullins. Manuscripts should be double-spaced type with notes at the end; writers are encouraged to employ simple citations within the text when possible. MLA or APA style are preferred. Because the journal serves English writers across the world, we do not require anybody’s “standard English.” Abbreviate frequently cited book titles, particularly books

by Polanyi (e.g., *Personal Knowledge* becomes *PK*). Shorter articles (10-15 pages) are preferred, although longer manuscripts (20-24 pages) will be considered. Consistency and clear writing are expected.

Manuscripts normally will be sent out for blind review. Authors are expected to provide an electronic copy as an e-mail attachment.

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Learning to See: The Role of Authoritative Guides in Knowing

Esther L. Meek

Abstract Key Words: knowing, authority, authoritative guides in knowing, the normative component of all knowing, persons and personhood, the personal, reciprocity, submission, epistemic responsibility.

My own ongoing reflection on the Polanyian understanding of knowing leads me to recommend that we help people acknowledge and reaccredit authority as a key feature of all human knowing. This recommendation I support in this essay by showing the following. First, I argue that reliance on authority is unavoidable. The Polanyian model, along with the complementary insights of a few others, and reflection on human experience, together show that human knowledge is what it is only by virtue of its normative component. Such normativity, I argue, requires persons as mentors and as recipients. Second, I describe some of the ins and outs of responsible reliance on authority in a way that I hope will make it a more palatable and delightful prospect, and will encourage its skillful employment. I believe that this message offers much needed epistemological therapy for philosophy and ordinary people today.

Thanks to the efforts of Descartes and other modern philosophers, the idea that authority might play a legitimate role in knowledge acquisition was excised from our Western mindset and replaced with its negation: that to the extent that a knowledge claim is derived by reliance on authority, it is thereby defective and illegitimate. Standard treatments of the sources of knowledge, when I was a student, ranked reason and sensation as paramount. Relying on the word of an authority made the list of secondary sources, as that which we tolerate when there isn't anything better, or when we're too young to think for ourselves. As soon as it can be replaced, it should be. Michael Polanyi notes this telling remark of Bertrand Russell's: "The triumphs of science are due to the substitution of observation and inference for authority. Every attempt to revive authority in intellectual matters is a retrograde step. ... One of the great benefits that science confers upon those who understand its spirit is that it enables them to live without the delusive support of subjective authority."¹

Postmodernism's studied suspicion of all metanarratives both calls the bluff of modernism with respect to authority, and leaves the suspicious with no healthy response. The postmodern draws attention to what the modern failed to notice: the normative component of all knowing. All claims to knowledge reflect the fundamental religious (in the sense of unargued and uncontested) commitments of the knower or knowing community. Had this been openly acknowledged and responsibly navigated by the modern, suspicion may not have been the obvious response. As it is, the postmodern exercises as a matter of principle the very opposite of trust, and in this sense perpetuates the rejection of authority that characterized the modern. And if this paper's thesis is correct, that means that the postmodern, just like the modern, attempts to function epistemically in denial of the unavoidable role that normative commitments and authoritative guides play willy nilly in our knowing. I think the result is epistemic ill health. We live in a culture crying for epistemological therapy.

Among the many things about which Polanyi sounded a wake-up call in epistemology was this very issue. Scientific discovery occurs only in the context of an authoritative and communal tradition, and is accomplished only by people who have submitted themselves to apprenticeship with skilled masters who model an artistry larger than what they can articulate. In this respect, any effort of mine on this subject is like G.K.

Chesterton's wonderful metaphor of landing his wandering boat on a strange island, only to find that it is England.² However, if I may humbly add, he nevertheless proceeded to write his own book.

My ongoing reflection on the Polanyian understanding of knowing leads me to recommend that we help people acknowledge and reinstate authority as a key feature of all human knowing. This recommendation I support in this essay by showing the following. First, I argue that reliance on authority is unavoidable. The Polanyian model, along with the complementary insights of a few others, and reflection on human experience, together show that human knowledge is what it is only by virtue of its normative component. Such normativity, I argue, requires persons as mentors and as recipients. Second, I endeavor to describe some of the ins and outs of reliance on authority in a way that I hope will make it a more palatable and delightful prospect, and will encourage its skillful employment.

In engaging Polanyi's subject, however, I do not mean to imply that what I have developed here represents Polanyi's particular emphases concerning authority. He talked much and persuasively about authoritative traditions and communities. In this essay I develop different though complementary emphases and applications.

The Normative Component In All Knowing and the Necessity of Authoritative Guides

By authoritative guides, I mean persons present or formerly present, whose words, normative as they are, bringing to verbal expression a life full of inarticulable skills and commitments as they do, guide my act of coming to know. Thus, my guide may be a mentor sharing space and time with me. My guide may be the caregiver who taught me to objectify and to engage the world as she taught me to speak. My guide may be a person whose words are captured in a book. My guide may be any number of maxims that come to us on the waves of oral tradition. My guide may be any articulated verbal standard that, may we not forget, originated with some person or community of persons, intended as an effective, yea, normative way to unlock the world.

Identifying the Normative Component

Early in my thought development, I learned from theologian John Frame to identify not two but three dimensions of human knowledge—the existential, the situational, and the normative.³ I didn't get it at first. Knowledge obviously involves the knower and the known, the existential and the situational. But the normative—what is that? It's taken a long time for the actuality of the normative to push through my dense modern philosophical haze. Not even a dissertation in Polanyi and multiple readings of Grene's *The Knower and the Known* waked me thoroughly to this until after years of incubation. Now I realize it was there all along. It was there, not only in Polanyi; it was also there in Plato. Thus, what I state here I hope you realized much sooner than I did. Yet it is a message I believe we will have to repeat often and patiently to person after person who could use some epistemological therapy.

When I teach people how Polanyi describes knowing, I often resort to the Magic Eye 3-D puzzles, in which the observer follows the directions and struggles to reconceive a computer-generated patterns as three-dimensional objects, such as dolphins. After years of further explaining "subsidiaries" by offering a random list of possible candidates, I tried applying the Framean triad to the list in the context of the Magic Eye example. The world, as I came to call the situational, included the surface features of the puzzle. The body, as I called the existential, included lived bodily efforts, such as those of the optical nerve. Having found the two, I went

looking for the third, the normative. But where? The directions! In a first encounter with a Magic Eye, a person sees the computer presentation, but has no clue concerning that nature of the game, let alone the object of it. The minimal fact that it is a game may also be in doubt, though its setting on the game page in the newspaper may be a clue. It is the directions that let the person know that a game is afoot, to bend the idiom, what the goal is and how to reach it. Were the puzzle designer present, or any other experienced person, that authoritative guide would demonstrate the behavior required, and then coach the initiate's own attempts, telling her what's happening and whether she is doing it right. But even at long-distance, the designer norms the initiate's experience formatively, interpreting for the initiate the goal, the process, and the initiate herself.

In addition, it is the case that actively shaping a pattern, which is the essence of the Polanyian description of knowing as integration, involves assigning varying values to the particulars with which the knower is first presented. Here I mean by *values* some measure of significance. I actually have in mind the paint-by-numbers that I occasionally did as a child. Suppose the paint-by-number blank had outlined segments that by themselves did not suggest a pattern. It would take actually putting green on the 9s, red on the 6s, blue on the 2s, to see that pattern. Painting the 9s green is like assigning value. Value assigning is, I am convinced, the driving mechanism of pattern making. No value assignment—no pattern, no integration. Assign values—and pattern, figure, steps out from the background. Even the simplest perception involves noticing, and noticing is inherently an assigning of values.

Linking the Normative to the Personal

Polanyi made the case that this is personal: it involves a person's critical, responsible, appraisal, a tacit coefficient of all knowing thus inherently unformalizable. Marjorie Grene, if no one else, made the case that this is normative. "...[I]n *noticing* we have already a normative procedure, a bringing of aspects of experience under a system of values."⁴ That's just one little piece of her brilliant argument that "there is no intelligible discourse independently of evaluation. Appraisal underlies all speech, and therefore all knowledge."⁵ Contra the hard-to-kill fact/value dichotomy, there simply is no fact without value.⁶ All concepts are standards, she says; "cat" signifies what-it-is-to-be-a-cat; and our humanity *is* the complex of criteria, of evaluative structures, within which we have come to dwell and are content to dwell.⁷

Humans mentor humans, moms guide infants in first noticings and namings, till the human child comes to indwell a world layered with values so richly and closely that we hardly notice them at all. A cat? Of course it's a cat! Seeing is believing—we say blandly, having forgotten that we had been taught to value in order to see what was there. —Which is the epistemological rationale for the fact that parents don't get the gratitude and respect they deserve. Says Grene: "A fundamental error of the fact/value dichotomy, it seems to me, was to see these three aspects of the human situation as two only, and so to miss the unique phenomenon which both unites the other two and holds them apart: the phenomenon of responsible acceptance of standards. ...As long as we seek wholly the stateable this constitutive element eludes us."⁸ And as long as we seek wholly the stateable, we miss the role of authoritative, personal, guides in knowing.

Grene also cites ape and human child studies to root this normative ingredient in the natural artificiality, the fold in being, that makes us the humans we are. She follows the ape/human analysts in noting that human mother and child form a society in which the infant entrusts himself to the one who opens experience by norming it, acquiring it literally along with his mother's milk. No human experience is "given," but comes to us normed by a person who both models and speaks.

The Critical Role of Authoritative Guides in Knowing

We need to learn to see. We need to be guided to see both ourselves and what is there. When I check these theses against my experience I come to see that authoritative guides are needed to interpret both the world and my very own self to me. It would not be correct to say that authority trumps rationalism and empiricism as a source of knowledge, as we shall see in the latter part of the essay. But it is the case that both rationalism and empiricism only succeed as they presume some skilled authoritative guiding.

Examples abound. Piano teachers and pitching coaches help their students identify a touch. Students in radiology are led by their teachers to read otherwise inscrutable patches of dark and light. John Frame sent me looking for the normative, even as Polanyi sent us all looking for the tacit coefficient. The people who reject Polanyi's work as subjectivism and mystery-mongering are the very ones who fail to see the tacit coefficient, seeing which involved a normed noticing that may have been more successfully expedited had they trusted themselves to a person as an authoritative guide. The cook teaches her student what scalded milk looks like, or dough through which yeast has successfully permeated. Authoritative guides teach us to notice what otherwise we would not even see. They teach us, through word and through example, the unformalizable skill of appraisal, the apt application of concepts to things.

Wise educators know this: learning takes place best in the hospitality of a relationship of persons in which trust and mutuality reign. In that safe space, the teacher speaks and moves intentionally with a view to replicating his words and tacit skills in the speaking and moving of the student. I cannot in this space begin to represent to you the rich insights of Parker Palmer along these lines.⁹ Truth is personal; all truth is known in personal relationships. A teacher, not some theory, is the living link in the epistemological chain. In fact, truth is *troth*, a pledge to engage in a mutually accountable and transforming relationship, a relationship forged of trust and faith in the face of unknowable risks. In his discussion, Palmer moves us way beyond the tighter claim that knowing requires the normative, to the multifaceted and allusive one that human knowing requires and thus is inculcated only through a plethora of unformalizable elements, best summed up as persons replicating persons.

Wise leaders know this also. Leadership, I feel sure, is very close to anything we might say about persons as authoritative guides in knowing. Consider then, Jere Moorman's application of Polanyian insights to business management. Moorman characterized the first mistake of objectivism as "an alienated, non-participating form of knowing." He describes Polanyi's personal knowledge, by contrast, as "a new paradigm of knowledge by participation where knowledge by relationship of the knower and the known is primary; where wholes are found to have properties that parts do not have; and where persons are alive: i.e. not reducible to their factual components—where persons and their passionate contributions to their knowledge are indispensable." Moorman says most pointedly: "no examination of the facts, however meticulously carried out, can make a person aware of the other's passionate message."¹⁰ Adapting this to what we are saying about normativity in knowledge, and persons in normativity and therefore in knowledge: in the best, most successful connectings of knower and known, both knower and known and guide must be accessed in a way that integrates beyond the words and the "facts." The knower, in particular, to grasp and be changed by the words of the guide, must be picking up more than words; she must be picking up personal, passionate message.¹¹ This calls for the patient, self-giving, alongsidedness of guide and guided.

Philosopher and psychotherapist Eugene Gendlin has claimed that persons coming to know themselves require other persons who listen actively to the telling of their story. Without the telling of the story, *there is no story*.¹² Story, I believe, is a normative shaping of our experience. It is an integrative pattern, a temporal one. An active listener, I believe, in this capacity serves as an authoritative guide. The knower, even to know himself, must be heard and coached in self-interpretation. The knower needs an authoritative guide to know himself. This is my personal experience repeatedly, as I listen to one after another of my students' stories. A student, having heard what I have to say, invites me into his or her life, to hear and to comment. It is also my experience as a knower: I rely on others to see myself and the significance of my acts and thoughts—or even just to see my acts and thoughts.

If our first modernist picture of knowledge was of two disembodied points, the knower, and the known, then affirmation of the normative dimension turned the two into three points, a triad. The fact that communication of this normativity requires persons and involves replication through mentoring leads me to embed my mental triad picture in a lived body, and to put another body alongside it, perhaps with its own somewhat larger triad. I have often said to my students: you will not remember the words that I say; what you will remember is the person, the window on the world, that is me, and what you will find replicated is not me, but a better, richer, you. If knowledge is personal and participative, historically situated, tapping into dimensions of reality beyond what is expressible verbally but is instead skillfully and personally accessed, unlocked by means of norms, there couldn't be a better way to pass on knowledge than by means of embodied persons alongside embodied persons.

In short: the normative dimension of knowing just is that which makes it knowing. Normativity requires or presupposes personhood, persons in pledge relationship. So knowing requires persons functioning as authoritative guides.¹³

Descartes needed to realize that, had he truly jettisoned all that was his as a result of authority, he might as well have *been* the piece of wax. He could not have spoken, let alone have persuaded an entire philosophical era. He could not have eaten (farmers require authoritative guides too) nor performed any other of his routine cultural activities. He could not have thought his way through to thinking himself a thinking thing.

Youth pastors with whom I work agree that students' deepest question is, whom can I trust? My daughter, a college student, confirms this in her report of a late-night IM conversation with a suicidal classmate: "I refuse to trust anyone," he wrote. This is both a cry of pain, and also a statement of the hopeless future of epistemic skepticism. If every decision, including my choice of whom to trust, is open for deconstruction, how is it possible to avoid such inauthenticity?

Moderns and postmoderns need to hear that it is not possible to disengage from all authoritative guides, nor, despite the pain and error to which they sometimes expose us, would we want to. Since we cannot and do not wish to disengage from norms and authorities in knowing, it would behoove us to explore how best to employ them. We cannot ever step outside what we might call the matrix of authority. We must learn instead how to navigate it. I believe all of us already practice this navigation in the ordinary affairs of daily life. Holding out against this risky navigation in knowing is not an option.

All of us may also need the gentle admonition that our epistemic questions may be a smokescreen that hides our irresponsibility and laziness even from ourselves. This is no argument, or course, but a tentative and

selective diagnosis. Deconstruction cuts both ways. But heartfelt questions can be helped also by thinking further about how in fact we do navigate the matrix of authority. .

All of this leads me to consider how to make a winsome case for authoritative guides, and guide people in utilizing them responsibly. To this end we have already reasoned, in the first half of this essay, that just about all that we are and know is ours at the agency of authoritative guides in our past and of our responsible submission to them. In this essay's second half, I elucidate various aspects of our use of authoritative guides in knowing. This kind of exploration, I believe, also serves to recommend its viability and promote a reinstatement of authority as a source of knowledge. Can we more adequately describe the dimensions of knowing by authority, so as to appreciate and employ them more responsibly? What, for example, makes for a trustworthy authority? How does the authority relate to the knower and the known? How do I choose between alternative authorities? Does not the need for such personal choice render me the epistemically ultimate authority? How do we cope with the reality of the hermeneutic spiral, the fact that my interaction with both the authority and with the known is really with both as I interpret them in my understanding? These are some of the questions I have kept in mind as I endeavor to describe, in what follows, how we navigate the matrix of authority in our coming to know.

How We (Properly and Improperly) Navigate the Matrix of Authority

Once again I mean to see how the Framean triad can help us think through this matter. In any act of knowing, we have knower, known, and a normative dimension with at least a historic connection to a personal guide. As I was working out my thoughts, I drew my triangle, with two arrows pointing in opposite directions between each point. After labeling the points, I strove to describe each arrow. The reason I drew the arrows was that I wanted to suggest a dynamic system as opposed to a static structure. Each participant moves toward the other, and responds to the other's initiative. This represents participative and interpersonal knowing.

Thinking in terms of this picture, I think the following comments shed light on how we utilize guides in coming to know. For me, this is a work in progress rather than a completely articulated system. Convivial contributions are welcome.

Participatants Are Personal

First, both the knower and the guide are human persons. This we see must be on the basis of the argument about normativity in the first half of this essay. If knowing is a norming that draws up into its pattern a vast range of inarticulable commitments and skills, the best and perhaps only way fundamentally to begin to know is to apprentice oneself to another human knower. In addition, knower and guide, at least, are embodied, as well as personal. The known may also be a person. It may, if not a person, still be arguably person-like. It is what I call a characterized real. It reveals itself in indeterminate, inexhaustible but nevertheless systematic, recognizable and nameable ways. Its character can be unlocked by me, especially as I gain skill through expert guidance. And, I believe, it reveals itself in response to my respectful self-binding, expressed in patience, attentiveness, humility, and commitment to its reality. I join Palmer in believing it helpful to think of truth as truth, that knowers relating knowingly to the known do so most effectively as that relationship is pledgedlike.¹⁴

Persons, it is sobering and awe-inspiring to note, are most fundamentally *not* substances with

attributes, contra the Greeks, but living beings who transcend the particularities of self in communion with others.¹⁵ Our very identity as persons links us in relationship to other persons. I mention this topic only to promise to explore in another setting. But if this is so, it could hardly be otherwise that human knowing occurs in the context of personal relationship.

How We Gauge Potential Guides

Second, a credible guide is one who demonstrates responsiveness to and mutuality with both the knower and the known. If the authority is well-related to the known, then she is an expert, say, on rose bushes, because she is skillfully acquainted with the character of that known. She has listened to, not dictated, the known. She has let the character of the known shape her judgment, rather than solely making it submit to hers.

Similarly, a trustworthy authority, ideally, is one in relationship with the knower, as mentor to initiate, qualified to apprentice him, but attentive to and increasingly aware of the apprentice, the nature of his need, the strength of his commitment. A competent mentor knows to cultivate the hospitable space in which learning can occur. Even as a rose bush expert cultivates a bush (the known), an authoritative guide to the rose bush student cultivates a caring environment for the student (the knower).

The relationship is mutually shaping. No teacher remains unshaped by her students; each grows in response to the other. This means that our triad is a developing one. It never remains static. Each dimension changes during and as a result of the interaction. But such dynamism is not the sign of weakness, but the sign of the strength of something that is alive.

A knower can sense and grow in her ability to sense an authority candidate's connectedness both to known and to knower. In other words, we build our authority-sensing skill. We sense in-touchness, and care, and expertise. I hope you see that I am only describing the way we all navigate ordinary life.

When I lived in Louisiana, I quickly gained regard for my "parish agent," an old Cajun man who would come when I called with a yard problem and use the occasion to teach me about everything else in my yard as well. He knew about everything from chinch bugs to pruning. I quickly sensed his expertise, his love of things growing, and his propensity to teach.

Similarly, in academia, as we are trained, we get better at telling good sources from bad ones. We can be guided in choosing guides. I am told that a noted professor at Rice University advised the class of incoming freshmen that the goal of their education was to develop a built-in, anti-magnetic, waterproof, shock resistant, crap detector. Even as knowing is a skill that increases with practice, so recognizing wise guides is a skill that increases with practice.

The point is that we do choose guides, and this is how we choose them. What draws us to them is their grip on reality, their vision (i.e., their grip on reality yet to be known), and their care for us. Yesterday a strange man chose me as an authoritative guide. Driving out of my subdivision on the way to work, I encountered an oncoming car whose driver waved me to stop. He wanted directions to a road in the subdivision. He gauged rightly that I knew the subdivision and would condescend to tell him.

Distinguishing Authority from Authoritarianism

We can in light of this distinguish *authority* from *authoritarianism*. We rightly resent and discredit pretenders who demonstrate little connectedness to the known in question or to the knower in question. Of course there will come times when we misjudge this in our inexperience. We must ask: is he arrogant or am I ignorant? But generally a reliable authority also gives us grounds for trust, an expertise with regard to the known and a care with regard to the knower that shows respect and attentiveness and skill, an in-tune-ness rather than a high-handedness, or a self-aggrandizement. Authoritarianism thwarts the cultivation of the personal relationship in which learning flourishes.

Authoritarianism, when it is practiced by a guide or by the guided, treats the knower as passive, as if the knower is not actively involved in the process. “Do this because I said it!” It is arguable that over the centuries we have come to view authority as authoritarianism and hence a repression of knowledge precisely because we were overlooking the active role of the personal in knowing, the very ingredient which Polanyi has persuasively argued is indispensable. Authoritarianism discredits the responsible agency of the knower. It leads to the false dichotomy I seek in this paper to criticize, the belief that we choose between authority/mindlessness and no authority/knowledge. It also breeds epistemic irresponsibility. Some knowers prefer authoritarian guides, so that they can avoid owning their choices, so that they can pass the buck, take the path of least resistance.¹⁶

The Epistemic Contribution of Active Submission

One of the most intriguing things about authoritative guides is that the knower must submit to guidance not only with respect to the known but also with respect to himself as knower. The guide, somewhat like a global positioning system, tells you not only where you are going, but where you are and how to get there and whether you are going about it right. It’s quite possible that the knower begins with having it wrong, wrong even about herself. It takes humility and grace to let somebody else tell you what you are doing wrong. Wise indeed are those who recognize the wisdom of this course of action.

In fact, I think it a telling critique of the typical Western misunderstanding of knowledge (and personhood) that we all know what it is to say, “He knows me better than I know myself.” But this state of affairs is indicated by the Polanyian model. The knower is the “from,” by definition more (or differently) attentive to the “to,” the focus, than to himself and the clues on which he relies. In an act of coming to know, the “to” is in a profound sense prior. We can get it right without knowing all that went into our doing it. Coaches and friends are mirrors in which, rightly, we see ourselves reflected, thereby glimpsing things to which we were blind. A guide can and must tell me when I am mistaken, or help me see what I am or think, if I am to move forward in my knowing. Submission, openness to another as a norm to which I strive to conform myself, from whose hand I receive correction, is necessary for me to grow in knowing.

Epistemic Stewardship

This leads us to consider the role of the knower. Does all this mean that submission is a laudable thing? Isn’t submission just turning belly up, a mere passivity bordering on nonbeing? Is this not what acknowledgment of an authority entails? Does not, rather, my own active involvement in the epistemic process mean that

I and I alone am the epistemic ultimate, the determinative cause in my own knowing? And isn't this to be preferred? I would like to suggest that the knower's active involvement in the process is indeed a *sine qua non*, but that does not rule out the possibility or necessity of authoritative guides. For what the knower is contributing should not be construed as an autonomous last court of appeal. Instead it is a responsible engagement, sensing, and stewardship. Submission, we may see, is as much the act of a responsible agent as is authoritative guiding. It can even, temporally speaking, initiate the process. It is a reciprocal act, a counterpart, Ginger Rogers to Fred Astaire, dancing backwards being equally as active and responsible as dancing forwards, if not more so. Teachers have only to recall the students who have said to them, "I need to take your course," or "I need to hear what you are saying to me," plus the students whose responsible initiative both affirmed their trust and catalyzed their learning. Teachers know they just can't do it without such responsible agency on the part of the student.

In the biblical story of the early Christian church, the apostle Paul arrived at Berea and announced the good news of Jesus' messiahship and resurrection to the Jews there. The Scripture says "the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians [who had rioted], for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true." (Acts 17:11, NIV) This response to a hitherto unknown message and guide is full of responsible agency, respectfulness without mindless acceptance. It would be inappropriate to say that the Bereans set themselves up as epistemically ultimate authorities (that may be, by contrast, what the Thessalonians had done). The better word to describe it seems to me to be *stewardship*: the personally responsible utilization, care and development of another's resources entrusted to one's care. The Bereans stewarded their epistemic resources, utilizing the key authorities available to them, comparing one to the other, examining their own heart response, with their prevailing commitment seeming to be to truth. If they had vaunted their own epistemic agency, they would have blocked their contact with the real.

Of course, the sobering reality is that the process involves risk. As Lesslie Newbigin says more than once, "There are no insurance policies."¹⁷ We make mistakes. We can choose poor guides. We can choose our guides wisely and still be disappointed. We can end up, not with knowledge, but with delusion or grave error. We always have to choose selectively, choosing to trust one guide in one respect, and another in another respect, for no single person is, can be or should be seen to be complete. But this state of affairs does not make guide-trusting or knowledge undoable or unnecessary. Indeed, the fact that we can sometimes tell that we have been misled shows that the thing is doable. Trusting no one at all is not an option; the alternative is trusting someone else, a decision that also involves risk and possible failure. Instead, it serves to highlight even more powerfully the agency of the knower who, in her submission, exercises critical personal and risky responsibility. It also is a reminder that guide choosing is a skill that we can be worse or better at, and with respect to which we would do well to cultivate wisdom.¹⁸ And it is a warning to those who aspire to be guides, teachers, and parents, to cultivate their own character and expertise with sober care.

Internalizing Authoritative Guidance

As the process unfolds with respect to a specific act of coming to know, any one of the three components may instigate it—knower, known, or guide. It may be the knower's own sense of need—I always think of Han Solo's "I got a bad feeling about this. . ." It may be the eventful stirrings of time and space—we find ourselves plunged into circumstances that impel our learning. It may be the words of an authority spoken into what is at the time a void of response—as when a student stumbles into the first day of calculus class. Along the trajectory of our coming to know, we continually move back and forth between the three, checking the one

against the other, modifying the one in light of the other.

There will be a point at the beginning of our coming to know that the words of these guides hit us as external and arbitrary, because we have yet to have their experience or even to know what to look for or to feel. This occurs especially when the instigating factor is not my sense of personal need but my hearing the normative word of a possible authoritative guide. Once we have trusted the guide and gained the particular skill of unlocking the world that is in question, the words of the guide no longer feel external and arbitrary, for we have come to embody them, to know them as lived, to bring them to expression in our own lives. Were we asked to describe it to someone else, we probably would use the same words. One young man said to me, for example, “My daddy always used to say, you can stand on your head for a year....” He told me that to express his own approach of being willing to try anything for a time, even if it is difficult. He had embodied his father’s words, but he produced them to explain his own lived experience.

How We Navigate in Light of Multiple Authorities

In coming to know, the knower navigates among an array of authorities, like a sailor orienting by the stars. I could not even begin to specify all the authorities by which we orient, but with respect to a certain epistemic endeavor, usually there are a few key ones. It seems that sometimes we rank these hierarchically, using “lower” ones where the “higher” one does not speak. It also seems to me that we use them complementarily, perhaps even utilizing a “lower” one to deepen our insight with respect to the word of a “higher” one. This latter describes how I relate Polanyi and many other subjects! Some day I want a bumper sticker that expresses my stock phrase: “Polanyi helps.” Many subjects are deepened and amplified by bringing Polanyian insights to bear. I am about to address a group of artists thinking about creativity. I am going to teach them Polanyi—not because Polanyi’s authority trumps their own or their teachers’—but because it collaborates actually to elucidate more fully the word of other authoritative guides. In this essay you can already name the guides by whose lights I have navigated. I think you can also see that I have utilized them collaboratively.

In this tacit ranking of authorities, I think that a knower in many epistemic circumstances evidences a heart commitment, the choice of one norm and/or one guide as norming and guiding all the rest. We have all been heard to express something like this when we say, “I trust so-and-so implicitly.” By that we mean, whatever so-and-so does we take to be right, true, and faithful. Even if evidence were against this commitment, we would resolve to remain committed, for this norm, this person, is our standard of choice by which we judge all others. This affirmation is neither baldly arbitrary nor a passive shirking of personal epistemic responsibility. To acknowledge a fundamental commitment neither makes us epistemic arbiters nor does it deal us out of the equation. It shapes our rationality, and we responsibly and riskily embrace it for that purpose, rather than our rationality shaping it. This heart commitment is covenantal, pledgeliike, a resolved affirmation of the kind we most commonly experience as person pledged to person in a covenant of love, a marriage. It is appropriate to describe it as broadly religious, an act of worship. I do think that many people navigate with a sense that the heart commitment they have is less than satisfactory.¹⁹

While there is appropriately an air of permanence about this pledge, the fact is that people do shift their loyalties, and all of us, epistemically, must have a first time of coming to embrace them or recognizing that we embrace them. Were a chosen guide to prove untrustworthy, breaking through our most determined disposition to believe him or her faithful, true, right and good, we would rightly need to seek another. Such a move is radical, a personal transformation that can affect us to the core, a conversion. I do not think that people

ever navigate without such a heart commitment.

Polanyian Response to Hermeneutic Concerns

We must at all times factor in our interpretive contribution. Even in acknowledging the legitimate and necessary role of authoritative guides, at no point may we affirm that any knowledge or guide is accessible apart from our interpretation of it. The knower norms, even as the guide norms, and it is her glory to learn to norm well. Our interpretive skill (or lack of it) is just one of the things that we may need a guide to attend to and help us to cultivate. Again, we need to see that our interpretive grid should not be taken to be epistemically ultimate. It is possible and necessary to submit it to the test of both guide and world (something understandable only when as Polanyians we acknowledge our tacit powers) in order to move forward. This is responsible stewardship. “Our knowledge rests on the responsible and skilled judgment of persons,” says Moorman.²⁰

Left to itself, this hermeneutic qualification would render the act of knowing arbitrary. It is, however, counterbalanced by the artful functioning of the tacit dimension in knowing. Even as “truth lies in its indeterminate bearing on reality,” and our tacit powers are aptly suited to the skilled appraisal of that bearing, so our tacit powers, our embodied, situated awareness, adds the third dimension, a kind of background check, to strengthen our more explicit hermeneutic efforts. The knower senses even as she trusts. The radar should never be turned off—and by *radar* I don’t mean a kind of ruthless criticism that opposes all trust, but our ever-functioning, skilled, stewardly, sensing. Gendlin labors to develop the notion of *felt sense*, or *body sense*.²¹ That sensing is what we continually exercise, for example, as we continually measure the aptness of our words. My mother has Alzheimers. Ever the word*meister*, she is still sensing when she hasn’t quite got the right word, and searching for it; usually after a while she gets it. An exhaustively explicit ideal for knowledge blinds us, as Polanyi has taught us, to these powerful and indispensable tacit capacities. The point here is that they buoy up trusting authoritative guides even as they float all articulate knowledge.

The important thing to see is that in navigating the matrix of authority in the pursuit of knowing we have no absolute anchor, if by that we mean an unqualified, uninterpreted, undeveloping starting point from which we may derive a flow chart of foolproof operations. The other important thing to see is that far from negating it, this dynamic system is the medium and beachhead in and from which we learn to engage the world. Instead of standing on the sand, we learn to surf the waves. Water lets you sink when you are standing still, but it holds you up when you’re moving. We learn to ride it.

My hope is that exploring this marvelous and skillful interweaving that we recognize characterizes our knowing will serve to allay the fears and objections of those who have been deluded into thinking that authority is bad, or that it is avoidable. Okay, so maybe we don’t use the word, “authority.” Maybe we just live our lives with caring, confidence, and joy, closely alongside those with whom we might, after a time, have an opening.

Authoritative guides are a critical piece of this unfolding that is knowing, even as normativity is a critical dimension of knowledge. Donald Guthrie, an educator, and my former boss, has described young postmoderns as “information rich and mentor poor.” They are also, I find, far more open to having older people in their lives than my generation was. The obvious practical injunction for us in the vintage years of our lives is to offer ourselves, our persons, to be alongside young people, which is why I’m chaperoning the high school band to the Orange Bowl in a month.²²

Endnotes

¹ *The Impact of Science on Society* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1952) pp. 110-11, quoted in “The Potential Theory of Adsorption,” in Marjorie Grene, ed., *Knowing and Being: Essays by Michael Polanyi* (Chicago, 1969), p. 94.

² Chesterton was picturing his own perception that he had made some profound personal ideational discoveries, only to find out that what he had come up with had been for centuries known as Christianity. *Orthodoxy: The Romance of Faith* (Doubleday, Image Books: 1959), p. 9.

³ John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1987). Frame developed this triad as a result of exploring the implications of God’s lordship and the role of Scripture for human knowing. God’s sovereignty comes to expression in his control (the situational), his authority (the normative) and his presence (the existential). I have found the triadic approach valuable in unpacking all human knowing. It helped me unfold Polanyi’s insights much as that funny wooden rack of my grandmother’s helped her untangle and rewind her skeins of yarn. And even as this triad elucidates all human knowing, revealing the role of normativity in ordinary knowing and thus of authoritative personal guides, it also serves to demystify and accredit historic Christianity’s intentional reliance on authoritative verbal witness embedded in personal, covenantal relationships as a standard epistemological enterprise. Another especially helpful source regarding the relative roles of the authority of Scripture and the church has been Herman Ridderbos’ *Redemptive History and The New Testament Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1963).

⁴ *The Knower and the Known* (London: University of California Press, Ltd. 1966), p. 175.

⁵ *The Knower and the Known*, p. 173.

⁶ Frame concurs with Grene that knowing is rooted in value, arguing that epistemology is a subset of ethics.

⁷ *The Knower and the Known*, pp. 164, 168, 159.

⁸ *The Knower and the Known*, p. 181.

⁹ *To Know As We Are Known* (Harper San Francisco, 1983). See for the following quotes pp. 48, 29, 31.

¹⁰ Jere Moorman, “The New Art of Leadership and Polanyi’s Theory of Tacit Knowing,” paper delivered at the Loyola Polanyi Conference, June, 2000.

¹¹ This, by the way, I believe to be the key to effective writing. One cannot expect one’s classroom lectures to transcribe without addition into text. A writer must both say what she has to say and communicate her passion for it. All the body-based inarticulable things, including passions, commitments, and skill modeling, that communicate as person is alongside person, must in written message be communicated, if not in words, then by means of words (and sometimes exclamation points, Marty!).

¹² Eugene Gendlin, Talk delivered at the Polanyi Conference, June 2001.

¹³ We may also conjecture the following intriguing claims also indicated by this discussion, but beyond its scope. First, normativity and its required persons-in-pledge-relationship context suggests, in a theological vein, a Sixth Way, an argument from human knowing to the requisite anterior existence of a Person as first cause. Second, the normative dimension of knowing requires the verbal. This makes me wonder if in the Genesis account of creation, worlds could have come into existence by means of anything *other* than the spoken “let there be...’s” of God.

¹⁴ Esther Lightcap Meek, *Longing to Know: The Philosophy of Knowledge for Ordinary People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2003), Ch. 22. I hope to explore this more in my next project; I will argue that

we adopt an interpersonal, pledge-based relationship as the paradigm for all knowing. I call this “covenant epistemology.”

15 J. D. Zizioulas, “Human Capacity and Human Incapacity: A Theological Exploration of Personhood,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* (28), pp. 401-48. See further John MacMurray, *Persons in Relation* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961) and Colin Gunton, *The One, The Three and the Many: God, Creation, and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

16 This insight I owe to Mike Williams. Williams also notes that evangelical Christians often seem to have embraced authoritarianism in their approach to God and Scripture. “God said, I believe it, that settles it” is a commonly heard maxim, which is at best naively true, for it hides from the speaker his or her own personal responsible agency in knowing and trusting God. By contrast, Williams argues that the God who commands me to trust him gives innumerable occasions for me to experience his trustworthiness, even as a wise parent both requires a child’s obedience and offers ample proof of loving commitment and faithfulness.

The evangelical’s commitment to authoritarianism is well-intentioned, I believe, though misguided: it stems from an effort to express God’s lordship over all. But American evangelicalism has imbibed the very Western model of knowledge criticized by Polanyi, and has yet, as a whole, to recognize Polanyi’s *tertium quid* or see that it accords more faithfully and evocatively with Scripture than has the modernist one. Frame has sought to develop an epistemological approach that harmonizes with Scripture and elucidates the parameters indicated by God’s lordship, espousing authority and not authoritarianism (*The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*). But in the absence of a broader epistemological sea change of the sort possible in a Polanyian approach, this effort has been met with harsh criticism and lack of understanding.

17 See his *Proper Confidence: Faith, Doubt and Certainty in Christian Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), p. 14, for example.

18 The biblical book of Proverbs is replete with maxims concerning choosing guides.

19 My claim is that this heart commitment is not unique to the believer, nor avoidable or non-epistemic for anyone else. This has been argued also by Nicholas Wolterstorff, in *Reason Within the Bounds of Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), Roy Clouser, *Knowing With the Heart: Religious Experience and Belief in God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999); and John Frame, *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, esp. pp. 125-27. Christians’ trusting God’s self-disclosure in Scripture fits the parameters of all acts of knowing.

20 “The New Art of Leadership and Polanyi’s Theory of Tacit Knowing.”

21 *Focusing* (Bantam, 1979).

22 Special thanks are due to Mike Williams and Dale Cannon, whose comments on an earlier draft served strategically to guide the development of my thought in this essay. In this 2005 revision of the essay, I have adjusted several dated references. But I have left this Orange Bowl closer (December 2002) stand.

REVIEWS

Gregory R. Peterson. *Minding God: Theology and the Cognitive Sciences*. Theology and the Sciences. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003. Pp. xiii + 252. ISBN: 0-8006-3498-5. \$19.00, paper.

In this work, Gregory R. Peterson, Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at South Dakota State University, explores the implications of the various cognitive sciences for Christian theology. By cognitive sciences, Peterson refers to an array of disciplines (especially those of psychology, linguistics, neuroscience, ethology, and artificial intelligence) that investigate topics such as language, perception, reasoning, and brain structure (7-8, 28). He argues that the cognitive sciences can both challenge traditional theological claims and provide ways of obtaining a richer understanding of ourselves, our world, and God (5). As such, cognitive sciences serve as both data and lens for theological reflection (21). As data, they provide evidence which might assist theologians in choosing between different theological options. For example, Peterson argues that evolutionary science provides warrant for preferring Irenaeus's account of the fall to that of Augustine (Chapter 7). As lens, the cognitive sciences might inspire theologians to see topics such as human freedom in fresh ways (Chapter 4).

Peterson develops his case in four steps. He devotes the first part of the book (the first two chapters) to introducing readers to his method, as well to the history and general findings of the cognitive sciences, highlighting insights into the workings of the brain. The second part of the book explores the impact of the cognitive sciences on the person by addressing several traditional areas of philosophical and theological dispute. In Chapter 3, Peterson discusses the problems of consciousness and the relationship between mind and body, concluding that the findings of the cognitive sciences largely converge

with biblical accounts of the unity of the person. In Chapter 4, Peterson discusses personal freedom and the unity of the self, concluding that the cognitive sciences suggest that whatever freedom humans experience is rooted in the structures of the brain and our biological heritage. In Chapter 5, Peterson examines religious experience, concluding that while the cognitive sciences can help us understand something of the biological facets of religious experience, they cannot tell us the import or truth of those experiences. The third part of the book wrestles with the impact of cognitive sciences on our understanding of nature. Peterson addresses the debate over human uniqueness (chapter 6) and original sin (chapter 7). On the former topic, Peterson argues that the cognitive sciences suggest that humans exist in a complex, interdependent web of life, in which uniqueness must be understood in carefully nuanced ways. On the topic of original sin, Peterson argues, that the cognitive sciences suggest that human nature is incomplete, not fallen from a prior perfection. The final part of the book discusses the impact of cognitive sciences on our understandings of God (chapter 8) and the future of life (Chapter 9). As to God, Peterson argues that the cognitive sciences serve as a useful reminder that references to God as person stretch human language significantly. As to eschatology, Peterson suggests that science can tell little about how the universe will end and instead calls people to live by the hope that traditional eschatology has nurtured by metaphor and poetry.

The strengths of this book lie in its clarity, breadth, and modesty. Peterson writes for an audience unfamiliar with the sciences and does an exemplary job of communicating the basics about the cognitive sciences, as well as the disagreements within. The book includes a helpful glossary of terms and is, overall, reader-friendly, except for the citation system employed. Peterson's conclusions about what can be learned from the cognitive

sciences are appropriately modest, given his sense of those internal debates. While he doubtless oversimplifies matters, Peterson provides a helpful primer on the state of the art in these particular sciences. He does expect a bit more familiarity with theology from his readers—this is not a criticism, merely an observation. His conclusions about insights to be gleaned from the intersection of theology and the cognitive sciences are likewise suggestive and open up areas for further investigation.

Although the work attempts to start a conversation between the sciences and theology, it seems that, as is often the case, the dialog goes one way. The cognitive sciences thus challenge theology, but only rarely does theology challenge the sciences. Peterson certainly does not uncritically appropriate the cognitive sciences, but rarely does he criticize them on theological grounds. Can the conversation go both ways? Put in Polanyian terms, Peterson dwells in the cognitive sciences in order to break out from traditional theological dead ends. Might it be possible to dwell in theology so as to break out from conundrums in the cognitive sciences?

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Barbara Forrest & Paul R. Gross. *Creationism's Trojan Horse: The Wedge of Intelligent Design*. Oxford University Press 2004. pp. 383. ISBN: 0195157427. \$39.50, hardback.

This book, written by a philosopher and a zoologist, is a particularly interesting contribution to the growing body of literature that analyzes and criticizes the “intelligent design” movement. The main themes of the book are elaborated in minute detail in nine chapters. The title and subtitle of the book identify the approach taken here: the intelligent design movement is creationism disguised in order to gain a new foothold. But the authors want to make sure that the dangers of the disguise are reckoned with: “intelligent design” is a movement that has a carefully organized political strategy (the wedge) that has frequently not been recognized or, if recognized, is underestimated.

Forrest and Gross go to great lengths to show that “intelligent design,” despite the protestations of fig-

ures like William Dempski, is really no more than creationism recycled. They argue that if one looks closely at publications and papers that this is obvious, since it is easy to trace alliances and to see how the “intelligent design” case is presented when delivered to biblical literalist audiences.

“Intelligent design” is not science, although it presents itself as science and has successfully convinced many who know little about science and the operation of the scientific community that it is science. Much of the book carefully walks through the so-called “scientific” work of the major ID players or fellow travelers (Axe, Behe, Chien, Dempski, Wells, et. al.), showing that there is often much fanfare and public proclamation, but no scientific substance here. The movement longs for scientific legitimacy, but there is no serious research program and the major authors seem uninterested in matters fundamental in the scientific community such as peer review. There is no paradigm shift in the making in biology and allied sciences.

Forrest and Gross make a strong case that “intelligent design” is basically a complex, well-planned and somewhat secretive political movement, a Trojan horse designed to get inside the academic and cultural mainstream in order to effect cultural transformation. It is a conservative religious reform movement aimed at science and the culture that takes its worldview from science. It is a serious mistake to underestimate the commitment and influence of this movement. The authors outline the formation and unfolding of the so-called “Wedge Strategy” primarily associated with Philip Johnson, a Berkeley law professor who, along with several of the other figures in the movement, is affiliated with Seattle’s Discovery Institute. The Wedge Strategy is a strategic plan and it aims to shape popular opinion through public relations maneuvers. Slowly, the movement has tried to cultivate academic respectability and has also moved into state and national politics. For example, at the state level, the movement has entered into debates about science textbooks in Kansas, Pennsylvania and Ohio. At the national level, it supported the effort to add the so-

called Santorum Amendment to the “No Child Left Behind” legislation but this anti-evolutionary language was later deleted and is not part of Public Law 107-110.

In the mid-twentieth century, Polanyi’s thought made clear the fragile relation between the scientific community and larger society and culture. He warned that the notions of freedom in the French Revolution ultimately undermined the foundations of communities of inquiry like science because such notions—popular in the cultural mainstream—invite disrespect for structures of authority in such specialized communities. Insofar as “intelligent design” is a movement that exploits popular sentiments about fairness and tolerance, using all the sophistic tools of public relations campaigning, it represents the same sort of threat to science that the social planning movement did in Polanyi’s time.

As perhaps most readers of this journal know, the attempt at Baylor University to set up “The Michael Polanyi Center,” an academic center linked to the “intelligent design” movement, was abandoned in 2000. On the Polanyi Society web site, there now is a brief statement about the move to establish this center and the circumstances that led to the removal of Polanyi’s name from the center. This addition to the web site is an effort to apprise all who come to the Polanyi Society web site that Polanyi’s name should not be associated with the “intelligent design” movement. The authors of *Creationism Trojan Horse*, in fact, maintain a web site (http://www.creationisms-trojanhorse.com/#Special_Features) that includes information about and reviews of their book as well as other interesting materials tracking the “intelligent design” movement. Included is Richard Gelwick’s “Polanyi Scholarship and the Former Baylor Polanyi Center” as well as links to articles by Gelwick, Apczynski and Gulick that were in *Zygon* 40: 1 (March 2005) which discussed Polanyi’s evolutionary ideas and “intelligent design.”

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Struan Jacobs and R. T. Allen (eds.). *Emotion, Reason and Tradition: Essays on the Social, Political and Economic Thought of Michael Polanyi*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Co. 2005. ix + 172. ISBN 0-7546-4067-1. \$69.95, hardback.

This thin volume offers twelve essays plus the editors’ brief biographical and interpretative essay outlining the significance of Polanyi’s thought. Almost all of the essay writers are familiar names to those who follow Polanyi scholarship.

The introductory essay is a remarkably concise review of Polanyi’s life and thought. In five pages, Jacobs and Allen sketch Polanyi’s time in Hungary, Germany and England. They summarize Polanyi’s non-scientific writing by dividing it into two different periods. Writing from 1935 until 1950 they dub “the defence of freedom,” outlining the kinds of political, economic and sociological themes that emerge as Polanyi gradually left his life as a physical chemist. The period from 1951-72 was a time in which “deeper and more specifically philosophical interests” (4) became central. Jacobs and Allen focus the discussion here around the criticism of objectivism and working out ideas about tacit integration. Although it seems likely that most readers of this book already will know much about Polanyi and Polanyi’s ideas, this introduction provides a helpful general organizing scheme and is the sort of précis that teachers might give beginning students.

As its title suggests, Endre Nagy’s “The Hungarian Context of Michael Polanyi’s Thought” aims specifically to discuss “whether there are any elements of Polanyi’s theoretical edifice that can be brought into particular causal relation to some elements of his Hungarian background” (8). As a sociologist, Nagy is also interested in how Polanyi (as well as other Hungarians) “mastered and transcended” (8) his socio-cultural milieu. Nagy contends that such transcendence is the result of conversion that involves intellectual illumination and transformation of life. He suggests that Polanyi’s own description of “dwelling in” in order to “break out” is a useful way to

capture such changes in a life. After noting that the Polanyi literature (Charles McCoy excepted) has not much thematized the concept of “breaking out,” Nagy reviews the discussion of “breaking out” in *PK*. He points out that when discussants do not have a common framework of superior knowledge, they are fundamentally separated, as if they spoke different languages. This was in fact the case with Polanyi: “The young Polanyi did not participate in reverence for the same superior knowledge as those belonging to the ‘official’ Hungary” (12). Polanyi was a member of the Galileo Circle and this group was a part of the countercultural opposition in Hungary that favored scientific views and social change. The Galileo Circle, and Polanyi in particular, was especially influenced by the poet Endre Ady who represented a more progressive Hungary. Nagy argues that both Karl and Michael Polanyi were idealists by 1920 and that this was at odds with the dominant disposition toward materialism in European intellectual culture. Finally, Nagy suggests that both Polanyis were influenced by the Hungarian intellectual and socialist leader Ervin Szabó (one of Polanyi’s cousins) who spoke of an ethical or moral revolution. Although the argument in this essay is far from straightforward, this is an insightful and interesting effort to link Polanyi to Hungarian roots.

Lee Congdon begins his “Believing Unbelievers: Michael Polanyi and Arthur Koestler” with reflections on Koestler’s philosophical writing, outlining Polanyi’s awareness of it and suggesting ultimately that Koestler was, in his own words, a “crusader without a cross” (22). He then moves to a further discussion of Polanyi’s friendship with Koestler and what they shared:

Both were deeply troubled by the spectre of nihilism haunting Western civilization, both were convinced that a return to orthodox Christianity was neither possible nor desirable, and both were searching for some new and more acceptable “religion”—both, in a word, were unbelievers (in the orthodox Christian sense) who believed in a reality, in particular a moral

reality, that could not be reduced to material existence (22).

It is this motif, the “believing unbelievers,” that Congdon uses to hold together this most illuminating comparative discussion of the lives and work of Polanyi and his friend Arthur Koestler.

Congdon sees Polanyi, like Koester, as on a quest. He succinctly and adeptly lays out Polanyi’s philosophical themes, presented as the saga of Polanyi’s ongoing search. He ends this discussion with comments on Polanyi’s dissatisfaction with orthodox Christianity which nevertheless was combined with the persisting search for and embracing of some “truer form” (23) of Christianity. Although his discussion is but a few paragraphs, Congdon’s treatment of Polanyi’s personal religious beliefs (much ink has been spilled on this topic) is among the best.

Next Congdon reviews Koestler’s unsatisfactory search for spiritual bearings in India and Japan. He then turns to the major ideas (about science and about science and religion) that Koestler’s publications show he was developing and traces similarities and differences with Polanyi’s views; his judicious quotations from the archival Koestler-Polanyi correspondence allow Congdon to make clear how these figures were themselves aware of both differences and common sympathies. The job Congdon does on Polanyi’s views is very much on target, although I would quibble with one small point: Congdon discusses Koester’s interest in and sympathies for parapsychology. He notes that Polanyi likely had Koestler in mind when Polanyi noted his own respect in *PK* (158) for those who go against the tide in giving credence to extra-sensory perception. While this may be the case, it is also good to point out that Polanyi himself came to think that the theory of tacit knowing as it was developed after *PK* was an account that satisfied some of his own early questions and sympathies for parapsychological explanations. Polanyi’s discussion of his own developing ideas in the 1964 introduction (“Background and Prospect,” p x) to the reprint of *SFS* make this clear.

R. T. Allen has earlier written about the contributions of several twentieth century thinkers (including Polanyi) to understanding the importance of emotions. His essay in this collection (“Polanyi and the Rehabilitation of Emotion”) is an expansion of this work that looks in greater detail at the role of emotions as a theme in Polanyi’s thought. Allen argues that Polanyi’s “rehabilitation of the person” (41) is integrally tied to his account of emotions. He makes his case by analyzing the discussion in chapters 6 and 7 of *PK*, chapters treating intellectual passions and conviviality. In a very systematic fashion, Allen reviews Polanyi’s ideas in terms of a building sequence of four topics: the structure of emotion, the functions of emotion in the life of science, the generalization from science to other areas of life that Polanyi offers, and Polanyi’s description of “the rootless emotions of the modern age” (50—e.g., moral inversion). Allen’s account is remarkably clear and incisive; he is a careful Polanyi reader and one of the most articulate spokespersons for these themes that were dear to Polanyi. Yet there is a kind of bitterness toward modernity in Allen’s Polanyian critique (see particularly the final paragraphs of his essay), a bitterness that I find in some tension with the hope that pervades even Polanyi’s most devastating criticisms of his time.

Stephen Turner’s essay, “Polanyi’s Political Theory of Science,” looks carefully at Polanyi’s ideas about the operation of science and the link between the scientific community and the larger political setting in which science is nested. Turner examines Polanyi’s ideas as a part of the history of political theory by situating their emergence in the social-political context of the years preceding and following World War II. He outlines the case of the planners of science, with generous quotations from Bernal. Turner argues that the novelty of Polanyi’s work as a political thinker was to reconcile his appreciation of tradition “with its Tory, Christian, Anti-enlightenment, Romantic, and fiduciary tinge, with the idea of science, to which it had hitherto been opposed”(86). The key to this reconciliation, Turner suggests, is the way in which Polanyi affirms both the importance of the Influentials

(the “benevolent elite”[87]of science)and the autonomy of the individual scientific researcher, while claiming that this is the most efficient model for science. Turner thinks that Polanyi’s case that maximal co-ordination of scientific activities happens spontaneously (by mutual adjustment) rests only on analogical grounds (i.e., the famous jigsaw puzzle analog that appears several times in Polanyi’s writing). The last section of Turner’s discussion turns to the problematic relation of science and society after the war and particularly in the last quarter century. Certainly, Polanyi did not see foresee many aspects of the emergence of “big science” nor did he anticipate how capitalists would become major shapers of science, but his case for science as a “specialized and traditional form of truth seeking” (95) that belongs within the tradition of liberal democracy remains a strong one. Turner thinks that Polanyi was never narrowly interested in questions about funding for science, but instead provided

a meditation on fundamental politics . . . that is still relevant today. There is still, and perhaps more pressing than ever, the question of whether the practices of institutions and institutions of science are up to the task of dealing in the light of their fundamental commitments to truth with the novel political circumstances in which they operate (96).

Struan Jacobs, one of the editors of this collection, has two essays in the book. “Polanyi on Tradition in Liberal Modernity” is a succinct and clear discussion of why Polanyi thinks tradition is important in the contemporary period. Jacobs reviews Polanyi’s major distinction between articulate lore and the art of creative practice and lays out Polanyi’s account of pre-modern and modern dynamic societies that are free and those that are totalitarian. He sets forth the Polanyian distinctions between civic and individual culture and discusses Polanyi’s notions about innovation or renewal in culture. Jacobs reviews Polanyi’s discussion of science as the paradigm case of a domain in which tradition functions both as a ground and a source of renewal or transformation. Jacobs con-

cludes by pointing to the theoretical value and the historical importance of Polanyi's comprehensive account of tradition: he was the first to make clear and to analyze in detail the traditional dimension of science. Many interested in science, including Edward Shils, have followed in his wake.

Jacobs' second essay, "Polanyi's Analysis of Social Orders," has as its chief objective "to clarify Polanyi's idea of spontaneous order and the place that it occupies in his social-political thought" (99). In passing, he notes that it is Polanyi and not Hayek who likely comes up with the term "spontaneous order" (see his "Michael Polanyi and Spontaneous Order, 1941-1951," *TAD* 24:2 (1997-98): 14-28) and Polanyi does not get the term from the Scottish Enlightenment. Working with Polanyi's early essays, Jacobs shows that Polanyi's ideas about freedom and the free society are bound up with ideas he develops about dynamic or spontaneous orders. Jacobs draws chiefly on "The Growth of Thought in Society" (1941), which was part of the "planned science" debate but this is an essay that goes beyond the case of science. This discussion is part of Polanyi's effort to set forth his broader pluralistic vision of society as a domain in which there are a number of dynamic orders (law, arts, religion, science, etc.) whose success depends on the willingness of persons to serve ideals preserved in each respective order. Polanyi's basic distinction is between dynamic or spontaneous orders that operate through the initiative of agents and mutual adjustment, and corporate or specific orders that focus on design and planning rather than relying upon agents' discretion. Where did Polanyi come up with his basic distinction? Jacobs argues it seems likely that he developed his ideas from study of Kohler, Lippman and Graicunas.

In an essay whose title "Beyond Nihilism" plays on a Polanyi essay title, C. P. Goodman tries very concisely to summarize Polanyi's account of values and situate this perspective in the longer history of western thought. This is a dense essay but a rich one and I can do no more than highlight the author's major claims. Goodman sees Polanyi as a figure who "antici-

pated the contemporary revival of an ethical approach based upon what it is good to be, rather than which rules we ought to follow" (55). Polanyi holds that humanity makes moral progress and believes "ethics is oriented by the self-set transcendent ideal of being a good person" (55). This transcendent ideal of the good person was created with the emergence of human beings and always bears upon a specific social context, yet it remains for persons something both objective and not fully realizable. The morally good has a reality that directs our choices: "Morality is not something you opt into; it accompanies what it is to be a reflective being" (60). Both ethics and science "draw upon our tacit awareness, and make judgments about realities whose truths exist independently of our subjective preferences" (55). In the case of the transcendent ideal of the good person, Polanyi "does not seek to derive what is morally good from descriptions of a natural order, nor does he seek to ground it in a local practice" (59). But, in Goodman's view, Polanyi does derive "values from purposes. It is the ends that determine value" (60-61). But Polanyi's teleology should not be misread as a teleology interested in final causes in a cosmological sense; Goodman holds that "when Polanyi talks about purposes he is talking about intrinsic purposes (i.e., purposes related to points of view)" (61). That is, he recognizes "internal teleological systems" (61). Finally, Goodman suggests that Polanyi's internal teleology and his account of transcendent ideals should secure us against the contemporary face of moral inversion:

Although totalitarian political systems are no longer fashionable, the assumptions that inspired them continue. Liberal nihilists recommend doing whatever you want, in pursuit of your own ends, so long as you respect the right of others to do the same. Polanyi opposes moral relativism and advocates a society in which liberty is defended on the grounds that it facilitates the pursuit of transcendent ideals (55).

"Polanyi's Conservatism: The Reconciliation of Freedom and Authority," by R. J. Brownhill, argues

that Polanyi presents “a restatement of British conservative philosophy” which “provides an updated Burkean concept of change.” (124) Brownhill contends that Polanyi emphasized commitment to truth in the scientific community, but this notion “is more problematic when applied to society as a whole or political activity” since such commitment “can have dangerous consequences for its believers, and society as a whole” (115). Such dangers are avoided in the case of science because “a statement concerned with scientific activity cannot be classed as scientific knowledge until it is recognized as such by the scientific community” (116). The tacitly accepted criteria of the community are thus the key to what counts as knowledge: “The word ‘knowledge’ then appears as a badge which is stuck on a theory when the criteria have been met but could eventually be withdrawn if it was shown the theory did not meet the criteria, the criteria changed, or the weighting of the criteria changed” (117) Brownhill contends that Polanyi’s “spontaneous coordination” is a “euphemism for the internal political wrangling that go on within the scientific community when a consensual decision is made” (117). To this reader, Brownhill underplays Polanyi’s realism and his reading of Polanyi seems dangerously close to a nominalistic social constructionist account.

Brownhill extends the case he makes for the operation of the scientific community to the larger society and discusses in some detail more problematic matters such as education and particularly political education. Brownhill suggests that Polanyi holds that every society has “core moral values and other beliefs” that are foundational and therefore “decision-making arises from continual practice whilst being immersed with one’s own tradition” (117). Polanyi’s ideal of a free society is “the just and moral society where excesses of individual initiative are controlled by the operation of society’s conscience through the law, its institutions, and the process of socialisation whilst living in society and its process of education”(118). Brownhill holds that “society as a whole, although not possessing systematic ideas, will possess a body of coherent beliefs, and these beliefs will be used to judge and keep a check on innovations” (119). Polanyian

political education has as its objective to show that “the state’s function is to provide the necessary conditions for the development of the values of a free society, by nurturing the numerous intellectual disciplines controlled by their own authority” (122). Clearly, Brownhill reads Polanyi as a strongly Burkean conservative. In contrast to Nagy, he underplays Polanyi’s insistent call to seek the unknown, to dwell in in order to break out

“Polanyi the Economist” is a lucid five page discussion of Polanyi’s importance as an organizational and macroeconomic theorist by Paul Craig Roberts, one of Polanyi’s last graduate students. Roberts argues that Polanyi recognized “that tasks have inherent structures and cannot be organized by principles that do not reflect the inherent structure of the task” (128). In science, the economy and in other spontaneous orders, Polanyi clearly saw that mutual adjustments could not be replaced by organization through hierarchical principles. Roberts acknowledges that “Polanyi’s insights led to my explanation that the Soviet economy was organized polycentrically like a market economy” (128). He argues that Polanyi’s social criticism was more profound than the critiques of von Mises and Hayek. Polanyi saw that no modern economy can be organized without coordination among people achieved by mutual interaction and initiative. For Polanyi, liberty “is the way a free society organizes its pursuit of ideal ends”(129) and is not simply concerned with protection of the individual. In Roberts’ account, “Polanyi saw the logic in liberty. Polanyi’s goal was to communicate this logic in order to remove liberty’s vulnerability to inordinate collective passions” (129). A free society is a society of explorers constituted by overlapping spontaneous orders. Such a society has a dynamic authority structure: “Just as scientific authority cultivates discovery, the beliefs that compromise the authority of a free society cultivate debate and reforms” (129). Roberts is clear about the contours of Polanyi’s free society:

Polanyi defined a free society as one striving for self-improvement and motivated by the search for truth. It is a compromise between

Edmund Burke and Tom Paine. Freedom is rooted in a dynamic tradition and a dynamic authority that cultivates change and progress within the framework of a free society (129).

In the final sections of his article, Roberts turns to Polanyi's specific contribution to Keynesian economic ideas. Because he was an outsider to economics, Polanyi was able to provide a maverick explanation of the unemployment problems of 1945: he was able to see that the insufficiency of demand causing unemployment could be addressed by expanding the money supply. Polanyi did not, according to Roberts, recognize the originality of his own contribution: "He thought he was merely explaining Keynesian economics to a confused public that might be misled into accepting central economic planning as a means of ensuring full employment" (130).

Monia Manucci's "Observations on Michael Polanyi's Keynesianism" covers some of the same ground that Roberts' essay does, but both are certainly worth study since Manucci's focus is a somewhat different. She emphasizes that Polanyi's economic ideas are "deeply linked to the political theory of post-Marxist liberalism" (149). This means that Polanyi's "theory of full employment cannot be separated from the other aspects of Polanyi's thought." (161). What she wants to demonstrate is how Polanyi argued that economists have special responsibilities for certain fundamental aspects of social life and much depends on this.

Manucci shows how Polanyi's account of economic development as a dynamic order is both akin to and different in important ways from the ideas of Keynes (and secondarily, Hayek). In Polanyi's account, "the essence of his theory, like that of epistemology and politics, is a continuous relationship between authority and freedom"(150). According to Manucci, Polanyi was a keen reader of Keynes who supported most of Keynes' views. While Polanyi supports mutual adjustment in the economic realm, he is not a doctrinaire *laissez-faire* economist but thinks capitalism and the free market "for their own exist-

ence. .. need a certain degree of state intervention" (152): Polanyi

accepts the fact that the state has the duty of maintaining a satisfactory level of monetary administration of economics. . . . Every year the government should actually make a very important choice: it should choose the level of monetary circulation necessary to get a desirable degree of employment and at the same time decide to accept a correlated share of residual unemployment (153).

Polanyi's liberalism thus was a liberalism "which roots out the evils of capitalism and tries to resolve them, without eliminating the patient." (155). Unlike Keynes, Polanyi thought that politicians ought to leave the solutions to unemployment problems to economists since politicians too readily link addressing unemployment with social reforms:

A policy of full employment can and must be carried out separately, because of what it is. In this context, the principle of neutrality demanded by Polanyi is simply the principle of separation between economics and politics. This principle was challenged by those who considered it an obstacle for the humanitarian aims of the state. . . (156).

Thus Polanyi ultimately offers a different vision of authority than Keynes:

Polanyi's 'moderate' liberalism admits a form of authority in society, but such authority is not the one described by Keynes, in which the state can decide what is right or wrong for the community, although respecting freedom, and does not hesitate to connect economics and social justice (157).

Polanyi's ideas about regulating the money supply thus need to be seen as "an instrument to defend the dynamism and freedom in a historical moment which saw them in crisis as new emphasis was given to

managerial authority.” (159).

Carlo Vinti’s essay, (“Polanyi and the ‘Austrian School’”) is a discussion of the significance and the limits of Polanyi’s relationship with Mises, Hayek and Popper. Vinti reviews the scattered published comments Polanyi made on the work of these figures; a few are affirmative but several are quite critical in *LL*. Nevertheless, Vinti argues, one should not lose sight of the fact that Polanyi and these figures have much in common; they all are critical of anti-liberal ideologies; they all are proponents of moderate liberalism and oppose political programs that promise too much through planning. They all make basic claims about the

centrality of the individual, of his original liberty and his personal responsibility, the consideration of the public not as a collective affair but as an inter-individual project, a project created by individuals located in an open universe, of limited subjects, capable only of designs and plans that are always partial, fallible, and revisable (136).

Vinti comments on what he calls “the very delicate, and as yet, unresolved historiographical question” (136) about influences of these authors on each other and then discusses what divides Polanyi and the members of the Austrian School. Polanyi uses his analysis of science as a paradigm that then gets extended to the domain of economics, unlike most of these figures. Polanyi seems to have a vision of liberal democracy in which liberty is not so concerned with individual choice as with preserving the possibility for the person “to realize individual liberties in the public sphere.” (137) Vinti reviews Polanyi’s criticisms of Popper’s “open society,” linking it to the tradition of critical thought. He then launches a more extensive comparison of Polanyi and Hayek, suggesting the points of contact and analogies between Polanyi and Hayek are much more than Polanyi and Popper. He points out that claims by Goodman, Mirowski and Jacobs in articles in *TAD* have dissented from the conventional wisdom that tries to show Polanyi and

Hayek as bedfellows. The essay ends by calling for more investigation of Polanyi’s relationship to the thought of the Austrian School, noting that Polanyi’s notion of liberty “as a *public-individual exercise*” (145) is the most interesting difference between Polanyi and these thinkers who adopt a more conventional Enlightenment radical individualism.

This is a very good collection of essays that complements older scholarly resources such as Langford and Poteat’s *Intellect and Hope*. All of the essays are interesting discussions by scholars thoroughly familiar with Polanyi. Particularly some of the essays that treat Polanyi’s economic ideas are helpful, since this area of his thought is often underplayed, at least in this journal. A few interesting but unanswered questions—such as how much emphasis should Polanyi’s metaphysical realism have and how Burkean is Polanyi—thread through these essays.

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