

# Tradition & Discovery

## The Polanyi Society Periodical

Volume XXXIV                      Number 3 (completes volume XXXIV)                      2007--2008

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# The Polanyi Society

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## Preface

This issue of *TAD* contains the first fruits of the June 13-15, 2008 Polanyi Society-sponsored conference “*Personal Knowledge at Fifty*” held at Loyola University, Chicago. Included are two plenary session addresses, one by Richard T. Allen and the other by Richard Gelwick. Allen is a British Polanyi scholar who has written or edited many important Polanyi-related things, including *Society, Economics and Philosophy: Selected Papers of Michael Polanyi*; *Emotion, Reason and Tradition, Essays on the Social, Political and Economic Thought of Michael Polanyi* (co-edited with Struan Jacobs); *Thinkers of our Time: Polanyi*; *Beyond Liberalism: The Political Thought of F.A. Hayek and Michael Polanyi*. Richard is also editor of *Appraisal: A Journal of Constructive and Post-Critical Philosophy and Interdisciplinary Studies*. Richard Gelwick most readers probably know since his articles have frequently appeared in *TAD*. Richard is the author of the first introduction to Polanyi’s thought, his 1977 *The Way of Discovery*, as well as the first bibliography of Polanyi’s non-scientific writing. He worked with Polanyi from 1962 until his death and is one of the founders of the North American Polanyi Society. I’m sure that future issues of *TAD* will bring to readers some of the other papers that the conference produced. Take a look at the conference program on page 6 or go to the Polanyi Society web page for a look at all of the abstracts and some of the papers.

Please also note (page 4 and 5) that upcoming in the fall are Polanyi Society meetings at both the American Academy of Religion and the American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division. The AAR Polanyi Society meetings are in Chicago on October 31 and November 1, 2008, earlier this year than the normal Thanksgiving week date for these Polanyi Society meetings. Sessions this year will focus on new books by Society members. The APA, Eastern Division Polanyi Society meetings in Philadelphia will probably be December 28, 2008. Papers and responses are by folk who have often written for *TAD*. Additional information about both of these meetings will be included in the October *TAD* and will be posted when available on the Polanyi Society web site.

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.

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# NEWS AND NOTES

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## Polanyi Society Travel Funds

For students and others requiring assistance to attend the Society's meetings held in conjunction with the AAR and the APA, Eastern Division, limited funding may be available. Please do apply although the travel fund resources were substantially reduced in providing grants for the June 13-15, 2008 "*Personal Knowledge At Fifty*" Conference at Loyola University, Chicago. Society members are urged to call the availability of this assistance to the attention of those they consider worthy candidates. Those interested in applying for this funding, as well as those able to assist in making this funding available, should contact Walter Mead ([wbmead@insightbb.com](mailto:wbmead@insightbb.com)) and see the information on the Polanyi Society web site (<http://www.missouriwestern.edu/orgs/polanyi/>). Anyone interested in contributing to the travel fund should also contact Walter Mead.

## 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) digital archives containing all issues of *Tradition and Discovery* since 1991; (2) a comprehensive listing of *Tradition and Discovery* authors, reviews and reviewers; (3) the history of Polanyi Society publications, and information on locating early publications not in the archive; (4) information on *Appraisal* and *Polanyiana*, two sister journals with special interest in Polanyi's thought; (5) the "Guide to the Papers of Michael Polanyi," which provides an orientation to archival material housed in the Department of Special Collections of the University of Chicago Library; (6) photographs of Polanyi; (7) links to a number of essays by Polanyi as well as audio files for the McEnerney Lectures (1962) and Polanyi's conversation with Carl Rogers (1966).

## 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 is 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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# 2008 Polanyi Society Meetings

## Annual Meeting With Two Sessions at the American Academy of Religion

The Polanyi Society will hold its annual meeting in conjunction with the AAR, November 1-3, 2008 rather than in the week before Thanksgiving, the period for the meeting for many years. To attend the Polanyi Society annual meeting, it is not necessary to register for the AAR meeting. For additional information about the AAR meeting, go to [http://www.aarweb.org/meetings/Annual Meeting/Current Meeting/Reg1.pdf](http://www.aarweb.org/meetings/Annual_Meeting/Current_Meeting/Reg1.pdf). The hotels and rooms in which the annual meeting will be held will be included in the October 2008 issue of *TAD* and will be posted, when available, with other information about the annual meeting on the Polanyi Society web site (<http://www.missouriwestern.edu/orgs/polanyi/>).

### Friday, October 31, 9:00 pm to 11:00 pm

A Symposium on Tony Clark's *Divine Revelation and Human Response* (Session M31-419)

Reviews: Chris Kettler, Friends University  
Walter Mead, Illinois State University  
Response: Tony Clark, Friends University  
Open discussion

### Saturday, November 1, 9:00 am to 11:30 am

A Symposium on Phil Rolnick's *Person, Grace, and God* (Session M1-115)

Reviews: Paul Lewis, Mercer University  
Amy E. Marga, Luther Seminary  
Response: Phil Rolnick, University of St. Thomas  
Open Discussion  
Business Meeting

## December Sessions at the American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division

The Polanyi Society will be holding its first ever sessions in conjunction with the American Philosophical Society. We have become officially recognized as an affiliated group by the APA. The committee responsible for overseeing our programs and relationship with the APA is Robert Innis, Ron Hall, Walter Gulick, and Wally Mead, *ex officio*. These inaugural sessions will be held in conjunction with the APA's, Eastern Division meeting at the Philadelphia Marriott from December 27-30, 2008. The date requested for the two sessions is December 28, but final confirmation of times and places will be in the October issue of *TAD* along with abstracts of the papers being presented. Additional information will also be posted on the Polanyi Society web site as soon as it is available.

## Session 1: Polanyi and Langer on Meaning

Robert Innis, University of Massachusetts, Lowell

“Between Articulation and Symbolization: Framing Polanyi and Langer”

Walter Gulick, Montana State University Billings

“Polanyi and Langer: Existential Meaning”

Response: Vincent Colapietro, Penn State University

## Session 2: Polanyi on Normative Thought and Action

Ronald Hall, Stetson University

“Natural Normativity: Polanyi and/or Searle”

Response: Drew Leder, Loyola College in Maryland

Charles Lowney, Washington and Lee University

“From Science to Spirituality: A Polanyian Perspective on Moral Law and Virtue *ForItself*”

Response: Michael Raposa, Lehigh University

## Notes on Contributors

**Richard Allen** edited *Society, Economics and Philosophy: Selected Papers of Michael Polanyi*, was co-editor of *Emotion, Reason and Tradition, Essays on the Social, Political and Economic Thought of Michael Polanyi*, as well as author of *Thinkers of our Time: Polanyi and Beyond Liberalism: The Political Thought of F.A. Hayek and Michael Polanyi*; he also edits *Appraisal: A Journal of Constructive and Post-Critical Philosophy and Interdisciplinary Studies*.

**Richard Gewick** is Professor Emeritus, University of New England, author of *The Way of Discovery*, the first introduction to Polanyi’s philosophy. He also compiled the first bibliography of Polanyi’s non-scientific writing, and served for a number of years as General Coordinator of the Polanyi Society as well as editor of *TAD*.

**N. E. Wetherick** is a retired psychologist who has been for many years be interested in Polanyi’s thought.

**Brian G. Gowenlock** is a retired chemist who was educated at Manchester University in the last years that Polanyi served as a chemistry professor there.

**John Puddefoot** teaches mathematics at Eton; several of his articles have appeared in *TAD*.

**Martin X. Moleski, S. J.** is the surviving author of the 2005 Polanyi biography, *Michael Polanyi, Scientist and Philosopher*.

***Personal Knowledge At Fifty***  
**June 13-15, 2008**  
**Conference Program**

[Information on speakers, abstracts and some papers are posted on the conference program posted on the Polanyi Society web site: <http://www.missouriwestern.edu/orgs/polanyi/Loyola08/Loy08-conf-sch-6-2.htm>]

**Friday, June 13**

8:30-2:30 Trip to Polanyi Papers, Department of Special Collections, University of Chicago Library

3:00-4:30 Concurrent sessions with conference participants' papers

Session 1

Phil Mullins, "Marjorie Grene on *Personal Knowledge*"

Esther Meek, "Marjorie Grene Fifty Years Later: Stopping Short of Personhood"

Session 2

Chris Mulherin, "A Rose by Any Other Name? Personal Knowledge and Hermeneutics"

Craig Scandrett-Leatherman, "Anthropology, Polanyi, and Afropentecostal Ritual: Toward a Scientific, Personal and Social Epistemology of Participation"

4:45-6:15 Concurrent sessions with conference participants' papers

Session 1

Phil Rolnick, "Wittgenstein and Polanyi On The Concept Of The Person"

Diane Yeager, "Intellect, Hope, and Cupidity"

Session 2

Eduardo Echeverria, "Why Is Polanyi's Post-Critical Philosophy Not Post-Modernist?"

David Rutledge, "Individual and Community in a Convivial Order, or Polanyian Optimism"

6:30-7:15 Dinner

8:00-9:00 Plenary Address: Richard T. Allen, "Political Implications of Commitment"

**Saturday June 14**

7:00-8:00 Breakfast

8:30-10:00 Concurrent sessions with conference participants' papers

Session 1

Walter Gulick, "How Susanne Langer's Thought Can Augment Polanyi's Philosophy"

Charles Lowney, "The Tacit in Frege: A Defense of Michael Polanyi's Thought from within Analytic Philosophy"

Session 2

Bob Doede, "The Promise and Peril of Transhumanism: A Post-Critical Assessment"

Aaron Milavec, "Polanyi's "Cosmic Field"-Prophetic Faith or Religious Folly?"

10:00 Coffee break

10:15-11:45 Concurrent sessions with conference participants' papers

Session 1

Keith Morgan, "Does Polanyi's Tacit Knowledge Dimension Exist?"

Jere Moorman, "Hazardous Commitment in Organizational Leadership"

## Session 2

Stephen Henry, "How Can Personal Knowledge Improve Decision Making in Clinical Medicine?"

Andrew Meszaros and Catherine Quatman, "Tacit Knowledge and the Deception of Human Movement"

11:45-12:45 Lunch

1:00-2:00 David A. Peck, "Backstage: Magic, Mentorship and Tradition"

2:15-3:45 Concurrent sessions with conference participants' papers

## Session 1

Fuat Oguz, "Economists on Polanyi and Tacit Knowledge: Do We Really Mean What We Say?"

Eric Howard, "A Joint Pursuit: The Unique Epistemic Project of Friedrich Hayek and Michael Polanyi"

## Session 2

Emmanuel Dissake, "Polanyi and Popper on Scientific Objectivity: From a Critical to a Postcritical Philosophy of Science?"

Kiernan Cashell, "Making Tacit Knowing Explicit: William Poteat's Adaptation of Polanyi's Post-Critical Method"

3:45-4:15 Coffee break

4:15-6:15 Panel Discussion: "William Poteat and Michael Polanyi: An Ongoing Dialogue"

Moderator: Walter Mead

Discussants: Gus Breyspraak, Dale Cannon, Ron Hall, Robert Osborn, James Stines, and Diane Yeager

7 p.m. Banquet

Plenary Address: Richard Gelwick, "Fifty Years of Discovering *Personal Knowledge*, The Rise and Development of the Polanyi Society"

## Sunday, June 15

7:00-8:00 Breakfast

8:30-10:00 Concurrent sessions with conference participants' papers

## Session 1

Richard Haney, "The Tacit Dimension Applied to Understanding Christian Mission as Translation"

Samantha Clark, "Knowledge and Piety: Michael Polanyi, Alasdair MacIntyre, and the Epistemological Crisis of Evangelicalism"

## Session 2

Bill Kelleher, "Empathy as Method in the Social Science Writings of Michael Polanyi"

David Hiles, "Putting Heidegger, Polanyi and Popper in the Same Frame"

10:00 Coffee break

10:15-11:45 Concurrent sessions with conference participants' papers

## Session 1

Koen Swinkels, "From Republic to Market: An Austro-Libertarian Analysis of Michael Polanyi's 'The Republic of Science'"

Ted Brown, "Polanyi and the Concept of Well-ordered Science"

## Session 2

John Apczynski, "The Relevance of Personal Knowledge: Reflections on the Practices of Some Contemporary Philosophers"

11:45-12:45 Lunch

# SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE POLITICAL ASPECTS OF PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE

**Richard Allen**

**ABSTRACT** Key Words: ultimate and proximate beliefs, Bosanquet, Edmund Burke, Descartes, Heidegger, ideology, Bertrand de Jouvenel, Marx, J.S. Mill, concrete and constructive philosophy, fiduciary philosophy, Michael Polanyi, concrete and constructive politics, prescription, sense of responsibility, Rousseau, Sartre, situation, tradition.

*The political passages in Polanyi's Personal Knowledge are an integral part of his arguments against 'objectivism' and for a post-critical, personalist, fiduciary and fallibilist philosophy. This paper elaborates the social and political implications of Polanyi's emphasis upon acceptance of one's situation and the exercise in it of a sense of responsibility to transcendent ideals, as against attempts to start with a clean slate, to overcome all imperfections and to find some simple rule for political policy. Prescriptive duties and rights, and mutual trust and solidarity, are the bases of politics, and responsible action must start with them. But much of modern politics expresses a Gnostic impatience of our created and finite existence which results in arbitrary commitment to some radical and destructive ideology.*

## 1. Introduction

For the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *Personal Knowledge*, I have been asked to speak at the conference in Chicago and to write for *TAD* on its political aspects, presumably because I have already published a study of Polanyi's political writings in my *Beyond Liberalism*.<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I shall elaborate some suggestions made there about the further implications of the political sections of *PK*, especially as they are a corollary of the post-critical, personalist, fiduciary and fallibilist philosophy which he set forth in *PK*, to which his previous reflections on politics, economics and the freedom of science had led him, and which he had earlier sketched in *Science, Faith and Society*.

His positive philosophy is the only coherent alternative to objectivism, which 'seeks to relieve us from all responsibility for the holding of our beliefs',<sup>2</sup> and to its attendant reductivisms which deny the fact of any such responsibility, all responsibility, and even consciousness itself, all of which have underwritten and reinforced the powerfully destructive forces that almost destroyed European civilisation and are still active today. To the contrary, he aims to show 'that into every act of knowing there enters a passionate contribution of the person knowing what is being known, and that this coefficient is no mere imperfection but a vital component of his knowledge'.<sup>3</sup> In Pt I Polanyi shows that personal judgment, appraisal and decision cannot be eliminated from scientific research and that knowing is a skill which consists of attending from a set of subsidiary skills to a focal object. The former are tacitly integrated by the knower into his comprehension of the latter. It follows that what can be explicitly stated can be transmitted only by a master to an apprentice who trusts his authority and expertise, and tacitly picks up the clues of which the master is himself only tacitly aware, and thus in a tradition formed by such relationships.<sup>4</sup> In Pt II he explores further the tacit and personal components in all our thinking and action, including the passionate valuations that guide and sustain them. In all of this we may be mistaken, but there cannot be any wholly impersonal guarantees. In the final chapter, 'Conviviality', he examines the social and political



settings that can sustain or undermine the articulate systems, such as natural sciences, technology, mathematics, abstract arts and religion, which themselves foster and sustain the intellectual passions integral to human and civilised existence. All such articulate systems, because they are primarily transmitted by way of master and apprentice and by traditions, require a communal setting and the support of the wider society and its political organisation. And so Polanyi broadens his attempt in *PK* to ‘stabilize knowledge against scepticism, by including its hazardous character in the conditions of our knowledge’ to find its social and political equivalent in ‘an allegiance to a manifestly imperfect society, based on the acknowledgment that our duty lies in the service of ideals which we cannot possibly achieve’.<sup>5</sup> Following that, in Pt III the heart of *PK*, Polanyi seeks to justify personal knowledge in a back-handed manner by showing that the alternatives must themselves tacitly rely upon what they explicitly reject: all explicit knowledge is tacitly asserted and believed to be true; explicit doubt presupposes some implicit beliefs about the reasons for doubting; and truth ‘*can be thought of only by believing it*’.<sup>6</sup> It can be known only within the framework of commitment to it, where the personal, as the act of commitment, is united with the impersonal as that at which the personal aims with universal intent. Earlier (Ch. 7 §1) Polanyi had referred to the tension between, on the one hand, our claims to be guided by and to achieve universal standards and transcendent ideals, and, on the other, our awareness that we believe in them because we were taught them, and so they may appear external to us and arbitrary.<sup>7</sup> In Ch. 10 §10, he refers back to that problem. Our reliance upon our cultural heritage, and the information and guidance given by others, would reduce, he says, ‘all our convictions to the mere products of a particular location and interest, according to a critical philosophy’. But a fiduciary philosophy, accrediting intellectual commitments and personal responsibility, regards the local and particular circumstances in which we live and think as opportunities for the exercise of that responsibility. These limits are to be accepted for we cannot hold ourselves responsible beyond them nor imagine how we might exist outside any particular society. Rather, it is our calling to use what we have been given and have been taught to fulfil our universal obligations. ‘A sense of responsibility within situations requiring deliberate decisions [as in drawing conclusions from evidence] demands as its logical complement a sense of calling with respect to the processes of intellectual growth which are its necessary logical antecedents’.<sup>8</sup>

From even this very brief summary, it can be seen that the social and political themes of Ch. 7 are an integral part of his argument, and I shall now draw out some further implications of the concluding sections of Ch. 7 and Ch 10 upon acceptance of one’s situation and one’s calling to exercise responsibility in making decisions in the light of transcendent ideals and our own self-set standards for realising them.<sup>9</sup> I shall begin with the general topic of ultimate and proximate beliefs; I shall then turn to more specific topics within politics; I shall conclude with the need for acceptance of our finite and created situation, which goes far beyond politics yet bears heavily upon it.

## 2. Ultimate and Proximate Beliefs

In Pt III of *PK* Polanyi sought to articulate his ultimate beliefs, but ones which were not simply his, but universal, for it is impossible for anyone to act and think without tacitly presupposing them and committing oneself to them. But they can exist only through and as presupposed by proximate beliefs and more specific intellectual frameworks, such as those which govern the practices of modern natural science, and they, in turn, by even more specific ones, such as judgments about the result of a particular experiment. In turn, our ultimate beliefs, such as that there is a world to be known and that our perceptual organs and mental powers are generally reliable, enable us to correct our specific and particular beliefs: we can know that our eyesight and memory sometimes fail us only because of our use of them during the occasions when they do not. This is the dialectic of assimilation to an existing set of beliefs or intellectual framework and accommodation or adaptation of such a set or framework to new but as yet vaguely apprehended realities, tacitly known by attending to them from already known realities.<sup>10</sup>

Without it, human thought and civilisation could never make any progress nor adapt themselves to changes in the world. Hence positivism and relativism support each other, for they both deny the reality or necessity of these ultimate and universal beliefs by the use of which we can break out of a more specific framework of thought and create or adopt another. This denial power of thought in human life to transcend the present system of beliefs consequently entails a denial of any real power of thought, and so must explain all historical events in extraneous terms as the mere results of non-rational forces.<sup>11</sup>

The distinction between and interplay of ultimate and proximate beliefs makes possible a concrete and genuine philosophy transcending both any abstract rationalism, which seeks to construct its fields *de novo* upon some abstract principle alone (e.g., both Kant and utilitarianism in ethics; Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Rawls, Nozick in politics), and also the positivist accumulation of particular facts.<sup>12</sup> Contrary to the latter, it finds its own special subject-matter in the universal and necessary structures of human experience, but, contrary to the former, it always reminds itself that it is an abstraction and endeavours always to start from and to return to the realities of human experience in the world, the concrete, local and historical forms in and through which the universal and necessary features are realised and expressed. Polanyi's philosophical writings are paradigms of concrete philosophy.

Corresponding to the distinction between concrete philosophy and the constructivism of pseudo-philosophy is that between concrete politics and the ideological 'isms' of constructivist politics. This, I suggest, is the real division in politics and not the utterly confused and confusing one between 'Right' and 'Left': everything identified with the one can be found in examples of the other. Its basis lies in the distinction between acceptance of one's situation, with the call to exercise responsibility in it, and the refusal to accept it and its call. On the one hand, concrete politics starts with the situation at hand and seeks to deal with the problems and challenges that it poses. Of course it can identify those problems and challenges only with general principles and conceptions, but these it takes from the traditions within which it has arisen and which it also adapts to meet novel circumstances.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, constructive politics, based on some mostly abstract scheme, is ideological in operation. That is, the situation at hand does not set the tasks to be done but is only the ground to be cleared for the building of the new edifice, or, in what Aurel Kolnai called 'reactionary Utopianism', for rebuilding an old one which is itself to be frozen against any change or adaptation.<sup>14</sup> Political movements, of thought and practice, obviously vary to the extent that they are constructivist, and there may be no clear line between a pressing need for some radical changes to meet a new situation and an ideological imposition of abstract schemes upon reality. But as Burke said of night and day, they are on the whole tolerably distinguishable.

### 3. A Clean Slate

Bertrand de Jouvenel in his *Sovereignty*, a book read and admired by Polanyi,<sup>15</sup> has a chapter on the political consequences of Descartes in which he argues that the political parallel to Descartes' insistence that 'clear and distinct conceptions' are self-evidently true would be that there would be a general convergence towards the same political truths and body of laws, which, de Jouvenel implies, has not happened.<sup>16</sup> I propose to step back a little and to show why, even in the case of Descartes himself, this could never be the case, and that, just as Descartes' method of doubt could never clear his mind of all assumptions, so too could no Cartesian politics of starting with a clean slate ever really do so.

Descartes failed because he confidently uses the languages at his disposal, Latin and French. And those languages embody thought-forms, categories and conceptions of which he is likely to be not fully aware or to

take simply for granted, such as the Aristotelian conceptions of substance and attribute, and the Neo-Platonic conception of a cause, that it is that which generates a lesser likeness of itself, upon which he tacitly relies in his first proof of the existence of God. Like the rest of us, he can question, modify or discard particular words or uses of them and the categories and conceptions which they express. But he can do so only by tacitly and acritically relying upon others. To question all of them is impossible, for it would mean depriving oneself of all the means of articulate and complex thought, and questioning is very much an articulate and complex process of thinking. Hence even the doubter has generally to accept, implicitly, his intellectual situation and the bulk of what he has inherited in order explicitly to question and doubt some part of it.<sup>17</sup> The same applies to all those who have tried to reconstruct human knowledge upon some assured foundation, irrespective of the particular errors in their assumptions. We can never wholly transcend the intellectual milieu into which we have been born and reared, and knowing is always a hazardous task in which we are always liable to being mistaken in part but in which we can later correct some of our errors.

The modern world is awash with ideological schemes for the reconstruction of society and has paid a high price for some of them. But they never can achieve the clean slate from which they propose to start. Even in their theorising they inevitably incorporate inherited and tacit assumptions about man and the world, perhaps parts of a radical tradition that they simply take for granted, such as hostility to an exchange economy or to economic science itself, which reminds us that everything has its costs. Even more so in the implementation of any such scheme they cannot start with a clean slate because they are dealing with people who carry their pasts with them and not are malleable clay, cement, stone and metal. I saw this in the two years that I spent teaching in a College of Education in northern Nigeria. Formally, it was very similar to the one where I had been teaching in England from whence the design had been imported, but its actual operations were often very different, from administration to the styles of teaching and learning. Again, northern Europeans in public offices will tend to place the public good above family ties and shun nepotism, but Africans regard it as their duty to help poorer relations and so those in positions of responsibility will try to obtain for them employment in public services irrespective of their fitness for the job. A recent report in the newspaper showed that people in Britain, Holland and Switzerland are more likely to co-operate with each other and the law whereas people in Russia and Greece, where family ties are more valued, are more likely to disobey the law and seek revenge for injuries to their relations. Hence no matter what the planner plans, those for whom he plans will operate it in ways to which they are accustomed and for which they have the required practical knowledge, unless it is already adapted to suit them or there is some provision for genuine acculturation to it, and not just the presentation of ‘information’ which cannot tell one what to do with it, let alone arouse a desire to use it in appropriate ways. If imported machinery can fail to work even in similar conditions, then even more so are political and social systems liable to go awry when exported to states and societies with very different customs and attitudes.<sup>18</sup>

#### ***4. Le meilleur, c’est l’ennemi du bien***

Acceptance of one’s situation entails acceptance of imperfections, including those in oneself. Polanyi’s particular target is revolutionary attempts at a total renewal of society by means of unrestrained power, yet he also warns that any attempt to remove injustices overnight, rather than gradually, would replace them with yet worse ones.<sup>19</sup> What the modern mind seems reluctant to accept is that in this life most things are ‘double-valued’: that is, as well as their good attributes they also incur costs. Economics is the ‘dismal science’ precisely because that is what it teaches, particularly in respect of unintended consequences, usually untoward. This shows itself in an imbalance in attitudes towards the past, the present and the future. The past is neglected because of the refusal to learn what it can teach—in modern politics the wheel is constantly re-invented and ‘the gods of the

copy-book headings' are ignored, and either the present is sacrificed to a future that never arrives or the future is sacrificed in impatience for short-term shifts and enjoyment now. Doubtless such follies were committed in the past but today they seem to be more prevalent. One reason may be that genuine improvements in the conditions of life have bred a belief that most of its frustrations and disappointments could be removed, and that increases in the powers at our disposal, and especially at the disposal of governments, have led many to conclude that government action can remove all of them.

## 5. No Simple Rules

Just as no art can be reduced to a set of explicit rules, so too is it vain to search for simple rules to guide public policy. In *On Liberty*, J.S. Mill himself could not keep to his one simple rule that only actions which affect others should be subject to legislation, for he had to admit that, although a man walking into danger might not thereby harm anyone else, he could and should be legitimately constrained from so doing because he would not wish to harm himself. In any case there is no such simple distinction between those actions which affect only oneself and those which affect others: every act is liable to affect others in some way and at some time. Likewise Bernard Bosanquet could not keep to his simple rules, that only those actions which are better done for the wrong motive than not done at all should be enjoined by law, and thus that state action should be limited to 'hindering hindrances' to a better life.<sup>20</sup> For his later endorsement of state help for study at university for those otherwise unable to undertake it, was a proposal for positive aid rather than an attempt to counter a definite obstacle. Both these are examples of constructivist, simplistic thinking which the better judgment of their authors forced them to abandon while pretending not to do so.

Abstract principles and the necessary and universal features of human life are necessarily embodied in local and historical institutions, customs, traditions, laws and ways of life. It follows that no code book of abstract rules can suffice to guide us, privately or publicly, through life and diverse problems, and that local custom must provide the 'matter' which the abstract form requires to become concrete. For example, a row is brewing in Oxford where the local mosque wants to broadcast the calls to prayer from loudspeakers but where the non-Moslem population doesn't want to be disturbed by them. Elsewhere militant atheists, tradition-loathing socialists and 'liberals', and some newly arrived townies in villages, combine to oppose the ringing of church bells, and so there are probably some in Oxford who would want both to prevent the Moslem call to prayer and to stop the ringing of church bells. How could Mill's simple rule resolve these disputes? Whose rights take precedence? Those who want silence no matter what the source? Those who want to continue a traditional practice? Those who want to introduce something new and not any part of English tradition? Who is going to be forced to remain silent or be made to hear something they do not wish to hear? On what abstract principle can any such question be decided? But local custom can in many cases. If what has long been practised has a prescriptive right to continue, then those who wish to stop it or those who wish to introduce something which annoys others, especially if the former are new-comers and the latter long-established residents, would have to give way until they have secured voluntary agreement all round. This is itself an abstract rule, but is one which indicates its own content in many particular cases. It also embodies the foundation of all law and government, namely, prescription.

## 6. Prescription

All modern discussions of the basis of legitimacy and political obligation, from Hobbes onward, are beside the point for abstract principles cannot apply themselves, and the right to govern and to legislate is ultimately that

of prescription, established usage, in every case. For even a revolutionary regime, such as the Jacobins in France and the Bolsheviks in Russia, has to assume a right to govern that territory and that population already constituted as France and the French or Russia and the Russians. When, supposedly, France was being reconstructed anew in 1790, it was taken for granted that France already existed, that certain persons in Paris had the right to reconstruct it, and that their decisions were binding upon Charles in Cherbourg and Maurice in Marseilles. Even if a plebiscite had been held, it would have begged the questions of why Charles and Maurice should be obliged to accept the result and why just that set of persons and no others were given the chance to take part. The body politic is prior to any formal organisation of it or explicit constitution for it. One of the few wise decisions made and largely continued by the newly independent states in Africa has been to accept the boundaries laid down for them by the former colonial powers, even though there are, for example, Yorubas in neighbouring Benin as well as in the south-west of Nigeria and Hausas in Niger as well as in the north of Nigeria. It is a necessary presumption of all government that, on the whole, what is right simply because it is and has been. To start with a really clean slate would be arbitrary power at its most extreme. Whatever rearrangements a government may wish to make, it must start with what is already there and take it to be legitimate, for that is the ultimate basis of its own legitimacy.

## 7. Trust and Solidarity

Belief, faith, authority, trust—all these have little place in distinctively modern philosophy. For Cartesian doubt, critical philosophy and the recent ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’ are based, not only on a sceptical reaction against excessive credulity with respect to others, their authority and what they say, but also on distrust in one’s own cognitive powers. Likewise all efforts to find ‘criteria’ for our judgments, sure foundations for our knowledge and purely ‘objective’ methods for extending it, are all motivated by the same distrust. Hence the conclusion that the knower can only infect his knowing with ‘subjectivism’ and so must be eliminated from it as much as possible. But this is all a mere pretence, as Descartes himself said,<sup>21</sup> and many modern philosophers do not, and cannot, live by what they profess to believe, and thus their philosophy is philosophy in bad faith. Sartre’s existentialism logically entails that it too is ‘bad faith’, for to write it Sartre had to presuppose that there are intellectual standards which he had not arbitrarily chosen which was contrary to his claim that we are condemned to choose everything we believe and do. Only a fiduciary and not any critical or foundational philosophy can be consistent with how we actually live and think and have to live and think, that is, on a basis of trust in ourselves and others. For it formulates the golden mean between credulity and scepticism which in real life we try, or should try, to attain. In contrast to belief as an inferior alternative to knowledge, mere belief, Polanyi seeks to reinstate the Augustinian conception of it as that which leads to and sustains knowledge and understanding.<sup>22</sup>

The social and political counterpart of this is general trust in and solidarity with others. Just as the republic of science is held together by networks of overlapping competences, so too society at large and the body politic are held together by overlapping relationships of trust.<sup>23</sup> Polanyi, starting from the example of natural science, focuses upon other cultural domains such as the arts and religion, and leadership in them by authoritative figures. Just as belief and trust in our own and others’ cognitive powers is the prerequisite for knowledge, so too is the fundamental and everyday trust that we have in each other and especially in each other’s honesty, veracity and willingness to help in difficulties, the prerequisite for all social life. Trust is prior to suspicion and distrust, as belief is prior to doubt and scepticism. It begins in infancy, in the trust that the child puts in his parents. Children who have been abused from an early age have had such feelings destroyed and so come to view everyone else with suspicion, while psychopaths lack feelings altogether and therefore any insight into others. Life teaches us all that not everyone can be trusted. But just as sceptical, critical, foundationalist and objectivist philosophers wrongly infer that because they have sometimes been mistaken they can always be mistaken, unless perhaps

they reconstruct their knowledge in another way, so too in life generally do some, having been gullible on some occasions, conclude that no one can be trusted. Even the state of mutual fear and suspicion that Stalin created rested on a belief that everyone else could be trusted, in a backhanded manner, to inform Stalin of any actions by others that might displease him.

Trust begins as trust in particular persons, firstly one's parents, and widens to other family members and neighbours. A general attitude of trust, necessary to any wider society where strangers are often encountered, can grow from trust in particular persons. Likewise the emotions of fellow-feeling and solidarity, also necessary to any group and society, start with what Burke called the 'little platoon'. One's family, locality, tribe, region, nation are all concrete and imaginable objects of love and loyalty, but not the 'humanity' that Rousseau pretended to love nor even the anonymous members of Hayek's 'Great Society', important though it is that persons from very different backgrounds should meet each other with common respect. Again, as Polanyi argued, all continuing pursuits and practices, such as the arts and sciences, not only require trust and shared interests among their participants but also from society at large, so that even the parties in literary or scientific disputes, in which accusations of charlatanism and fraud may be thrown back and forth, can contain their dispute within some wider and shared convictions from their cultural heritage and the general public can believe that most of them are saying things of importance.<sup>24</sup> From this Polanyi further argues that there are four coefficients of social organisation with their appropriate institutions: sharing of convictions, and institutions of culture; sharing of fellowship, and social intercourse, group rituals and common defence, fostering and demanding group loyalty; co-operation for joint material benefit, and an economic system; and the exercise of authority or coercion by public power to shelter and control the previous three.<sup>25</sup> But equally, the last also rests on the previous three: without the sharing of some common convictions, some solidarity and fellow-feeling, and some generation of wealth, governments are both more reliant on coercion and yet also gravely constrained and powerless. Indeed, without the first two, there is no genuine society at all. Even short-term contracts for limited purposes rest upon some degree of trust by at least one of the parties, as by Stalin in Hitler over the Soviet-Nazi Pact. Beyond that, contracts presuppose some general confidence in the making of promises, for the promise to perform what one has promised cannot be a part of the contract itself. And so, as Max Scheler argued, every contract presupposes some prior shared experience of mutual and spontaneous solidarity and fellow-feeling with others, though not necessarily within the same community as the other contracting party.<sup>26</sup>

But such particular loyalties and feelings, because they distinguish 'us' from 'them' and any 'us' may be indifferent or hostile to 'them', have become suspect in many eyes, precisely because they are local and particular and seem to be imposed upon us. Once again we are faced with the question of acceptance or rejection of the concrete situation in which we find ourselves. There are only two other possibilities: attachment to and solidarity with some abstract ideal and design or no attachments and solidarity at all. The first is ideological attachment: attachment to a mere principle or scheme and not to living persons, one's fellow kinsmen, tribesmen, countrymen, etc., and their shared traditions, memories and aspirations. The result is inevitably fanaticism, infatuation with an abstraction that can never be realised in concrete reality, and thus in revolutionary and dictatorial politics to bend recalcitrant reality to it, no matter that the end result may be supposed to be freedom. For example, Nozick's libertarian utopia is never going to be realised by the 'invisible hand' of the spontaneous mutual adjustment of individual and group actions and decisions. It is not so much that it is uninspiring, though it is in comparison with concrete and therefore historic entities, but that, insofar as it is inspiring, it can inspire only fanaticism.<sup>27</sup> As for no attachments and solidarity, that would be universal autism or psychopathology, a crowd of unrelated individuals with no ties one to another, not even of mother to child. Such a condition of humanity could perhaps come about, but it would be suicidal. None would spontaneously help any others, and

they would die off one by one with no posterity.

It follows that the only valid questions about local and particular attachments and solidarity are themselves concrete ones about how given societies, communities, groups and states be guided peaceably to live together. Sometimes a foreign and imperial and impartial power has been able to preserve the peace among groups that otherwise may have been in conflict. But even that requires some attachment of at least some in those groups to the imperial power, such as the locals recruited into a colonial civil service, police force and army. In other cases, only the dominance of one local group and its customs and culture can provide stability and order, with the others being more or less content to play subordinate roles. Indeed, there can be a society only when there is a common body of custom, law, language and mutual understanding, that is, a common culture of some sort which can create a basic consensus and solidarity. This is especially true in the modern world where participation in government of all the people is both possible and desired by them. Without a demos there can be no democracy, only the rule of a coercive majority, if that.<sup>28</sup> Whatever the abstract considerations may be, any policy likely to disrupt the common culture, consensus and solidarity, such as mass immigration of peoples with customs and attitudes very different from those of the local population, is fraught with danger. Likewise any aggressive imposition of a dominant language, culture and customs at the expense of established regional variations, and any aggressive assertion of the latter against the former. There can be no general plan suitable for all circumstances and occasions, only particular adjustments for particular times and places.

## **8. Beyond Politics: Modern Gnosticism**

In (3) above, reference was made to contemporary frustrations at our limitations even though our powers have vastly increased in the last two centuries. Somewhere in all this, it seems to me, is a general frustration with human limitations and a refusal to accept that there are some things that none of us can achieve. Behind this frustration, I suggest, lies a refusal to accept our finitude and createdness. Ultimately political problems cannot be solved by political means but are moral ones, ones of character and temperament, and they in turn rest upon our conceptions of and attitudes towards the world and our destiny within and beyond it.

In the later sections of *PK* Ch. 7, 'Conviviality', Polanyi seeks to explain how the magic of Marxism bewitches intellectuals with the moral appeal of its contempt for morality. I do not question any part of his account, but I think that there is more to be said and that it goes beyond Polanyi himself and even Eric Voegelin. For what we see in such as Rousseau, Marx and Heidegger in *Being and Time*, is a modern and secularist variation upon ancient Gnosticism. The latter held this physical universe to be the lowest level of the cosmos and intrinsically evil in being material and furthest from the Light. Human beings are sparks of that one and original Light which have fallen through successive 'aeons', each with its own ignorant and malign ruler, and have been encrusted with the evils peculiar to each aeon. By some means or other, certain persons receive revelations of the saving gnosis, the knowledge of what we really are, whence we have come and how we can return through the aeons, shedding our encrustations and returning to the one Light. Unlike the monistic trends in Hinduism, it was never explicitly stated that our final destiny would be reabsorption in the one Light, but that does appear to be the logic of the explicit teaching. I suggest that we find an exact but secularist and immanentist parallel in Rousseau, Marx and Heidegger, and the like, and that what they are ultimately reacting against and seeking release from is differentiation and finitude as such, from being this and not that. Rousseau and Marx find that release in a total and undifferentiated state in which free, pure spirits together resolve their differences and act as one, respectively, in the General Will and in the classless and purely socialist society, while Heidegger found his in the 'resolved

community’ of the Nazi Gemeinschaft.<sup>29</sup> In Sartre, we find an even more explicit statement of the entrapment of the pure and free spirit, the ‘nothingness’ and ‘fold in being’ that is condemned only and always to choose, in a world in which others ‘objectify’ him (i.e. make him determinate) with their gaze. But for Sartre there is *Huis Clos*, no exit, because humankind can never achieve the identity of *être en soi* and *être pour soi* which, if it were possible, would be God. A similar idea of the empty self has been found in analytic philosophy,<sup>30</sup> while reductionist sociologies, which make the person a dimensionless point at which roles and other social forces intersect, have exactly the same effect on those exposed to it—they come to feel themselves encrusted and defined by ‘society’, exactly as Rousseau, Marx, Heidegger and Sartre did, and wish to be free. But that freedom is an empty Gnostic freedom from created particularity which we never attain. Hence the widespread discomfort induced with one’s social situation, with all social roles, all allegiances and commitments, is ultimately a revolt against our cosmic situation. It results in an aimless and destructive fretting and discontent (*angst*), to be relieved by arbitrary commitment to some politically radical movement bent on ‘smashing the system’, which these days also takes the form of an alliance with radical Islam against Western civilisation, its proximate object of discontent.

Polanyi’s call that we accept the intellectual, cultural, historical, social and political situations in which we find ourselves and follow our callings to conduct ourselves responsibly in them, is also a plea for the virtue of patience in dealing with the problems of life which include our own limitations. Likewise, the acceptance of our cosmic situation as created and finite beings in a created and finite world requires also the virtue of humility, of acknowledging that we are not the creators and masters of the world and that we must ungrudgingly accept our subordinate status. And both require the virtue of hope to guard against the despair that we can achieve nothing and that life and effort are futile. But no merely political action can arouse the patience, humility and hope that responsible conduct, both political and non-political, requires.

## Endnotes

All references to Polanyi’s publications will be given with the usual abbreviations.

<sup>1</sup> Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, NJ, and London, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> *PK*, p. 323.

<sup>3</sup> *PK*, p. viii.

<sup>4</sup> *PK*, pp. 53-8.

<sup>5</sup> *PK*, p. 245.

<sup>6</sup> *PK*, p. 305.

<sup>7</sup> *PK*, p. 203.

<sup>8</sup> *PK*, p. 323.

<sup>9</sup> In Pt IV Polanyi elaborates the epistemology and ontological significance of his post-critical and personalist philosophy, especially with respect to tacit integration which most of his later publications further developed. Perhaps the wider philosophy has been somewhat neglected because of this. For a general survey of Polanyi and acceptance of one’s situation, see my ‘Michael Polanyi and acceptance of situation’, *Revue Roumaine de Philosophie*, Vol. 40, No.s 1-2, 1996, pp. 179-93.

<sup>10</sup> *PK*, p. 105.

<sup>11</sup> See *PK*, p. 213, and Ch. 6, §13, ‘Dwelling in and breaking out’.

<sup>12</sup> Positivism also is a rationalist construction, both in its original sense of Comte’s *a priori* scheme of human history and its termination, and in its general sense of denying *a priori* that there are universal and necessary features of human existence in the world and that we cannot live and think without a world-and-life-



view of some sort of other. Empiricism also was a rationalist construction, for it substituted for actual experience its own *a priori* construction of the mind as a passive recipient of unstructured and atomic ‘sensations’, ‘impressions’, ‘sense data’ and the like. Kant appears to have combined both empiricism and a more explicitly rationalist constructivism.

<sup>13</sup>See *SFS*, p. 83; *PK*, p. 244.

<sup>14</sup>On this, see Aurel Kolnai, *The Utopian Mind and Other Papers*, ed. F.N. Dunlop, London, Athlone Press, 1995.

<sup>15</sup>Trans. Huntingdon, Cambridge, CUP, 1957; see *PK*, p. 213n.

<sup>16</sup>See *PK*, Ch. 9.

<sup>17</sup>*Sovereignty*, pp. 228-30.

<sup>18</sup>*PK*, pp. 52 and 53-4.

<sup>19</sup>*PK*, p. 245. Cf. Burke: ‘He censures God who quarrels with the imperfections of man’, Speech at Bristol before the Election, 1780, in *Works*, London, Rivington, 1826-7, Vol. III, p. 359.

<sup>20</sup>*The Philosophical Theory of the State* (London Macmillan, 1899, 4th ed. 1923) pp. 177ff.

<sup>21</sup>*Discourses on Method*, 1. Descartes proposed, in the meantime, not to doubt his moral beliefs and others necessary for living.

<sup>22</sup>*PK*, p. 266.

<sup>23</sup>*PK*, pp 216-24.

<sup>24</sup>*PK*, pp. 137, 203, 215, 220-2.

<sup>25</sup>*PK*, pp. 212-3.

<sup>26</sup>*The Nature of Sympathy* (trans. Heath, London, Routledge, 1954 ), Pt 3, Ch. 3. On the limits of contract generally, see my *Beyond Liberalism*, pp. 173-9.

<sup>27</sup>*Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1974, p. 297. Cf. Polanyi on Popper’s ‘open society’: ‘A wholly open society would be a wholly vacuous one—one which could never actually exist since it could never have any reason for existing’ (*M* p. 184).

<sup>28</sup>cf. *PK*, pp. 215, 221, 223.

<sup>29</sup>See the Epilogue, ‘Gnosticism, Existentialism and Nihilism’, in Hans Jonas’ *The Gnostic Religion*, Beacon Press, Boston, Mass, 2nd ed. 1963.

<sup>30</sup>Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, London, Routledge, 1970.

## 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](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.

# FIFTY YEARS OF DISCOVERING *PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE*, THE RISE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE POLANYI SOCIETY

Richard Gelwick

ABSTRACT Key Words: Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, the Moot, Marjorie Grene, Gifford Lectures, The Polanyi Society, impersonal scientific objectivity, moral inversion, post-critical, tacit knowing.

*This address to The Polanyi Society's June 13-15, 2008 conference at Loyola University in Chicago commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of Michael Polanyi's publication of Personal Knowledge and considers the generative influence of Polanyi's post-critical theory of knowledge that led to The Polanyi Society, its journal Tradition & Discovery and more than 2000 books and papers on Polanyi's philosophy.*

## 1. The Fountainhead

Taking time at a scholarly conference for consideration of the significance of Michael Polanyi's *magnum opus*, *Personal Knowledge: Towards A Post-Critical Philosophy*, is most appropriate since this work is the fountainhead of Polanyi's philosophical thought. Take away *Personal Knowledge* from Polanyi's philosophical works, and he is a significant and interesting thinker with keen and memorable insights. Without *Personal Knowledge*, Polanyi would most likely be remembered today by a few scholars for his prescient grasp of the economic fundamentals that led to the collapse of the Soviet empire, his development of the principles of x-ray crystallography and chemical reaction rates, and essays on science and freedom, science and the humanities, and implications of gestalt psychology for epistemology. These are major accomplishments that outshine most persons in any time, but they do not rise to the level of a monumental and culture-changing work. *Personal Knowledge* is a choke slam, a *tour de force*, a massive argument. *Personal Knowledge* overturns the established intellectual hegemony of impersonal scientific knowledge. All knowledge is not impersonal, but personal; not detached but involved knowing. With the publication of *Personal Knowledge*, a revolution begins and by Polanyi's 100th birthday in 1991, we could say at Kent State that there has been "a tacit victory."<sup>1</sup> The ideal of strictly impersonal knowledge is no longer secure in the academy. Our participation in our knowing is more widely explored.

The date of the publication of *Personal Knowledge* in 1958 is an emergent event. We know that *Personal Knowledge* came together slowly as the outgrowth of Polanyi's Gifford Lectures at the University of Aberdeen in 1951-52. The invitation to do these lectures has two important aspects in understanding Polanyi. One aspect is the purpose of the Lectures. On the one hand, the Gifford Lecture program is seeking a person to address natural theology in a modern sense of religion without supernatural miracles. (Please note all detractors from Polanyi's interest in religion that the Gifford Lectures are regarded as about religion. His most important book was in response to the general problem of religion in an age of science.) Polanyi is in Aberdeen lecturing because of his growing reputation as a scientist who thinks about the role of faith in science and in a free society. When we say "faith" we mean the act of trusting in and believing in as used in Jewish and Christian faith. Polanyi's book, *Science, Faith and Society*, one year before the Gifford invitation came in 1947, given as the Riddell Memorial Lectures at the University of Durham in England in 1946, is part of the impetus for the Gifford Lecture

invitation. These Riddell lectures are what I call Polanyi's "inaugural address." They show most clearly where his life purpose is turning toward an epistemological reform of grand proportions.<sup>2</sup>

The second aspect of understanding Polanyi's Gifford Lectures is the suffering, the difficulty, and time it took him to produce first the lectures, then six years later the finished book of the lectures published as *Personal Knowledge*. This series of 20 lectures over a two-year period gives him time to think through and to build systematically his views. In this time, he is also in a great dialogue with the members of the Moot, a gathering of leading British sojourners and religious intellectuals who met to pray (again note the spiritual dimension all who detract from Polanyi's religious faith) and to diagnose, treat, and remedy the current crisis of totalitarian states that were destroying the spiritual heritage of Western civilization. He is also getting the help of a rising American philosopher, Marjorie Grene, as well as the creative interchange of lecturing during this time at major American and British universities. But Polanyi struggled for four years before he gave the Giffords.<sup>3</sup> Invited in 1947, he had to postpone them several times because he was not ready. Taking command of his insights and putting them into the forum of academic discourse was a major task in his move from professor of physical chemistry to research professor in social thought. Even after the Giffords were given in 1951-52, it is still six more years before they are published as *Personal Knowledge*. The total time from the Gifford invitation to the published book is eleven years of intellectual struggle, reflection, creative imagination, consultation and conversation, wide reading synthesized into the four parts of *Personal Knowledge*. In this time, Polanyi examines the essential structures of knowing, how they work to build a society and a civilization, and how they arise out of the biological and social history of humankind. When he finishes, he has tried to cover every angle, every argument that one could propose to uphold the philosophy of detached impersonal knowing as the true guide to knowledge and truth. Having found impersonal objectivity false, he also shows how knowing in science and everywhere depends upon the tacit components of personal knowledge.

Several things stand out about Polanyi's Gifford Lectures. One is they are among the most seminal of the entire Gifford series of over 100 years. Many Gifford lecturers are invited after they have already reached the apex of their careers. Few besides Whitehead and James' lectures are as ground breaking. Polanyi was beginning at least a fourth career after medicine, physical chemistry, and economics. *Personal Knowledge* is an achievement of a level of thought not reached by Polanyi before these lectures.

Another thing about the Giffords is that *Personal Knowledge* is a surprise and its scope and depth of argument are what make it the fountainhead nourishing and giving strength to all his later work. Separating *The Study of Man*, *Beyond Nihilism*, *Knowing and Being*, *The Tacit Dimension*, and *Meaning* from the ground work of *Personal Knowledge* misses the weight and seriousness of his epistemological program. To put it simply, without *Personal Knowledge* there probably would be no Polanyi Society or the large body of growing scholarship world wide.<sup>4</sup> In fact, Maben Poirier reports that there are now over 2000 publications on Polanyi.<sup>5</sup> *Personal Knowledge* is a solid foundation supporting all that Polanyi wrote afterwards.

## 2. The Polanyi Wilderness

In 1962 when I met Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* was barely known beyond its summary on the book jacket. One could not easily talk with university faculty or fellow students about Polanyi without having to do an introductory overview and justification for bringing up Polanyi's philosophical thought. There was no familiarity or basic background for discussing Polanyi. Bill Scott exhibits this problem in his important and early Polanyi discussion in *The Massachusetts's Review* of 1962.<sup>6</sup> Scott labels Polanyi's theory of knowledge "A

Gestalt Philosophy,” and in the article further identifies it as an “existential gestalt philosophy.” Both terms, existential and gestalt, provided more familiar handles for grasping what Polanyi is about, but they barely open the window to seeing a radical program of epistemological reform. This same difficulty of understanding *Personal Knowledge* is seen in the *festschrift* for Polanyi’s 70th birthday published in 1961.<sup>7</sup> The title of the *festschrift*, *The Logic of Personal Knowledge*, pays tribute to the book but there is little direct discussion of the book. Instead there is an organization of the contributed essays around the four parts of *Personal Knowledge*. Each part presents indirectly relevant essays. Except for Raymond Aron’s essay on “Max Weber and Michael Polanyi” and Marjorie Grene’s essay on “The Logic of Biology” the contributions to understanding *Personal Knowledge* are oblique and indirect. A beginner looking for guidance here will be bewildered by being thrown into gems of works by leading thinkers who associate themselves with Polanyi’s known concerns but do not directly discuss his epistemological arguments. The essay by Paul Ignatus “On The Hungary of Michael Polanyi” helps with some background on Polanyi’s Budapest years. Probably the greatest strength of *The Logic of Personal Knowledge* is the range of illustrious thinkers who honored him with their essays and the intellectual breadth and diversity that they represent from the physical sciences to social thought and philosophy. The *festschrift* shows that some major contemporary writers highly regarded Polanyi, but they had not yet comprehended enough his epistemology to discuss it.

Trying to construct a research proposal on Polanyi was like being in a wilderness without maps but lots of clues and a sense of no boundaries. A polymath who published in a wide range of journals, one had to look everywhere to see if Polanyi might have been there. That was how I found the incredible half page 1936 letter to the editor of the British journal *Philosophy of Science* that Polanyi titled “The Value of the Inexact.”<sup>8</sup> Polanyi had forgotten that he had written it. The day I showed it to Polanyi he smiled brightly realizing that as early as 1936, three years after immigrating to Manchester from the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin, he already had intuitively foreseen his whole theory of knowledge. The short letter protested the way philosophers of science describe science as exact, precise, and quantitative and how they actually operate with vagueness guided by skills.

I was fortunate that I was working personally with Polanyi for a year and had the advantage of talking with him about his life and work. Without that direct contact, it would have been much more difficult to develop a bibliography of his social and philosophical thought. When he came to the Center for Advanced Studies at Stanford, he brought with him papers for me that he thought were the main ones that he had published. There were about thirty papers. During that year, thanks to the great library collection at the University of California in Berkeley, I searched indices of every journal in English that Polanyi mentioned or knew. If Polanyi had published in it at sometime, I looked it up, and made a Xerox copy. Fortunately, the social and philosophical works of Polanyi were primarily in English, not Hungarian. From the small box that Polanyi brought, my bibliography and reading of his papers grew to a collection of over 120 social and philosophical papers in English, not including those published more than once in different journals.

Realizing that future study would benefit from having these papers of Polanyi, I got the Holbrook Library of Pacific School of Religion to pay for making a microfilm of all of these papers and to include the microfilm in their collection. The microfilm was published in 1963 as *The Collected Articles and Papers of Michael Polanyi* and included an 18 page catalogue and index to the papers.

*Personal Knowledge* was published first in England on June 20, 1958, and a week later in Chicago. At first, there were few reviews of it until after 1962. Scott and Moleski report about twenty. They were brief for the

scope of the work. May Brodbeck, philosopher of science, said Polanyi was “an obscurantist” and dismissed the book.<sup>9</sup> John Ziman, a physicist and philosopher of science, was sympathetic but thought Polanyi should have put more emphasis on scientific knowledge as social knowledge. He complimented Polanyi for showing common foundations of disciplines.<sup>10</sup> Carl Friedrich, a political theorist, saw in Polanyi’s approach grounds for a discussion of natural law.<sup>11</sup> Julian Hartt, a philosophical theologian, disputed that Polanyi is truly post-critical because he saw Polanyi as still making the mind the central shaper of our knowledge and called Polanyi a neo-Kantian.<sup>12</sup> In short, the reviews were not comprehensive in their understanding, and they showed the difficulty of reading Polanyi thoroughly enough to appreciate the coherence and force of his argument. Most striking to me is their not commenting on Polanyi’s grand thesis that we are living under a theory of knowledge that makes absurd human knowing and the human role in the fate of the earth. Polanyi, perhaps wisely, followed *Personal Knowledge* with shorter books and lectures that illuminated his major argument for a new theory of knowledge replacing the dogma of impersonal scientific knowing.

From 1958 to 1968 when *Intellect and Hope, Essays In The Thought of Michael Polanyi* was published, thanks to the work of William Poteat and Tom Langford, public thought and reflection directly on Polanyi was scarce.<sup>13</sup> One of the tasks was to introduce Polanyi to diverse academic audiences. This task was gradually undertaken in a number of ways: 1) dissertations, 2) interdisciplinary conferences, 3) Polanyi’s lectures at leading universities, 4) the development of The Polanyi Society, and 5) books on Michael Polanyi as a philosopher.

From the first dissertations in 1965 through 1976, the year of Polanyi’s death, there were 31 doctoral dissertations on Polanyi’s social and philosophical thought. The largest number was produced at Duke under the direction of William Poteat.<sup>14</sup> It was 1977, 19 years after *Personal Knowledge* before there was an introductory book on Polanyi. Composing a book on Polanyi had a number of challenges. First, you face what I saw as the problem of the first introductory book. Why a book on Polanyi? What’s so important about Polanyi? What does theory of knowledge about science have to do with everyday life? Privileged as I was by study with and close association with him for fourteen years, I felt an obligation to try to make him available to a general audience without misrepresenting or degrading the depth of his thought. So if you want to introduce a new figure of the rank of Polanyi who is going against the stream and who you see as crucial to your society, you have to figure out how to construct the story so that the grand point is clear, persuasive, and promising or in Whitehead’s terms coherent, adequate, and applicable to the problem. The books on Polanyi since 1977 have shown an increasing gradient of appreciation, sophistication and complexity for first readers with the exception of Drusilla Scott’s *Everyman Revived, The Common Sense of Michael Polanyi*, which I find is the friendliest for first readers of Polanyi. While slightly more philosophically technical, Richard Allen’s *Thinkers of Our Time, Polanyi* has a great advantage in brevity and balance. Allen, while inviting people into Polanyi’s major ideas and also discussing critically philosophical issues involved, manages to cover a lot in very readable space. Although I have not carefully yet studied Mark Mitchell’s new book, *Michael Polanyi: The Art of Knowing*, I am told it is a concise and sophisticated introduction. Andy Sanders’ *Michael Polanyi’s Post-Critical Epistemology* is definitely a book for philosophically-prepared readers as is Harry Prosch’s *Michael Polanyi, A Critical Exposition*. Jerry Gill’s *The Tacit Mode, Michael Polanyi’s Postmodern Philosophy* does a double service of introducing Polanyi’s post-critical philosophy and showing its constructive ways beyond postmodernism. Certainly, Scott and Moleski’s *Michael Polanyi, Scientist and Philosopher* has opened up Polanyi to a wider audience by telling the interesting story of Polanyi’s life and work. It also has the value of seeing Polanyi’s thought in the context of the events of the 20th century. Certainly, there is now a collection of books presenting Polanyi’s encyclopedic work. *Personal Knowledge* is no longer an uncharted territory without guides and maps.

### 3. Worldwide Lecturer

Even if the public did not understand well what Polanyi was saying in *Personal Knowledge*, university leaders wanted to hear more and find out what this scientist turned philosopher was saying. He was invited to major universities for lecture series. No doubt Polanyi's reputation for anti-communism, his views on economics and political freedom as well as his theory of knowledge made him an attractive figure to universities. Remember that this period was in the 1960's when the cold war was hot; students were criticizing the impersonal multiversity of higher education, organizing for freedom rides to southern states and beginning the Vietnam War protests. Theodore Roszak's *The Making of a Counter Culture* noted Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge* as a sign that an upheaval was occurring toward a more responsible society.<sup>15</sup>

In Polanyi's lecture tours you can trace his pursuit of the themes from *Personal Knowledge*. These lectures become steps toward his last major books along with significant articles and pamphlets. These lectures punctuate and underline features in *Personal Knowledge* and in Polanyi's total work that need to be kept in mind today.

First, chronologically and logically, the human condition is foremost. We should not disconnect Polanyi's thought from his life's concerns. Before Polanyi was a physician or a physical chemist, he was a moralist as a child and as a student trying to sort out the problems of political liberty, individual and social action in a world moving from monarchy to social democratic institutions. The problems of Communism and Nazism, individual rights and social progress were enormous for his life. Knowing has for him a profound ethical dimension. Therefore, it is not surprising that after *Personal Knowledge*, the first lecture series often focus on this human predicament resulting from the impersonal scientific model of knowledge. The Lindsay Memorial Lectures at the University College of North Staffordshire in 1958, after *Personal Knowledge* is published, become *The Study of Man*.<sup>16</sup> They claim exaggeratedly to summarize *Personal Knowledge* and show how its theory of knowledge as common ground for natural science and historiography. The greater point here is the subject of understanding the human person in history and not succumbing to the fact-value separation model of objectivist history. In the 1960 Eddington Lecture at Cambridge, the theme is "Beyond Nihilism."<sup>17</sup> In this lecture, again the emphasis is upon the destructiveness of human beings bent on social amelioration but acting immorally because the beliefs and values that should restrain and guide them are undercut by the dogma of impersonal scientific knowledge. In 1961-62, as Distinguished Visiting Scholar at the University of Virginia and also in the McEnerney lectures at the University of California in Berkeley, Polanyi continued this campaign in this series on "History and Hope."<sup>18</sup> When I recall this dominant concern in Polanyi today, I wonder if one of the problems or questions that affects The Polanyi Society's vitality is our lack of continuing relevance, contact, and involvement in the struggle for human freedom and social improvement.

But the human condition for Polanyi could not be overcome today without a new theory of knowledge. This second point was already clear in *Personal Knowledge*, but it had not caught on. It was to this task of clarifying his epistemological proposal that Polanyi began to turn more directly at Merton College in Oxford University. One of Polanyi's first philosophy talks at Oxford was on "The Process of Knowing," a title that shows Polanyi going into the dynamics of his theory of knowledge. Amplifying the dynamics and architecture of the knowing process seem to be one of the results of Polanyi's personal encounter with the cold reception of Oxford analytic philosophy. When he traveled in September of 1962-63 from Oxford for a year at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford, he arrived working on his Terry Lectures for that October at Yale.

For four years, from Oxford to Stanford, to Yale to Duke to Wesleyan University, Polanyi keeps revising these lectures until they are finally published in 1966 as *The Tacit Dimension*.<sup>19</sup> Marjorie Grene thought that Polanyi was going to ruin them by too much revision causing them to lose the flow of a public lecture. In this period, Polanyi is more intent on demonstrating the nature and principal elements of his theory of knowledge. The connection with the problems of human existence is present, but as you read these lectures you can see Polanyi's attempt to engage the skeptical academic world. Walter Mead's work today toward the republication of *The Tacit Dimension* is crucial for keeping widely available Polanyi's central and concise outline of his epistemological proposal. While it lacks the array of arguments in *Personal Knowledge*, it sets out the strategic elements of his campaign to change our epistemological outlook.

*Meaning*, Polanyi's last book completed with the help of Harry Prosch,<sup>20</sup> also is a gradual development taking nine years. The book in Polanyi's mind aimed to reach a level comparable to *Personal Knowledge* setting out again the cultural crisis of our era and how an alternative vision of human knowing is necessary to avoid disastrous consequences politically and socially. In this book, Polanyi and Prosch carry forward the nature and implications of tacit knowing both by extending the analysis more specifically to genres of human knowing and adding new terms to the vocabulary of tacit knowing. Though briefer than *Personal Knowledge*, this book shifts focus to a more inclusive, and more ultimate focus, "meaning." The choice of the word has an obvious relationship to the world of rhetoric and analytic philosophy even if it did not connect readily with the current work of those fields. What the book *Meaning* did do is to move Polanyi's epistemological proposal to a more inclusive audience beyond traditional Western religious and theistic outlooks without necessarily dismissing or contradicting them. Read from the background of Polanyi's prior work, the book is a helpful continuation of how Polanyi applies tacit knowing to major domains of creative human activity. Read without the *Personal Knowledge* and *Tacit Dimension* background, the book is less compelling. So far, *Meaning* has not received the attention that it deserves in spite of its joint authorship and the attendant debates about it. There is, however, another way of grasping *Meaning* which takes us to a new rubric for looking at the impact of *Personal Knowledge*.

#### **4. Interdisciplinary Study Groups and Conferences**

While I have traced the impact of *Personal Knowledge* through the follow-up books of Polanyi developed out of lecture series at universities, I have omitted that one of the major forces of his developing thought was the interdisciplinary study groups and conferences that grew out of this monumental work. In December of 1964 toward the end of the month several things were happening in New York City. One is that Polanyi was there making an agreement with Harper Torchbooks for a paperback publication of *Personal Knowledge*. Also, Marjorie Grene, Edward Pols--a professor of philosophy at Bowdoin College--and Polanyi were meeting with the Ford Foundation to obtain funding for a series of conferences on the topic "Study Group on Foundations of Cultural Unity."<sup>21</sup> These conferences developed not by focus on Polanyi's thought but by focus on the infection of scientism across the fields of intellectual inquiry. They sought to develop "a convergence of ideas separately developed in various fields...."<sup>22</sup> Leaders from the arts, natural and social sciences as well as philosophy were invited. Among them were William Poteat and Bill Scott. Polanyi was listed as chairman, but a major part of the organizing and editing of published papers from the group was done by Marjorie Grene. Edward Pols arranged for Bowdoin College's provision of facilities in a new center on campus especially designed for such meetings. Through these meetings and a host of others as far away as India, Polanyi was getting a hearing among persons aware of the problems of a culture dominated by scientism. The Study Group held two conferences at Bowdoin and then at the University of Texas between 1965 and 1969.

Also in the same week of December 1964, the former National Association of Biblical Instructors met at Union Theological Seminary in New York. Notice that the letters of this group are NABI, the Hebrew word for prophet. For years, NABI was the organization for college religion departments, seminary, and graduate schools of theology and religion. This meeting was the first one of this group that now was incorporated as The American Academy of Religion. At this first national meeting of the AAR, the President, James Price of Duke University, chose for his presidential address to have instead a panel of speakers on Michael Polanyi. The panel members were Tom Langford, Chair of the Religion Department at Duke, Ruel Tyson of the University of North Carolina, and myself still writing a dissertation on Polanyi. Michael Polanyi, William Poteat and Marjorie Grene were in the audience. I tried to give an outline of Polanyi's theory of knowledge. Tyson contrasted Polanyi and Kant. Langford focused on Polanyi's application of the Pauline scheme of redemption. The presentations were generously received with mainly questions of clarification and without critical opposition, Marjorie and Michael were encouraged, and afterward the Polanyi group celebrated the New Year at Polanyi's hotel.

Several features stand out in this survey of the growth and development of *Personal Knowledge's* impact. One is Polanyi's interdisciplinary outreach and collaboration. His work seems to have had its best hearing not in the halls of academic philosophy but in forums where inquirers sought insight on grand questions of cultural fragmentation and destruction of human values. The themes of recent violent history and grounds of hope are underlying concerns throughout. A second feature is the conviviality. Polanyi and Grene are gathering people with serious concern and willingness to explore ways for affirming a common vision of knowledge that restores confidence on what persons can do to continue human life with dignity.

## 5. The Polanyi Society

One of the lecture trips Polanyi made that led to conferences and further work on his thought was to the University of Dayton in 1969.<sup>23</sup> There in Dayton, a group called CHERS, an acronym for Consortium for Higher Education Religion Studies was led by an able clergyman and educator, Fred Kirschenmann. Dr. Kirschenmann, a one time student at Chicago Theological Seminary and former chair of the Religion Department at Yankton College, worked with not only the University of Dayton but also other academic institutions in the area including Wright State University, Antioch College, Wilberforce University, Defiance College, and Heidelberg College. They formed a consortium to deal with issues on values and religious questions in higher education. An exceptional student at Dayton University, Bruno Manno, suggested bringing Polanyi to the campus to lecture. Polanyi was invited, came, lectured, and received an enthusiastic response as a leading scientist turned philosopher providing a philosophical approach for the CHERS program. Polanyi they saw promoted the aims of renewing the relations of faith and of reason, science and religion, and a renewal of human values in higher education. To continue this direction, they wanted to bring Polanyi back to give more lectures. But this was 1968 and Polanyi was facing two major challenges. One was declining health showing mainly in lapses of memory and shorter periods of ability to work on his writing. He was already working on lectures on "Meaning" at the University of Texas at Austin and also at the University of Chicago. Fortunately for me, I had just been with him at the University of Chicago to talk with him and to attend one of his lectures in his "Meaning" project. It was one of those wonderful days with him like so many others when so lost in thought and walking to his lecture hall, we wound up lost and in the wrong place and were saved by a kind student who knew where he was supposed to be. Anyway, Polanyi recommended me to CHERS, and in the following academic year I commuted there from Stephens College to teach a course on Polanyi for faculty and graduate students from the member schools.



Among the faculty attending were Gene Reeves and David Griffin. Reeves became an active member of The Polanyi Society. Also during this time, Joe Kroger and John Apczynski attended one of the meetings as they were beginning their interest in Polanyi, and both later made substantial intellectual contributions to Polanyi's thought and Christian faith.

The CHERS program continued for several years with visiting lecturers each year. Bill Scott, Harry Prosch, Sigmund Koch, and Ruel Tyson all presented their views of Polanyi's thought and how they applied it. In a second time around, I did that with Polanyi on the resurrection and ecology. The climax of the CHERS program was in the spring 1972 when they brought Polanyi to the Dayton area again for an international conference called "The Culture and Crisis." We met in a seminary near the city of Dayton. Besides faculty and students from the CHERS colleges, there were about 34 participants from the United States, Canada, and England. Among them were Dale Cannon, Jerry Gill, Benjamin Ladner, John Brennan, Harry Prosch, Elizabeth Sewell and Marjorie Grene. Polanyi was the only speaker. Although Polanyi's presentations were affected by his memory lapses, the force of his ideas and the energy of the meeting were creative and hopeful. Besides an opening banquet and two formal talks, the group met with Polanyi in sessions of open conversation, moving from comment or question to discussion. It was clear that there was an affirmative spirit and unity with Polanyi's thought, and we were a unanimous group of one mind and spirit on the importance of Polanyi's thought for our time. So it was not surprising that it was proposed that we begin a network of communication by newsletters sharing thoughts, correlating our work and the works of others with Polanyi, and allowing for the possibility of future meetings. There was a sense of a coalescing intellectual movement of which we were a part. The CHERS office of Dr. Kirschenmann and Bruno Manno assumed the role of coordinator. Out of the need for an identifier for ourselves, we choose the name from *The Tacit Dimension*, "The Society of Explorers." The name fit the group well. It was not a disciplinary group but a multidisciplinary one. What was held in common was a sense that Polanyi's thought was opening a way for many fields of thought and research to move forward in their distinctive research and creativity but with a common framework that respected the human dimension and calling in all knowing, the importance of values that open, free, and sustain us in pursuit of truth and the good in our individual fields and in our society. I remember vividly without her exact words that on the morning of the third day, Elizabeth Sewell shared with us a brief poem she had written there during the previous night comparing Polanyi to a spring flowing like a brook that cleanses and renews. It was a powerful meeting. There was a sense that though Polanyi was aging, his important work was just beginning, and many of us were ready to carry on.

The Society of Explorers Newsletter in the fall of 1972 was the first publication of the Polanyi group. On the membership list are some still familiar names such as Walter Gulick and Aaron Milavec.<sup>24</sup> Our status as a group was different from the other groups with whom Polanyi had worked in the conferences on the Unity of Knowledge, the Congress for Cultural Freedom, the Society for Freedom in Science, or the Moot. We were mostly junior faculty members and graduate students, without superior distinction in our fields or institutions, and generally in teaching positions not connected with graduate research. In short, we were mainly younger scholars attached to a movement of thought not yet recognized as a major contribution or trend. Even our major mentors, William Poteat and Charles McCoy, remained interested but outside the newsletter-to-newsletter interchange of the group, leaving their students to keep them informed.

The winter 1972 and spring of 1973 Society of Explorers Newsletters list among new members Gus Bretyspraak, Jim Stines, Doug Adams, John Apczynski, Dale Cannon, and Phil Mullins. These are all, of course, people who continue to make contributions to the growth of Polanyian philosophy. During the summer of that year, a Society of Explorers conference was held at Skidmore College, where Harry Prosch was teaching. The

conference focused on the uses of Polanyi's philosophy in rhetorical theory, pedagogy, meaning in the arts, philosophy of language, and relationships to Bernard Lonergan and Karl Popper. This range of interests led to expanding the leadership of the Society of Explorers to a group of additional coordinators encouraged to organize and to gather connections in specific areas. The six areas and coordinators were: Art Studies - Douglas Adams, Educational Studies - Raymond Wilken, Medical and Psychiatric Studies - Allen Dyer, Philosophy Studies - Harry Prosch, Religious Studies - myself, Rhetoric and Communication Studies - Sam Watson.

Another change was made at the Skidmore conference of 1973. The name of the group was changed from The Society of Explorers to The Polanyi Society in order to be clear to persons looking for Polanyi studies. Also, a logo for a post-critical philosophical group was borrowed from Taoism by adopting the yin/yang symbol. The logo appeared on the masthead of The Polanyi Society "news bulletin." There is no record of any discussion of the adoption of this logo. It may have been an executive decision of the General Coordinator, Fred Kirschenmann.

It ought to be noticed that the polity of The Polanyi Society was very collegial and intending to be non-hierarchical. The title "coordinator" instead of president or chair person represented a spirit of mutuality and of democratic ideals. Authority was general in the Polanyian sense that we were committed to listening and to discerning as a group what we should be doing and where we should be going. Leadership positions were an honor to hold, but they were more a matter of service by someone who had ability, time, and institutional resources to support The Polanyi Society. Further, there was a welcoming of new persons into the group that made younger and older scholars at home regardless of their stage in study in the thought of Polanyi. That spirit is very much alive today in the travel fellowships supported by The Polanyi Society. It is the Polanyian wisdom that discovery and truth can breakthrough and come from persons and places that we may not have expected or yet seen.

The year 1975 was an important stage in the life of Polanyi and The Polanyi Society. The Michael Polanyi papers were superbly organized and catalogued by John M. Cash and archived in The Joseph Regenstein Library Department of Special Collections.<sup>25</sup> The choice of Chicago was a wonderful outcome to a contest for possession among several universities. Chicago is an appropriate location for many reasons. Also in 1975, Polanyi's last major work, *Meaning* was published. Polanyi had chosen T. F. Torrance to be his literary executor, and I had returned from England in the summer of 1974 after spending a year driving between Oxford and Cambridge working with Polanyi on *Meaning* at Oxford and with Arthur Peacocke at Cambridge on understanding the new biology unleashed by the discovery of the genetic code. One evening in Cambridge, I went over to Westminster College to hear the famous Barthian theologian T.F. Torrance who was giving a lecture to divinity students. To my surprise, he was expounding on science and religion and why students should be reading Michael Polanyi who had grasped the deep relations of science, faith and reality with the same kind of depth as Einstein's space and time in the theory of relativity. Afterwards we talked, and I mentioned my work with Polanyi, and Torrance encouraged me to submit a paper to *The Scottish Journal of Theology*, which I did.<sup>26</sup> The important thing is that three parts of this story came together in what I regard as the beginning of The Polanyi Society in the American Academy of Religion.

With the opening of the Polanyi papers at the Regenstein library in 1975, the publication of *Meaning*, and the annual meeting of the AAR occurring in Chicago, I was able to unite these events into an AAR Polanyi program. I was able to get Stephens College to provide enough honorarium for a lecture at the college to fly Torrance to Chicago and to Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri. This arrangement made it possible for Torrance to come and inspect the Polanyi papers at the Regenstein, to represent Polanyi at a University of Chicago

reception celebrating the publication of *Meaning*, to lecture at Stephens, and for us most significantly to take part in an AAR symposium called “Towards A Post-Critical Theology, The Influence of Polanyi.”<sup>27</sup> The principal speakers were Torrance and Ian Barbour. Our planning for the book reception and for the AAR symposium greatly underestimated the number of people that would come. The rooms were too small and about 75 people were trying to crowd into a space for twenty to thirty people. Also responding at the discussion were Joe Kroger, Aaron Milavec, Doug Adams, John Apczynski, Allen Dyer, Daniel Hardy, Frank Kirkpatrick, Robert Palma, Richard Prust, Gene Reeves, Loyal Rue, and Alford Welch. There was so much interest in Polanyi at this meeting that we decided to plan for an annual program at the American Academy of Religion. In retrospect, that decision led to the AAR becoming the site for the annual Polanyi Society meeting. So many of the interested persons were regular participants in the AAR, and the AAR provided a venue for our meetings. Despite high interest in Polanyi there was also diversity in outlook. There was disagreement on how to read and to interpret Polanyi generally as well as in religion and in theology. There was more consensus on applying him to the arts.

Gradually the other disciplinary areas of The Polanyi Society faded away. Harry Prosch organized a session at the American Philosophical Association on rhetoric and Polanyi’s philosophy. Raymond Wilken organized a conference on Polanyi and education at Kent State University and later the Polanyi centennial conference. The main arena for discussion became the AAR Polanyi meetings.

The story of The Polanyi Society has much interesting substance and detail remembered in the volumes of its journals. One is that Jere Moorman brought into its life an enduring awareness of the importance of Polanyi for the world of everyday life that we all share. He did and still does call attention to those issues from psychology to business ethics to humor. Moorman produced a book of cartoons about Polanyi and some of them were reprinted in *The Polanyi Society* newsletter and *TAD* until copyright issues prohibited them. What Moorman did was to show how humor works by the integration of incompatibles into surprising meaning and relationships. Several more things should be pointed out. In Britain, there was a parallel group with its own periodical called *Convivium*. *The Polanyi Society* newsletter and *Convivium* shared and reprinted articles from each others’ publication. Thanks to Richard Allen that journal and its Polyanian concerns have survived through the new British journal named *Appraisal*. Our North American journal name changed from *The Polanyi Society* newsletter in 1984 to *Tradition & Discovery*. I asked for suggestions from the membership, and we got only a few. Avery Dulles wrote that we should keep Polanyi in the name. I thought it should have a name suggestive of Polanyi’s grand themes. *Personal Knowledge* was suggested, but it seemed confusing and limiting to use the book title. So I chose “Tradition & Discovery” with the hope of including the breadth, challenge, and focus of Polanyi’s thought. There is also a contribution from either Bruce Haddox or Ron Hall, I think they were sitting beside each other, who commented at one of The Polanyi Society business meetings that we had enough good papers at our meetings to produce a journal. That insight was the beginning of our change from a newsletter format to a combination of news and also papers. The first years of the periodical were crudely done like a journal by cutting and pasting papers on to a 40 page format and Xeroxing them.

After the Polanyi centennial at Kent State in 1991, Phil Mullins took over as editor and improved the journal in so many ways. First, in the quality of its production, its appearance, and its content. Second, he put the journal into the scholarly literature through their indexing programs. Third, he raised the standards for publication by a process of peer reviews. His work, and that of Walter Gulick and Paul Lewis who ably assist him, has truly led and improved the significance and outreach of thought on Polanyi. We now have a journal of professional quality. For about ten years, the Society also has had a web site that continues to grow and

assures that Polanyi resources are available in the electronic world. The web site archives issues of *Tradition and Discovery* back to 1991 and also has many short articles by Polanyi as well as audio resources such as the McEnerney Lectures.

In the evolution of The Polanyi Society a number of organizational changes occurred. The annual meeting of the AAR became the location for The Polanyi' Society's annual meeting. The Polanyi Society became incorporated as a tax exempt professional society. The office of coordinator and editor of the journal were separated and done by different persons. When Phil Mullins became the editor of our periodical in 1991, David Rutledge was chosen to be Religious Studies Coordinator organizing the programs for the annual meeting through 1997. Martin Moleski, Walter Gulick and Paul Lewis continue today working to organize the Society's annual meeting. Walter Gulick became general coordinator in 1999 until Walter Mead was elected in 2006. This year Walter Gulick and Ron Hall are working to organize a Polanyi Society meeting at the American Philosophical Association meeting in December.

Let me come back to our purpose at this conference reflecting on *Personal Knowledge* after fifty years. When I began to study Michael Polanyi in 1962, I felt very alone. The Polanyi circle was very elite. There were few faculty competent to guide research. There was almost zero secondary literature. Today the situation is enormously different. The amount of scholarship is so extensive that it is difficult to examine all of it. The work of Scott and Moleski on Polanyi's biography has significantly organized and made possible much greater appreciation of the life, thought, and world of Polanyi's remarkable journey. The depth and value of Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge* has called forth a legion of professors who think, teach, write, and apply insights and principles based on Polanyian philosophy. Tonight we can celebrate that that task is well on its way, and we are a part of it.

One of my goals in life after study with Polanyi was to help others to know his thought. Thanks to the power of Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge*, we are not alone today. Polanyi studies in England and Hungary, and The Polanyi Society in North America has helped to do that. Later this month another conference in Budapest by The Michael Polanyi Liberal Philosophical Association also celebrates the impact of Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge*. Their conferences and their journal *Polanyiana* combined with the British journal *Appraisal* shows the great productivity of thought created out of Polanyi's thought.

As we meet there are two concerns that we should still consider. One is the challenge of the impersonal understanding of scientific knowledge. Despite postmodernism and other forms of criticism, the overly simple reduction of everything to materially measurable quantities persists, although it keeps taking on new forms. The eliminative materialism of cognitive science and evolutionary biology, the excessive reliance on brute power by national states, and the mechanistic exploitation of the environment all thrive on a dead view of nature and reality. But secondly and perhaps more threatening is the growth of a global technological and industrial world also inflamed with a passion for material progress and without transcendent values to guide and control it. Here is a world likely to encounter the same problems of moral inversion that occurred in Europe and in America in the twentieth century. One of the bright moments in our midst is our Chinese member Yu Zhenhua.<sup>28</sup> In such persons, the understanding of Polanyi is becoming worldwide.

When I began studying *Personal Knowledge* and found meager and inadequate discussion of Polanyi, one day I took a look at what happened when Whitehead published his Gifford lectures *Process and Reality* and

discovered it was also nearly twenty years before substantial work built on his foundations. Great philosophical thought takes time to absorb and to pursue. “Tacit knowing” is now a phrase turning up in the public square without attribution and superficial understanding, but the phrase significantly is in circulation. I expect that we are at that moment when the impact of his thought will shift from Polanyi the man, as it did for Whitehead, to the terms and concepts that serve to guide us toward overcoming the dehumanization of life and constructing ways of bringing the growth of knowledge and civic and global life to a better understanding. The time is ripe to put Polanyi’s thought to work in constructive ways. Plato had his Aristotle. Whitehead has his Charles Hartshorne and John Cobb. Polanyi’s thought is ready and waiting for his creative explorers.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>For a view of the 1991 conference program and its papers, see *From Polanyi To The 21st Century, Proceedings of a Centennial Conference, Kent State University, April 11-13, 1991*, Richard Gelwick (ed.) (Biddeford, Maine: University of New England) 936 pages. For selected papers on “The Tacit Victory and the Unfinished Agenda,” see David Rutledge, Walter Gulick, John Apczynski, Doug Adams, and James Stines in *Tradition & Discovery*, XVIII, 1, pp. 5-18 and Joseph Kroger in *Tradition & Discovery*, XVIII, 2, pp. 10-14.

<sup>2</sup>Richard Gelwick, *The Way of Discovery* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2004), previously published by Oxford University Press, 1977, pp. 42-47.

<sup>3</sup>See William Taussig Scott and Martin X. Moleski, S.J., *Michael Polanyi, Scientist and Philosopher* (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 203-231.

<sup>4</sup>Maben Walter Poirier’s *A Classified and Partially Annotated Bibliography of Michael Polanyi, the Anglo-Hungarian Philosopher of Science* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2002) provides a global resource of over a 2000 books and articles on Polanyi, as well as guidance to Polanyi’s non-scientific writings.

<sup>5</sup>Personal e-mail correspondence, May 9, 2008.

<sup>6</sup>“Polanyi’s Theory of Personal Knowledge, A Gestalt Philosophy,” 3: 2 (Winter 1962), pp. 349-68.

<sup>7</sup>*The Logic of Personal Knowledge, Essays Presented to Michael Polanyi on his Seventieth Birthday*, (no editor) (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1961). The book includes a valuable bibliography of Michael Polanyi’s scientific papers, a list of Polanyi’s nine books and 26 journals in which he has published, and Polanyi’s film *Unemployment and Money*.

<sup>8</sup>Reprinted in *Tradition & Discovery*, 18: 3 (1991-92), pp. 35-36.

<sup>9</sup>“A Review of *Personal Knowledge* by Michael Polanyi,” *American Sociological Review*, XXV (August, 1960), pp. 282-283.

<sup>10</sup>“The Two Towers,” *The Cambridge Review*, October 21, 1961, pp. 33-37.

<sup>11</sup> *Natural Law Forum*, VII, 1962, pp. 132-148.

<sup>12</sup> *The Christian Scholar*, XLIII (Fall, 1960), pp. 231-36.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas A. Langford and William H. Poteat (eds.), *Intellect and Hope, Essays In The Thought of Michael Polanyi* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1968).

<sup>14</sup> Poirier, *Ibid.*, pp. 245-249.

<sup>15</sup> New York: Doubleday, 1969.

<sup>16</sup> Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959.

<sup>17</sup> London: Cambridge University Press, 1960.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Polanyi, “History and Hope: An Analysis of Our Age,” *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 38 (Spring, 1962), pp. 177-195 contains a part of this four part lecture series.

<sup>19</sup> Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966.

<sup>20</sup> Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975.

<sup>21</sup> See Scott and Moleski, p. 258.

<sup>22</sup> Marjorie Grene (ed.), *The Anatomy of Knowledge, Papers Presented to the Study Group on Foundations of Cultural Unity* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1969), p. viii.

<sup>23</sup> Scott and Moleski, pp. 280-281.

<sup>24</sup> The first issues of the Society of Explorers quarterly bulletin are bound into a volume under the later name *Tradition & Discovery, The Polanyi Society Periodical, Publications of the Polanyi Society, Fall, 1972, Through Winter, 1984-85* and archived in the office of the current editor, Prof. Phil Mullins, Missouri Western State University. There is some inaccuracy in the numbering of the early issues because in the 1974 Fall issue, the death of Michael Polanyi, February 22, 1976 is reported.

<sup>25</sup> For more information on these papers see "Special Issue: Guide to the Papers of Michael Polanyi," *Tradition & Discovery*, 23: 1 (1996-97). An expanded and updated version of this document is accessible from the Polanyi Society web page (<http://www.missouriwestern.edu/orgs/polanyi/>).

<sup>26</sup> "Discovery and Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 28 (August, 1975), pp. 301-322.

<sup>27</sup> *Tradition & Discovery*, 3:1 (Fall 1974), pp. 2-4.

<sup>28</sup> *On the Tacit Dimension of Human Knowledge* (Doctoral Dissertation, Bergen, Norway, University of Bergen, 2006\_.

## **POLANYI SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP**

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Annual membership in the Polanyi Society is \$35 (\$15 for students). The membership cycle follows the academic year; subscriptions are due November 1 to Phil Mullins, Missouri Western State University, St. Joseph, MO 64507 (fax: 816-271-5680, e-mail: [mullins@missouriwestern.edu](mailto:mullins@missouriwestern.edu)). Please make checks payable to the Polanyi Society. Dues can be paid by credit card by providing the card holder's name as it appears on the card, the card number and expiration date. Changes of address and inquiries should be sent to Phil Mullins. New members should provide the following subscription information: complete mailing address, telephone (work and home), e-mail address and/or fax number. Institutional members/libraries (\$25/year) should identify a department to contact for billing. New individual members should write a short description of their particular interests in Polanyi's work and any publications and /or theses/dissertations related to Polanyi's thought. Please provide complete bibliographic information. Those renewing membership are invited to include information on recent work.

# Comments on *Michael Polanyi, Scientist and Philosopher*

ABSTRACT Key Words: Biography of Michael Polanyi, *Michael Polanyi, Scientist and Philosopher*  
*This article discusses the 2005 OUP biography of Michael Polanyi by William T. Scott and Martin X. Moleski S.J., Michael Polanyi, Scientist and Philosopher. The discussants are N. E. Wetherick, Brian G Gowenlock, and John Puddefoot; Martin X. Moleski, S. J. briefly responds, providing a previously unpublished letter from Polanyi to Reverend Dr. Knox, a Presbyterian minister.*

[Editor's Note: In the summer of 2006 (TAD 32:3), there were five articles on *Michael Polanyi, Scientist and Philosopher* by William T. Scott and Martin X. Moleski, S.J. Marty Moleski kindly responded to these authors. What follows continues this earlier discussion.]

## **A Good Man Who Threw Himself in Among Theologians: A Comment on Polanyi and the New Polanyi Biography**

**N.E.Wetherick**

I never met Polanyi nor heard him speak. I did once (in the early seventies) invite him to address a meeting of psychologists and he accepted (any topic, at any length). Unfortunately he withdrew (or was withdrawn) at the last minute. I had become interested in his work in the mid-sixties by reading *Personal Knowledge* (1958) for the first time and without much understanding. I was keen to meet a man who was clearly a major intellect and shared my dissatisfaction with philosophy as it then was. My luck was out—I was not aware that he had already entered his final decline though he was to live on for several more years. When his last book *Meaning* (1975, co-authored with Prosch) appeared, I was asked to review it and did so at some length (*Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 9, 1978, pp.60-62). I had edited a special number of that journal, devoted to Polanyi, in the previous year. I published three further papers in 1997 and 1998 by which time I had gotten to know his work better. I recently re-read the 1978 review and was pleasantly surprised to find that I can still stand by it.

I am (or was) a psychologist and my subject has not attracted many major intellects—so far only Freud and Piaget. What I have written about Polanyi has been mainly concerned to show how much psychology might have benefited but did not.

My luck was in as regards the authors of Polanyi's biography, Prof. W.T. Scott and Fr. Martin Moleski. I met Prof. Scott in Aberdeen and was able to be of some small assistance to him; I met Fr. Moleski in Edinburgh. I don't think I was of any assistance to him but I enjoyed his company as much as he appears to have enjoyed mine. Their book has vastly increased my understanding of Polanyi in two principal respects. I had always argued that the value of his philosophy of science sprang from the fact that he alone among writers on the subject was also a front-rank physical scientist with laboratory experience; he was someone who had got his hands dirty (though apparently he was clumsy with apparatus – his assistants tried to keep him away from it). This

book (two thirds of which covers his early, scientific career) enables me to put flesh on the bones of that hypothesis. His later career, as philosopher and social theorist, I described as a case of “a good man fallen among theologians”. This is not quite fair to theologians. Fairness to theologians does not come easily to me but perhaps I should have said “a good man who threw himself in among theologians”. He refused to deny them the right to commit themselves to the truth of their propositions in the same sense that scientists commit themselves to theirs. He might have said that while scientists are (or should be) able to specify what evidence would be sufficient to persuade them that a proposition they regard as true is actually false, theologians never are. Unfortunately, human nature being what it is, some scientists are equally at fault in this respect.

Polanyi’s scientific career began early. In 1914, some of his work was approved by Einstein no less but for most of the first world war he was required to serve as a medical officer in the Austro-Hungarian army —part of the time at forward casualty stations. He likely had a closer acquaintance with human suffering than most of us ever acquire. As soon as he could, he returned to research and at an exciting time. Much was by then known of the internal structure of the atom. Much was also known about which chemical substances combined with which and in what circumstances. Everyone agreed that the former phenomena must account for the latter but little was known of how this came about. That was the problem to which Polanyi addressed himself—in Budapest till Horthy revived anti-semitism in Hungary (1920), in Berlin till Hitler did the same in Germany (1933) and in Manchester until his final turn to philosophy in 1948. Working with primitive home-made equipment, constructed ad hoc for each investigation, he had laid foundations for the eventual explanation of many different chemical phenomena, but usually switched to a new problem whenever the way to the solution of the one he was working on seemed obvious to him. This enabled someone else to take the final steps and get the credit for the breakthrough. He advanced and defended a theory of the adsorption of gases onto a rough surface which was rejected by his contemporaries but turned out later to be fundamentally correct. (At Manchester, he was not allowed to teach his own theory.) He also postulated and defended the existence of a new kind of physical force to explain his results, but it turned out to be non-existent and unnecessary following advances in quantum theory.

While Professor of Physical Chemistry at Manchester, he did no experiments himself but won the respect of his assistants and students by his ability to propose an experiment and, when the result was brought to him, say at once what bearing it had on the theoretical issues under investigation and what ought to be done next—or occasionally that the result was wrong and the experiment must be done again. Most of his own time appears to have been devoted to economics at this stage.

Polanyi experienced science in all its aspects, success and failure; he grasped the fact that all that can be done is to commit oneself to the truth of any proposition that one believes to be true, in the knowledge that it may be false. The commitment is motivationally necessary to ensure continued progress; the *in pectore* reservation follows from the way the world is. The world gives every appearance of being a nexus of interacting causal forces but for an event A to function as a predictor of a subsequent event B, a certain subset of causal factors have to be present (absent). We can never know how large this subset is. A factor may be essential to the prediction, but since, in our experience, it has always been present, its relevance has never been realised. Or a factor may have to be absent which has never, in our previous experience, been present - this is the real problem of induction.

It follows that “If A then B” can never be known to be a universal scientific law and, strictly speaking, no conclusion can ever be drawn about the A now before us; i.e. whether it predicts B or not. But we do not usually



speak as strictly as that— we commit ourselves to the proposition or not as the case may be, we treat it as a universal. For a thousand years, the principal users of logic were theologians not scientists and they insisted on the absolute truth of their propositions—on the “Truth”. Scientists were persuaded that they must claim as much for theirs and thence was born strict empiricism. Theoretical propositions must, they thought, come after observation of the facts in order to be “true”, not before it. All the sciences except my own have seen the futility of this requirement. Polanyi saw it, brought the consequences out into the open and drew the appropriate conclusions.

Throughout his life, Polanyi yearned for the comfort of sincere religious belief but could never bring himself to accept it intellectually. He was born a Jew, received at one point into the Roman Catholic Church (but never afterwards attended a service) and once expressed a willingness to subscribe to any form of Protestant worship. At the end of his life, his view was that one should worship God “in order to make Him exist, not because he does exist”. Such a view is only likely to be acceptable among highly sophisticated individuals. Most religious believers worship God because they think he does exist and insists upon it (and might send them to hell if they don’t). Many of them draw genuine comfort from their beliefs but it is necessary to ask why this is the case—a psychological question. For some, Pascal’s wager is the answer—best be on the safe side. But there is a more fundamental reason. In organisms, the knowledge-acquiring mechanism (i.e., the central nervous system) is so constituted that to decide on any course of action it is necessary to take account of the evidence favouring all the alternative courses open to the decider and known by him to be so. To decide on one is to commit oneself in Polanyi’s terms. This is as true of the rat in the maze as of the scientist in the laboratory. As we have seen, it is equivalent to accepting a universal proposition “All situations A make a prediction that requires a response B from me”. The ideal scientist keeps in mind (in his laboratory) the possibility that he may be wrong but even he/she will often accept the full implications of the universal in everyday life. For the majority, this is the basis of the comfort afforded by religious belief. The accepted authority prescribes which propositions are to be accepted and acted upon—there is no need to consider the issues for oneself, no need for any *in pectore* reservations—and indeed entertaining such reservations may be dangerous. In members of the human species (only in them), it is possible to override any previously accepted system of propositions, which some individuals do, but not many. It requires effort and may involve risk.

Virtually all human conflicts are based on religious differences. When all parties hold that their fundamental beliefs are the “Truth”, some of them may feel obliged to offer others the opportunity to convert—and to kill them if they won’t. Christians appear to have stopped behaving like this, but only in the last few hundred years. Muslims still do but they of course started six hundred years later. Such phenomena are not only to be seen in old, established religions; analogous behaviours may be seen in Moonies, Scientologists, etc. They are a consequence of the way our mind/brain works—an essential and inevitable part of the human condition. I cannot share Polanyi’s optimism that the unsatisfactory parts of human nature may be eliminated without sacrificing at the same time the human capacity to advance scientific knowledge of the world and construct and appreciate works of art, literature, music, etc. These capacities are what distinguish us from what used to be called the “brute creation”. We should be thankful for them and live as best we can with the attendant disadvantages. To change human nature is the ambition of all religions; they have all failed and will continue to fail.

# *Michael Polanyi. Scientist and Philosopher :*

## **Some General Points and Personal Reminiscences**

**Brian G Gowenlock**

A characteristic of good biographies is their capacity to raise questions and supplementary thoughts in addition to the admiration that rightly is the due of the author(s). This work is a considerable achievement for the subject had a very wide range of interests and activities and the authors have succeeded in conveying an integrated picture of Michael Polanyi. My major contact with MP was during my undergraduate and research postgraduate years in Manchester, 1943 - 48 and Part III gives full coverage of all the Manchester years. From the academic staff in the Chemistry Department and also reading some of the Berlin publications, I learned something of the formative years covered in Part II. His later books and a meeting and conversation in Oxford in 1965 added to the picture given in Part IV.

MP's arrival in Manchester was important for the research careers of three members of the 1933 honours B.Sc. class in chemistry. Alwyn. G. Evans and Ernest Warhurst studied sodium flame reactions and Charles Horrex, after a year with Dr G. N. Burkhardt, studied reactions using deuterium labelling. I learned much of the stimulus of those years from these three, all of whom spent some time during the war years in other universities (AGE, EW) or in industry (CH) and CH and EW were successive supervisors of my research under the distant supervision of MP. Apparatus that had been brought from Berlin (p. 147) was still in use, with later additions and replacements, in 1948. In 1934 Daniel Eley joined MP's research group having graduated B.Sc. that year in Manchester (p. 150). My memory suggests that the technician mentioned on p. 148 was Leslie Robertson.. Small errors such as these are few, e.g. M Szwarc (p.207, 219 and 363) appears as Swarc. On p. 191, Hank Skinner is described as an Oxford physicist: he worked in the Oxford Physical Chemistry Laboratory with Leslie Sutton on electron diffraction before working in chemical industry alongside Charles Horrex. The problems of isobutene polymerization formed part of the departmental folklore of unusual results until rigorous purification of the reactants was carried out (p. 191-192).

MP was unusual in his lecturing to the first year class in that it was forbidden to take any notes during lectures. Duplicated notes and diagrams were available after each lecture and the books recommended were Max Born's *Restless Universe* and Linus Pauling's *Nature of the Chemical Bond*. As the weeks went by his voice became weaker and in the New Year of 1944, he had to stop lecturing (p. 193) and note taking returned with the course being taken over by Fred Fairbrother.

On p. 169, the work of E. T. Butler on determination of C-I bond energies is discussed. The remarkable feature of this work is that the values obtained for a variety of organic iodides are reasonably close to modern values but, in many cases, these were obtained by assuming that the activation energies could be obtained from a single rate constant coupled with an assumed frequency factor of  $10^{13} \text{ sec}^{-1}$ . Later work under the supervision of Charles Horrex by Fred Moore in 1945 and myself in 1946 demonstrated that the pyrolysis of ethyl iodide was more complex, and the study of benzyl iodide by Michael Szwarc in 1946 gave further support to the complexities of these pyrolyses. It remains to note that MP's intuitive perceptions could lead to important results in advance

of detailed kinetic study. His view was that it was of primary importance to establish a trend in the relationship between structure and reactivity and leave to a later date the refining of the technique and the consequent reduction of the error limits.

MP organised a couple of one-day meetings in 1945 and 1946, both on a Saturday, in which he brought together chemists from industry and universities to listen to short lectures on current research. He also invited undergraduates who were contemplating carrying out research in his department.

In late July 1945, Charles Horrex, in an undergraduate lecture course which I attended, referred to the unusual result of a possible nuclear chain reaction from the neutron reaction with  $U^{235}$ . He said that he had discussed this with MP who had said that the large exothermicity of this reaction would lead to a rapid expansion of the material such that the possible chain reaction leading to a bomb would be nullified. The following week's lecture began with a contradiction of MP's hypothesis. This may add further comment to the material on p. 208.

The above material of personal reminiscences is probably only of archival interest and I want to turn from this to the more general issues raised by the authors.

Some 60 years ago there was a popular song which had a refrain "Why am I always on the outside? On the outside always looking in?"

This refrain came into my thoughts on reading the biography: in chemistry MP's training was unusual in that his background was in medical science and formal instruction in physical chemistry occurred in Karlsruhe in 1913-1914. It is also the case that his contributions to economics and philosophy were those of an outsider without formal training in these disciplines. I have always felt that the circumstances which moulded his personality and his thoughts are to be found in the traumatic events of the twentieth century. Warfare, defeat, red revolution and white counter revolution in Hungary, hyperinflation in Germany, the rise of Nazism with accompanying anti-Semitism, and a totalitarian regime in the Soviet Union were the background to his massive contributions to physical chemistry. In this context, I was impressed by his unpublished essay on 'New Morality' (p. 128) in which 'the longing to find meaning' and 'how to address spiritual emptiness' are coupled with the desire to develop a 'new morality'. These epitomise the outlook of the man I saw in action both in Manchester years and in his wider writings. I am not surprised that he could find little in common with 'strongly entrenched pillars of logical positivism and of linguistic philosophy'. They had not been where he had been. He must have felt that their methods were inadequate when faced with the challenges posed by totalitarian regimes and the collapse of secular liberal democratic ideals. Did he realise his aims?

The intensity of his views on anything bordering on the planning of science was evident to me in my time as a research student. I had a long discussion with him in 1948 prior to my departure to my first post in Swansea. He told me that I would soon be meeting his friend Hugh O'Neill. The discussion went from one interesting topic to another and when, in response to a question from him, I gave an answer based on my understanding of Reinhold Niebuhr's writings he remarked 'You say that because you are a Christian'. I felt then that 'his philosophy of freedom of inquiry within a collegial atmosphere' (p.94) was his way of working. When we next met, in 1965 in Oxford at a residential conference on 'New Theology?', he told me that he was in sympathy with the views of John A. T. Robinson (*Honest to God*) who spoke at that meeting. I have wondered whether he was acquainted with the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in addition to the material on

pages 273 and 287. He also asked for copies of some of my recent research publications. In return I received from him the second edition of *Science, Faith and Society*.

A final comment. In 1996 Dorothy Emmet published a discerning account of MP's philosophy in *Philosophers and Friends* (Macmillan, London) in which she raises issues of objectivity, truth claims, commitment in MP's writings. 'In combining truth, assertion and commitment Polanyi was in fact drawing attention to the tension between faith and criticism.....I do not think he resolved this - if it is resolvable - but this is because he was firmly on the side of faith.' I would like to see this discussed in *TAD*.

## What Is A Biography?

### John Puddefoot

Biography tells the story of a life from-outside-looking-in, autobiography the story of a life from-inside-looking-out. But Polanyi's philosophy suggests that biography should be more than this: it requires the biographer to have done more than chronicle a life; it requires him/her to have understood it, to have dwelt in the events that shaped that life, and the actions that life produced, as subsidiaries sufficiently to attain to a focal vision of what it was like to be that subject and to help the reader to understand why that subject was who he/she was and did what he/she did.

Very few biographies rise to this challenge. Most present a narrative of a life with a few speculative suggestions about the connections between events and the person concerned and leave the reader to do the rest; few make any systematic attempt to bring us to understand what the life in question is from-inside-looking-out and why he/she views the world the way he/she does.

The absence of such a connection can have a more serious consequence if the reader comes to believe that the events that happen around a life are sufficient to explain its successes and failures. For example, "He spent his life attempting to earn the approval of his parents, who had always castigated him for being less successful than he could have been, but he never really acquired his own values and ambitions and therefore never really lived his own life at all."

A biographer must be able to intuit the significance of events for his subject. That intuitive power must include a capacity to understand an event as it would impact upon himself. We empathise. We take into ourselves actions, experiences, the expressions of others, in a way that we can understand as if they were happening to us. A putatively exhaustive list of where someone went and what someone did fails to take account of the tacit dimension, of what it is that connects mere facts with integrating insight.

Polanyi (or was it Prosch?) put the matter thus:

The fact is, we know other minds by *dwelling in* their acts – as the chess player comes to know the mind of the master whom he is studying. He does not *reduce* the master's mind to the moves the master makes. He dwells in those moves as subsidiary clues to the strategy in the master's mind which they enable him to see. The moves become meaningful at last only when they are

seen to be integrated in a whole strategy. And a person's behaviour, in general, becomes meaningful only when integrated into a whole mind.<sup>1</sup>

In this short passage, Polanyi tells us indirectly what it is to understand a life: we must dwell in the actions and circumstances of that life sufficiently to attain to focal knowledge of that life; and in attaining to focal knowledge of that life the significance of all the actions and circumstances we have dwelt in are transformed by the integrative insight that focal awareness affords. A biography that consists of little more than a series of "this happened and then that happened and then something else happened" has fallen into the trap of reducing the master's mind to the moves the master makes: why is this event worth recording; what significance did it have for the subject; why are we being told this; how did this outside-in affect the subject's inside-out?

Part of the fascination of life arises from the lack of a clear connection between the things that happen to a person and the things that person then does. What look like the same things can happen to two people; one thrives on them by rising to the occasion; another is destroyed by them. Biography should go some way to giving us an account of this difference in response. It seldom does. It more often presents "X happened to Y" and then "Y did Z" as if the two are inextricably linked and the latter requires no explicit connection with the former. But the opposite is the case: what leads Y to do Z is the very essence of what makes it interesting to record that X happened to Y in the first place. Unfortunately, most biographies are strong on the "X happened to Y" and weak on the explanation of what that means or why it is worth recording.

To understand this better we need to be clear about the logic of necessity and sufficiency: to say that X happened to Y and then Y did Z is to say neither that X causes Z inexorably nor, conversely, that Y would have done Z anyway. Yet we frequently find confusion over this in the pages of biography. It may well be that Z would not have happened had X never happened to Y, but that does not mean that X causes Z, only that it is a contributory stimulus in a multi-stimulus nexus. So what the biographer needs to try to tell us is what other stimuli and concerns combined with X to prompt Y to do Z. And this involves saying something about the subjective affective states of Y and how X is received and understood within the broader context of Y's life.

Social influences that dictate the range of possible responses to life's vicissitudes mean that the biographer must cast his net more widely and generally than would be involved in a localised account of the events that impinge upon his subject and so embrace the social *mores* of a time. Does that subject believe that he can make a difference, that she has something to say that can change things, that he is a master or a slave of his life and his time? These are vital questions, yet they presuppose a deep understanding of the subject's background psychology and society. In the spectrum from the most active to the most passive of agents we find manifested attitudes to what is permissible, what is possible, and whether each person feels empowered to make the most of his or her life or to allow others to dictate how it should be lived.

Here again the lessons of the logic of influence must be remembered. Suppose I am an educationalist responsible for a curriculum. I may well have been influenced greatly by, for example, Shakespeare, and I may attribute to the reading of Shakespeare or other literature everything that I currently am. As a result I may be led to wish to make Shakespeare a compulsory part of everyone's education on the premise that what was good for me must of necessity be good for you. But nothing of the sort follows: that Shakespeare was good for me may properly be taken to be an indicator that it may well be good for others, and therefore it will be a strong contender for space in the curriculum over which I have control; but it does not follow either that it will be beneficial or, indeed, that it must of necessity form part of that curriculum. To think otherwise, even for the very best of educational

motives, is to succumb to a logical error and back it up by a piece of educational imperialism.

So we find ourselves led to reiterate the sentiments of “Resonance Realism”<sup>22</sup> as an integral part of our understanding of the task of the biographer: his job is to identify those outside-ins that resonated with the subject to such an extent that they transformed and inspired his or her inside-out. And to know that will involve asking about those influences to which the subject returned again and again, whether they be books or music or scientific papers or other people or places or things. These deeply resonant sources will be chosen repeatedly and the subject may exhibit something close to an addiction to them because they will be the founts from which his resonant energy is drawn and in which her inspiration will be found.

And, even if such a subject is unlikely to be chosen for a biography, someone who is drawn to little or nothing, who exhibits no addictions other than perhaps to drink, drugs and nicotine, drinks from no non-alcoholic fountain, and is not drawn to much at all, is exhibiting all the symptoms of one for whom life has lost all meaning. And creative people frequently appear so between their bouts of creativity, taken over by their various black dogs and immobilised by inactivity when nothing interests them and they can raise energy for nothing. To draw together periods both of creativity, frequently manic and sustained, and inactivity verging on a self-destructive depression, the biographer must understand something of the silence that is frequently present in the minds of those worthy of treatment as subjects whose lives merit narrating. The biographer must understand the contribution that fallow ground makes to the harvest. Nobody can be creative endlessly and forever. And Polanyi’s humanity comes through in the Scott/Moleski work perhaps most movingly when it touches upon his frustrations, depressions and occasional despair.

Here again a question of motive arises: why do we write biographies, all this being the case? For some there may be the almost-certainly-forlorn hope that, by understanding the life of another the reader’s life may somehow become better than it is, more creative, powerful, assured. That were we to assemble all the outside-ins that surrounded George Orwell we might write our own very different *Animal Farm*. It is deeply unlikely. Why, then? Perhaps to try to bring us a little closer to the immortals, to be able to understand why the subject could do what the subject did, and so to make ourselves seem a little less mortal by chronicling the warts that inevitably festoon the lives even of the great. Or perhaps for the same reason that we watch professional sport in preference to playing ineptly ourselves: because lives well and successfully, even if perhaps only notoriously, lived are more interesting at second hand than our own at first.

So we find ourselves affirming two apparently opposite positions which are not opposites at all:

- that no account of the influences upon a subject will ever be sufficient to explain the life of that subject, not least because there will always be an incalculably large number of imperceptible influences that not even the subject, let alone the biographer, could chronicle;
- that nonetheless the life of a subject would not be what it was but for at least some of those influences, and certainly the most important ones, and therefore that we must take account of them in their inevitable incompleteness if we are to hope to understand the life of the subject

Setting aside for the moment then the motives of the reader, what are the motives for the subject that the biographer needs to understand and interpret for the reader? In an older philosophy, where truth, reason and knowledge are the icons of all aspiration, we might say the search for the truth is the motive above all motives or, perhaps, with Plato, the search for the Good. But the deepest drives in any life stem from the things that life

values, and therefore strives for, and those strivings are as likely to arise from trying to fill gaps or correct imperfections in the subject of the subject's world as they are to arise from motives of truth, reason and knowledge. In fact, whenever someone claims to be performing super-human acts of determination or bravery in the name of truth it is almost always possible to substitute some other motive based upon a need deep within the agent's psyche.

The biographer needs to weed out the chaff from the wheat and tell his reader what in his judgement constitute the signal influences on his subject that led him to be the man he was. To do this he needs to achieve three things: a deep knowledge of the life of the subject; a clear sense of the motivations that drove the subject from which to be able to infer those things that produced the values that provided focus for those motives; and an understanding of the inside-out subject that makes sense of these first two kinds of information.

If we turn to Michael Polanyi and the Scott/Moleski biography and ask first what the primary motives in Polanyi's life were, we can then assess the adequacy of the biography in helping us to identify and understand them. It is almost inevitable that any list will be incomplete and personal, but to understand Polanyi's life at least the following must be taken into account:

1. A passionate concern for the future of humankind
2. A vision of the role of science in that future
3. An understanding of the importance of freedom of thought and speech for innovation and progress ...
4. ... and a consequential understanding of the importance of dissentient voices in any free society
5. An all-consuming conviction about the importance of passionate involvement in any discipline in which one hoped to make important discoveries
6. A strong sense that the state of the world always teeters on the brink of decay and that only those prepared to fight for a creative positive future stand in the way of that decay
7. A strong belief in the importance of the intuitions that lead us into territory we barely understand, territory for which we have no maps, and yet into which we must venture if we are to advance our understanding, into "the domain of sophistication"
8. An unpopular conviction that the number of people capable of achieving the objectives in point 6 is painfully small
9. A fear that the forces of darkness will usually triumph over the beacons of light (a feature of Polanyi's life that the biography does bring out strongly in its repeated references to his disappointment that his ideas were not more widely appreciated and his cyclical depression)

A key question for the biographer concerns the importance and scope of his capacity for empathy: to what extent does his capacity to reconstruct the inside-out of his subject in some tentative way arise only because he can connect his, the biographer's, outside-in with his own inside-out? In other words, if I am to understand your inside-out, must I first understand my own?

Unfortunately, just here we run into one of the most difficult and controversial aspects of philosophy of mind: whether and to what extent an account of the inside-out experience of a subject is a legitimate, still less necessary, part of understanding her. For some the fact – and it is certainly a fact – that most of us do not understand ourselves other than in that fleeting consciousness that David Hume so famously wrote about, that is seen more through other things than in itself, and therefore for more of us consciousness is little more than – but no less than – a metaphor for the self. To hope to understand your inside-out is on that count hopeless

if I must first understand my own. But are things as bleak as this? The key issue, an issue that surfaced in Turing's famous essay "Computing Machinery and Intelligence"<sup>3</sup> in 1950 and has been hotly debated ever since, is whether we need take account of this inside-out at all, even whether there is anything to take account of. Jibes about ghosts in the machine (Ryle) and Cartesian Theatres (Dennett) have accumulated to discredit any sense of the "I" that is "inside looking out". And much of that criticism has been generated – quite rightly – by a concern to rid ourselves permanently of the metaphysics of the soul. But we do not need the soul as a metaphysical "kind of stuff" to retain intelligible and legitimate talk of the "I" as that which is responsible for a sense of self, even if we have to contend with those for whom introspection is impossible and the self no more than a series of descriptions (Rorty *et al*).

As I have put it elsewhere<sup>4</sup>, beings with an inside-out, who have experiences and add to the world an entire species of experiences called *qualia* that are completely invisible to science, do not require the existence of a soul to have those experiences. All they need is *to be* a particular kind of body-with-a-brain: if you are a particular kind of body-with-a-brain, you will be a mind, and being a mind is being a body that has experiences invisible to science; *mind is the world-orientation of body*.

This is something that Polanyi never quite got right. He tended to equate mind with the focal vision that accrued to someone looking from-outside-in who treated the body as a subsidiary and integrated its subsidiaries to that focus which was the mind of the subject. But that isn't quite good enough because it all remains outside-in. The final step is missing, the step through which the knower – the biographer – inverts the focal vision and sees it as something more than the sum of the parts he has chronicled and dwelt in, as more than a mere concomitant of physiology that a scientific analysis of sufficient sophistication could describe. He needs to come somewhere close to the point where he sees the world as his subject sees the world or he has failed in his task.

This is also something that Scott and Moleski do not get right. Perhaps they deliberately shrink back from the kind of bold speculative leap necessary if we are to integrate all these from-outside-ins into an understanding of Polanyi's inside-out; perhaps they leave the reader to make these tacit integrations for herself, not presuming to say in what respect they are to be understood. But perhaps also they fail to see the need for this final step at all. Perhaps like biographers before and since they believe that in telling the story of the events that occurred in Polanyi's remarkable life they have done all that needs to be done and even all that can be done. But in that case I think they are guilty of the error that Collingwood (in, for example, *The Idea of History*) accuses so many historians of committing: of describing the outside of an event as a mere event and leaving out the only thing that is really of interest, such as what was going through Caesar's mind when he made the fateful decision to cross the Rubicon.

Collingwood thought this a vital aspect of history, but few historians or biographers have joined him in trying to write history according to that pattern. Yet when we write the history of a tyrant who is responsible for the deaths of thousands or millions and the misery of countless others, what is the basis of the tragedy in the story we are telling if not that so-many-thousand or so-many-million centres of experience were extinguished and the world made a poorer place for it? To put it at its bluntest: if a human being is just a functional machine with no inside-out of any importance or no inside-out at all, why does the death of a human being matter any more than the turning off of a computer that has served its purpose in the nexus of human life? It cannot be sufficient to say that the death of another is wrong just because it diminishes me (as John Donne observed); others must matter in themselves. Otherwise they simply perform a function or play a part in my life and others' lives without being important in themselves; when the function is no longer needed, or no longer being discharged



with suitable efficiency and effectiveness, on such a view, why keep the body running, the person alive?

Biographers seem sometimes to wish to know less about their subjects than novelists. Novelists tell us how their subjects feel, why they feel as they feel, and what they think of doing about it. Or at least they give us clues to allow us to perform the last step of the tacit integrations necessary to intuit how they feel, why they feel as they feel, and what they think of doing about it. The best of them do this with such subtlety that we may not notice that they are doing it at all: that in reading *Middlemarch* we come to know what it is like to be Dorothea Brooke is one of George Eliot's greatest achievements; that in reading *1984* we come to know what it is like to be Winston Smith is one of George Orwell's. But we seem to be expected to read most biographies without learning anything of the kind as regards the biographical subject. I enjoyed Richard Holmes's detailed biography of Coleridge enormously as a piece of outside-in historical narrative, but it left me with *no idea at all* of what it was like to be Coleridge. I read Katherine Hughes' biography of George Eliot with similar enjoyment but the same deficient outcome. And reading the Scott/Moleski biography has not brought me nearer to an understanding of what made Polanyi tick, still less of what it was like to be Michael Polanyi.

Do I ask too much? Moleski himself, writing in *Tradition and Discovery* (32:3), the journal of the Michael Polanyi Society, makes the point that he excised most of Scott's detailed analysis of Polanyi's philosophy because he felt that Polanyi's own writing expresses and explains it far better than any secondary source could hope to do. That is almost certainly true – almost certainly, that is, a strategy worth pursuing – but it leads to a vacuum exactly where we most need rich content if we are to connect the events, the life, and the work: what was it about all this that led Polanyi to be the man he was, to think and write the things he thought and wrote, and to see the world the way he did? Without that connection at that vital point in the narrative we are left, on the one hand, with “these are [some of] the events that occurred during the life of Michael Polanyi” and, on the other, “these are the things Michael Polanyi wrote” without any suggestions about the connection between one and the other. Yet I am arguing that that connection is precisely and indeed the only reason to write the biography at all other than – and I do concede the importance of this in terms of mere record – to make sure that these oral traditions are not lost in case some later biographer should be able to do far better. To that extent neither Scott's nor Moleski's work is in vain; but neither is it enough.

Which brings me to my principal point. Ultimately the reason for reading Polanyi is to learn from his insights and methods, his values and objectives, in order to apply them along with others gleaned from elsewhere to problems that he had neither occasion nor opportunity to address. To put it otherwise, the purpose of reading Polanyi – indeed, of reading anyone at all – is to hope to receive clues about *how to go on*. We are living our lives into the future and that, in his terms, means that we are always entering the domain of sophistication where the maps are sketchy and the dangers many. His greatest achievement – an achievement far more important than his sketches of a language for the psychology of knowing, although that was part of it; far more important than his identification of the enemies of the free society, although that too formed part of it; far more important than his radical insights into the non-objective character of real science, although that too cannot be ignored – was to articulate the instruments needed in the intellectual toolkit we need if we are to be successful in living our lives into the future. A biography of Polanyi, to be worthy of him and of a life dedicated to often-futile attempts to do something to secure a better future for humankind, needs to further that objective. I am not sure that Scott's exhaustive researches and Moleski's Herculean redactions have done more than lay the foundations for that major future work; but that the narrative history has been secured, both in print and far more extensively in the Chicago archive, is no small achievement, and future generations of Polanyi scholars will be grateful to them for having achieved that.

That so many of those who knew Polanyi personally have now joined him on a distant shore – Bill Scott, Magda, Robin Hodgkin, Drusilla Scott and Joan Crewdson, to name but a few – only adds to the poignancy of the regret that in his lifetime there was, apparently, no-one to play Elisha to his Elijah, and ask for a double measure of his spirit. The world has certainly not become an easier place in which to live our lives into the future since his death, and the need for another with Polanyi’s wisdom and scope, and so for a biography that might enable one who never met him to see things from inside-out as he saw them, is as great as ever.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Polanyi, M. and Harry Prosch, *Meaning*, ed. Harry Prosch, Chicago, 1975, p. 48. Polanyi’s and Prosch’s emphasis.

<sup>2</sup> Puddefoot, John, “Resonance Realism”, *Tradition and Discovery*, 20:3 (1993-94): 29-38.

<sup>3</sup> Turing, Alan, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence”, *Mind*, Volume LIX, 1950, pp. 433-460.

<sup>4</sup> Puddefoot, John, “Information and Creation”, in *The Science and Theology of Information*, ed. C. Wassermann, R. Kirby and B. Rordorff, Labor et Fides, Geneva, 1992, pp. 7 – 25, especially p. 22.

# Provocative Questions, Abbreviated Answers

**Martin X Moleski, S.J.**

Let me begin by thanking *Tradition and Discovery* for soliciting so many reviews of *Michael Polanyi: Scientist and Philosopher* and for allowing me to respond to them. It is a pleasure to engage with serious readers of the biography. I regret that I cannot go into great detail here, but I assure the reviewers that their questions will remain with me—some, perhaps, as a “thorn in the flesh”—and will, I hope, lead me to a better understanding of Polanyi in the years ahead.

I met Wetherick twice in 1998, once at a conference in Sheffield sponsored by *Appraisal*, then at his home in Edinburgh. He opened my eyes to the atheist reading of Polanyi with humor, charm, and (if I may say so) great grace. I would like to take issue with him about the nature of dogma, the concept of revealed truth, the kind of authority necessary to preserve revelation made in history, and the relationship between theological articulation of a “system of propositions” and the tacit vision of religious reality that gives such propositions sense, but this is not the time or place to delve into those theological issues. I think he is right that Polanyi’s version of Christianity is “only likely to be acceptable among highly sophisticated intellectuals.” It is Christianity without a church, without revelation, without rituals, without Christ. If Polanyi’s view of God and Christianity is correct, then I have chosen the wrong path. While I am willing at least in principle to die for my beliefs, with Wetherick and all such humanists of such good will, I forswear killing people in an effort to change their vision of reality.

I very much regret that I did not meet Gowenlock when I was overseas. Many of the best anecdotes

about Polanyi's work in Manchester come from his correspondence and interviews with Scott. I appreciate his corrections and clarifications about the work Polanyi did in Manchester. In reviewing his correspondence with Scott, I found that he had sent a most revealing letter from Polanyi to Rev. Dr. S. James Knox who was the Minister of Saint Aidan's Presbyterian Church in Didsbury from 1944 to 1949. I don't understand why Scott did not mention this letter in his draft of the biography; it is unfortunate that I found it only after the revised version was published. The letter is dated 10 March 1948 and is hand-written on Polanyi's letterhead for the Department of Chemistry.

Dear Mr. Knox,

I am writing to tell you I have moved out of Didsbury to Hale and have ceased therefore to attend service at St. Aidan's. I wish to thank you very deeply for the benefits which I owe you from the time while I used [to] attend at your church. It has been a lasting influence in my life. Some time ago I used to see you quite frequently at the University and I wondered whether you would care to have lunch with me some day at the Staff House. I should very much like to talk to you before finally severing my relation to St. Aidan's, so as to make sure that we do not drift apart permanently. If you can manage this at all, I would like to make some suggestions for a convenient date.

Yours very sincerely,  
M. Polanyi

This is important evidence that, at least for some time in his life, Polanyi found some consolation in churchgoing. In the closing pages of the biography (287-292), I argue that Polanyi was unquestionably "on the side of faith," though it evidently took different forms at different times in his life.

I believe that I met Puddefoot at Polanyi Society meetings in the early 90s, before I became involved in the biography. He corresponded with Robin Hodgkin about the 25<sup>th</sup> and final chapter of Scott's draft in 1994. I sent him the 1999 draft and received detailed and very helpful comments on the first chapter. I doubt that he was in possession of his theory of what a biography should be back then. My guess is that he worked out "What Is a Biography?" in order to explain his evaluation of the shortcomings of *Michael Polanyi*. I have many conjectures about "what it was like to be Michael Polanyi," but, as a general rule, I left them out of my revision of Scott's manuscript. I did not try to fill in the blanks that Polanyi left in his own account of his self-experience. Polanyi was not very forthcoming about the most intimate details of his life. Magda's reaction to what he shared with Mannheim about his religious experience (194-195) suggests that she thought such disclosures were inappropriate. I have heard from a good source that there are other, more personal letters that may be made available in due course, but neither Scott nor I saw them. When and if they do become available, it will be interesting to see what new dimensions they may open into understanding Polanyi as he understood himself.

I am happy with the work I was able to do on the biography, although I am painfully aware of its limitations. I do not think I am equipped to write the "major future work" that Puddefoot envisages. I hope to reorganize Scott's files to make them more accessible; they will eventually go to the University of Nevada at Reno. There are undoubtedly many more nuggets to be mined from the files like the letter to Knox above. Polanyi was a good man and I am confident that there will be other and better retellings of his life's story.