

# **A Clue Toward Knowing Truth and God, and Polanyi’s “Forms of Atheism”**

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*Key words:* Polanyi, atheism, truth seeking, universal and unfolding reality, radical monotheism, idolatry, faith and tacit knowing, theological inquiry, God of the Bible, Pauline scheme of redemption, Augustine, the Moot, T.S. Eliot

## **ABSTRACT**

*The topic of atheisms of our time brings to the fore Michael Polanyi’s own beliefs about God which underlie and are briefly expressed in his essay, but need to be shown in a fuller exposition. His beliefs arise from two main sources. One is Polanyi’s intense life of pursuing of truth through science and also responding to his society in its destructive wars and revolutions. The second source is his belief in the God of the Bible which presents an ongoing journey of fidelity to truth seeking. In developing a new epistemology, he offered a clue toward knowing truth and God.*

## **Truth, Inquiry, and God**

Michael Polanyi’s 1948 essay, “Forms of Atheism,” a *tour de force*, displays much about his depth and intellectual prowess as well as central concerns of his developing philosophical outlook. There are so many hints and suggestions of Polanyi’s major views that it is difficult to stay focused in discussing it. Nevertheless, I want to call attention to Polanyi’s belief about faith and God. Put simply, Polanyi is an ardent advocate for the freedom of science to seek the truth and state its findings, contributing to the general pursuit of truth in society.<sup>1</sup> In the larger frame of his developing epistemology, the pursuit of truth is situated in his sense of an unfolding and universal reality. As he formulated his views justifying the independence and freedom of science, he saw Christian faith as part of the civilization that provided some of the major premises that led to the development of modern science’s capacities to advance knowledge and improve human life. Of particular importance from the Christian tradition is the role of faith, or the fiduciary component in knowing, in the aim of knowing toward the truth and in the unfolding nature of reality to human knowledge. What follows throughout my discussion is an interwoven and overlapping treatment of Polanyi’s epistemology with the biblical God.

## **The God of the Bible**

Polanyi’s thought generally reflects the influence of the biblical story of the Hebraic and Christian monotheism that develops and grows from a local henotheism toward an ethical and radical monotheism.<sup>2</sup> This development has a kinship with what Polanyi sees as the universal intent of the truth seeker. This influence, though not the only one, is important for Polanyi’s view of science’s need for freedom to choose its own research problems and methods. The independence of truth about reality and the freedom of conscience from the captivity to any human conception is a part of the perennial process of discovery and growth of knowledge in science and everywhere. Polanyi did not make this exact comparison, but his views do compare with the biblical narrative of the faith of Israel struggling to serve a unity of being described as one God. While his view of growing knowledge limits all stages of knowing from being final, it does not deny a center and standard of universality toward which the growth of knowledge aims.

Polanyi emphasizes this dynamic of an unfolding of knowledge throughout his major works. In *The Tacit Dimension*, he expressed briefly and incisively his view of the human knower as a seeker or explorer confronting problems and trying to understand and deal with them. There he states that the person and problems are more real than cobblestones “because of their capacity to reveal themselves in unexpected ways in the future.”<sup>3</sup> In his final chapter on “A Society of Explorers” he pictures organized humanity engaged in the pursuit of truth as an unfolding knowledge of reality.<sup>4</sup> His association of his theory of knowledge with ideas from scripture show a genuine relationship to biblical ideas of faith in God as a journey.

### *The Pauline Scheme of Redemption*

The following text is a *locus classicus* for seeing Polanyi’s relation to Christian faith and the pursuit of truth.

The stage on which we thus resume our full intellectual powers is borrowed from the Christian scheme of Fall and Redemption. Fallen Man is equated to the historically given and subjective condition of our mind, from which we may be saved by the grace of the spirit. The technique of our redemption is to lose ourselves in the performance of an obligation which we accept, in spite of its appearing on reflection impossible of achievement. We undertake the task of attaining the universal in spite of our admitted infirmity, which should render the task hopeless, because we hope to be visited by powers for which we cannot account in terms of our specifiable capabilities. This hope is a clue to God, which I shall trace further in my last chapter, by reflecting on the course of evolution.<sup>5</sup>

This passage is helpful in seeing the knower who is limited by her/his own self-centeredness yet keeps reaching for the seemingly impossible and may be met by the solution she/he is seeking. The solution, however, is limited by the seeker’s aptitude, historical horizon, and readiness to understand. The fallen state is a subjective mental condition or self-centeredness in a self which is delivered by turning its focus to the gift of the spirit that calls us toward a more universal perfection despite its difficulties. This point appears in Polanyi’s closing reference in the essay to Eliot’s lines in “Little Gidding.” I give the larger immediate passage from which Polanyi quoted:

The dove descending breaks the air  
With flame of incandescent terror  
Of which the tongues declare  
The one discharge from sin and error:  
The only hope, or else despair  
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre-  
To be redeemed from fire by fire.

Who then devised the torment? Love.  
Love is the unfamiliar Name  
Behind the hands that wove  
The intolerable shirt of flame  
Which human power cannot remove.  
We only live, only suspire  
Consumed by either fire or fire.<sup>6</sup>

The biblical image of the spirit of God descending is the background. The gift of the spirit turns the self outward and toward pursuing the awe and wonder of being itself, which is like a Christian worshipping God.<sup>7</sup> Reason alone cannot redeem the human state because we are lovers. Love is “the intolerable shirt of flame which human power cannot remove – as Eliot described Christian love.”<sup>8</sup> Our reason is moved by what we love. It can be the solving of a puzzle or a problem or life-long challenge and quest. Problem solving everywhere and especially in greatness in science involved the earnest and passionate pursuit of the knower; dedication and surrender are a part of the role of faith in the pursuit of truth and essential to it.

### *T.S. Eliot and Augustine*

In Polanyi’s use of Eliot there is a blending of the human drive and condition with what Augustine expressed in his *Confessions*, “that our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.” Applying this to Polanyi’s own life, we can see it in his dedication and drive for freedom to pursue the truth, in the problems that he faced, in his decisions to move from Germany to England, and to change careers from medicine to physical chemistry to social and philosophical thought. Eliot’s verses help Polanyi to speak of self-giving to the ongoing pursuit of truth.

There is a duality in this love of the knower and the known. The knower is searching for fulfillment of her/his love and the known is responding. The same can be said of problem-solving in Polanyi’s epistemology of scientific discovery, wherein the potential of a problem attracts the researcher, and the researcher chooses a strategy for the problem. The knower’s action—interest, urge, desire, love—has a self-centered need represented in her/his seeking. They are self-set standards searching for a destination of satisfaction.<sup>9</sup> There is a dynamic that commits her/him to act as she/he must, to move from the subjective self toward the objective and universal aspect of reality. This from-to relation of knowing shows the enduring pursuit of truth. The subjective self, embodied in passionate striving, is redeemed in its finding of illumination or understanding, which is similar to the grace of God of which the apostle Paul spoke. Significantly, the divine-human relation, which must include doing the truth, includes both the *eros* of wanting the good and the self-giving *agape* of the divine. In the *eros* of desire there is also an *agape* of self-giving, of risking, of even sacrificing for truth. In the seeking process that becomes surrender to what is found, we are changed. This change forms a new standpoint or even a revolutionary change of view. Biblically, one might say it is a conversion.

### *From Augustine: Key Principles of Faith and Knowing*

Among many instances and forms of the tacit dimension that underlies the personal in all knowing, Polanyi found in the Christian tradition the principle stated by Augustine of Hippo, *nisi credideritis, non intelligitis*.<sup>10</sup> Polanyi referred to him as a theologian who expressed clearly what Polanyi was developing about the nature of knowledge: “unless you believe you will not understand.” In contrast, Polanyi marks John Locke as one of the founders of the modern mind’s dismissal of faith as based on persuasion and not empirical evidence.

Augustine also thought truth and God are one. In Augustine’s neo-Platonic thought to know well one has to desire wisdom or truth. To desire something, however, one has to know to some degree that it is there or one would not desire it. Such desiring indicates that the knower has within some beginning awareness of this truth that she/he is seeking. The similarity to Polanyi’s later structure of tacit knowing is fitting. The hunch, intuition, intimation of something hidden that could be revealed prompts exploration and investigation which lead toward truth-finding.

Polanyi is not a neo-Platonist, but his theory of knowing has a from-to structure of relying on an inner prompting that leads to discovery of new knowledge. Where is God in Polanyi’s theory of knowing? God

would be the infinite and unfolding reality within and beyond the clues that prompt our quest for truth. Theologically, any move toward truth and good is movement toward God.

At a middle stage of Polanyi's turn toward social and philosophical thought in Manchester when he was still the chief physical chemist, he gave a religious talk at a school where he quoted extensively from Augustine four times on the theme that faith precedes understanding and one time that truth is our God. He related this view to John 8:31-32 where Jesus says to the Jews who accept him, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free."<sup>11</sup> Polanyi, however, is not appealing to the authority of scripture to settle a question of Jesus' divinity. Instead, his point is that seeking truth is a guidepost for a moral life. Such truth-seeking appears in Polanyi's ardent concern for freedom in science and implicitly in all areas of learning and research.

### *Polanyi and Theological Inquiry*

Polanyi's relation to Christian contemporary theologians was diverse in 1948 as well as later. Through the Moot, he knew theologians and their various attempts to state Christian theology effectively for the current time. In the Moot were theologians John Baillie and H. A. Hodges as well as the convener, J. H. Oldham. Baillie was a Calvinist and Scottish theologian who thought that all genuine knowledge, from revelation in religion to science, was of the encounter type where one meets the objectivity of reality and in meeting learns from it.<sup>12</sup> H. A. Hodges was an Anglican philosophical theologian with a special interest in bringing together the Church of England and the Eastern Orthodox Church. Sir Walter Moberly, formerly vice-chancellor of the University and one of the persons who aided in bringing Polanyi from the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute to the University, was a university leader in the Student Christian Movement in England. Oldham was a major leader in bringing Christian thinkers from diverse Christian affiliations to consider together what were called "Christian frontiers" and was regarded by many as a founder of The World Council of Churches. Through them, Polanyi was well aware of contemporary Christian thought as lively, with some contending for traditional views and others proposing modifications. In *Personal Knowledge*, Polanyi stated an affinity for the progressive Christian theology of Paul Tillich.<sup>13</sup> Near the end of his life, Polanyi made Barthian Scottish theologian Thomas F. Torrance executor of his literary estate. These disparate choices demonstrate in Polanyi an openness and respect for ongoing theological inquiry with its differences.<sup>14</sup> For Polanyi, the knowing and understanding of Christian faith itself was a continuing enterprise of exploration and discovery, which fits his larger outlook that the truth that we know and seek to follow is an unfolding one even in theology. Implicitly, it also means that the search for understanding between the Christian faith and other world religions should develop in fidelity to truth-seeking about reality itself. For Polanyi, no theology or tradition has absolute and final truth, though some may claim it. Also, controversy within science and evaluation by the scientific community has some similarity to these developments in Christian theological tradition.

The development of Christian theology is complex and more dynamic than its denominations and modern atheistic opponents understand. The basic reasons are seen in Polanyi's perceptive distinction between Christian worship and theology. He says: "A heuristic impulse can live only in the pursuit of its proper enquiry. The Christian enquiry is worship."<sup>15</sup> As in science, the inquirer needs to focus on the subject, which is God. The problem of the standpoint from which one judges is fundamental to judgment. Standing outside the circle of natural science or outside Christian worship limits greatly what can be known about nature or God. Polanyi's idea of Christian worship as the basis for understanding what Christians mean by "God" calls for experience of the meaning of God through the Christian's rites that center on God.<sup>16</sup> He also says: "...theology as a whole is an intricate study of momentous problems. It is a theory of religious knowledge and a corresponding ontology of the things thus known."<sup>17</sup>

Such a view is challenging to theological studies in the United States, where focus in theology is mainly in seminaries preparing persons for service in churches. Polanyi observes several theological problems in this essay that remain dangerous and in need of attention. First, “where nations are struggling for their existence and this leads to mortal conflict between them, what is then the right?” Second, is “the ability of Christianity to eliminate the evils of the world a test of its validity?” Third, are institutions the problem and should Christianity be mainly transcendent, i.e. spiritual?<sup>18</sup>

### *Modern Culture and Belief in God*

Understanding the nature of truth and God is a momentous issue in the crisis of beliefs in the modern world because it is distorted by a misunderstanding of truth in science as bare facts. By addressing this problem in his essay, Polanyi is focusing mainly upon rival deities that also arise out of the ways they have led us to seek and use the truth.

A witness of totalitarian misuse of and interference with science, Polanyi’s passionate and costly commitment to the pursuit of truth is similar to the spirit of the prophets and the spirit of the Confessing Church in Nazi Germany that struggled in their historical context “to obey God rather than men.” Not a church leader but a leading scientist, he is like a prophet who speaks out against the corruption of science’s mission to pursue the truth. In a society where truth is decided from the top down without openness to criticism and dissent, loyalty to the greater truth of all reality is denied and left in the hands of the most forceful.<sup>19</sup>

Polanyi’s view of truth is one of the chief motivations behind his arduous drive for a new epistemology. He sees that the rationalism and critical doubt of the Enlightenment had led to an ideal of objective detachment that undermined transcendent values of truth seeking, liberty, and justice. To counter this mistaken view, Polanyi drew upon his own experiences as a Hungarian scientist rising to leadership in the Kaiser Wilhelm Gesellschaft and then the University of Manchester. Schooling and practice in choosing a problem, the art of guessing right, the value of scientific conviviality, and many other important skills in scientific practice and judgment are essential to scientific practice. All of these practices and skills are akin to rites of worship that aid persons in attending to their subject.

### *Importance of Truth for the Individual and Society*

Polanyi’s thought, as indicated above, emphasizes that allegiance to finding truth guides a free society, corrects and balances a free society’s direction, and is an essential civic obligation. It endorses both individual search and the guidance of practices of a community of scientists. Among the institutions giving rise to a free society in the Western world are the synagogues, churches, schools, universities, and research centers, which have taught and called people to loyalty to a transcending reality that is knowable yet always exceeds our full grasp. No institution can know completely the truth, but the person and the society are always called to its discovery and meaning for their time. The four forms of atheism in this essay are “repudiators” of this reality and “the God manifested in the Bible.”<sup>20</sup>

### *Polanyi’s Inaugural Address on Science, Faith, and Society*

“Calling” and “vocation” are words used often by Polanyi, indicating a response from within to a higher obligation.<sup>21</sup> He felt this way about his work as a scientist and as a philosopher. His record of responding to a significant problem or need indicates his sense of high and guiding ideals. He was not a person doing science as just an occupation but a person passionately concerned about his society’s destructive views and how to correct them. Belief in God, transcendent reality, and values are essential

backgrounds of his view of the unfolding nature of truth in science and history, along with our common moral responsibility to follow it. The Riddell Lectures at the University of Durham published as *Science, Faith and Society* in 1946 were an inaugural address for the principal philosophical work he pursued for the rest of his life:<sup>22</sup>

I shall re-examine here the suppositions underlying our belief in science and propose to show that they are more extensive than is usually thought. They will appear to coextend with the entire spiritual foundations of man and to go to the very root of his social existence. Hence, I will urge, our belief in science should be regarded as a token of much wider convictions.<sup>23</sup>

Within these lectures of 1946, we have a basic outline of Polanyi's beliefs that illuminate his 1948 essay and the post-critical philosophy that he later develops.

## Rival Gods

### *Idolatry in Modern Form*

One of the most important discoveries of biblical monotheism is idolatry, and one of the most important features of Polanyi's epistemology is his monumental effort to deal with idolatry in its modern forms by developing an epistemology that attacks it at its intellectual foundations. Through his views, we see the limited and misleading gods that abound in modern forms and fail to deliver us. They do not identify themselves as gods, but as intellectual and social forces that weaken or replace our commitment to the pursuit of truth and the God of the Bible.

Compared to "the new atheism" of our day, Polanyi's "forms of atheism" are more subtle and more serious. The deities represented in "forms of atheism" are undercover and secular.<sup>24</sup> The "new atheisms" generally attack the idea of God in terms of a supernatural being based on a literal reading of scripture which they criticize inconsistently as being unscientific. However, according to their own standards as spokespersons for modern science they are not being scientific either. One example is seen in Richard Dawkins' *The Blind Watchmaker* and *The God Delusion*.<sup>25</sup> It is hardly empirical for an Oxford professor to make judgments of this kind without at least noticing that few Oxford professors of theology and biblical studies are biblical literalists and their theology is not based in a three-story worldview designed by a super engineer. The new atheists' rant is comical and tragic, since in the name of truth telling and criticism, they ignore the search for truth in their own university and modern theology generally. Their attacks do represent, however, an example of Polanyi's concerns in the atheisms of this essay. They are, however, a part of what Polanyi is attacking, a philosophy of science and epistemology that has obscured and lost its foundation for understanding the role of belief in all knowing and especially the role of belief within science's pursuit of truth.

### *Dangerous Deities Again*

Polanyi stresses the problem of atheism, not in the popular debates of his time or of the past, but in the power that four ancient deities represent. Unlike a traditional philosopher examining basic beliefs by logical and categorical analysis, Polanyi apotheosizes these four powerful forms of belief behind the world wars, totalitarian regimes, and mass killings: Athene (goddess of reason), Clio (goddess of history), Dionysus (god of ecstasy), and Prometheus (god of progress). Using these deities, Polanyi shows their allurements and dangers in their modern form when they work together. Then he offers not a philosophical concept of God but a biblical image of the self grasped by an attraction that is as consuming as fire, i.e., the shirt of flame from Eliot's poem mentioned above. To see better how Polanyi's pursuit of truth is a clue to God, we need to understand these deities in relation to the God of the Bible.

Polanyi introduces his discussion: “We are concerned with the convinced repudiator in modern times of God as manifested in the Bible, rejecting him in favor of other Gods.”<sup>26</sup> Here is a familiar biblical theme, the struggle of the Hebrews to remain loyal to the God of the covenant and not worship the pagan gods of fertility. The temptations of other gods remain a part of monotheism to the present as Polanyi is showing. The biblical prophets challenged their culture with “choose whom you will serve,” gods of nature or the one God of their covenant who is disclosed in critical events in Hebrew history.<sup>27</sup> However, we must caution that Polanyi’s concern is not defending orthodox Christian faith but explaining the challenges to belief in the God of the Bible.

### *Polanyi’s Sympathy for “the Repudiators”*

Approaching his main topic, Polanyi admits he has sympathy for some reactions against religious fanaticism, “which animates the oldest form of atheism.” He appreciates the reaction when religious orthodoxy that seems to insist upon acceptance of personal beliefs without allowing for personal judgment. Statements presented to him as unquestionable such as “religion *is* the blessed sacrament” and “the decisive fact of Christianity is that the tomb was empty” are offensive.<sup>28</sup> Acceptance of such statements should allow for their assessment and credibility. If Polanyi accepted these dogmas without his own appraisal, it would be an approach of faith against reason. His position of “I believe in order to know” combines with “faith seeking understanding.” The heuristic or discovery nature within knowing is a believer’s—and especially the theologian’s—task of faith seeking understanding. He takes very seriously the contributions of science to deepening our understanding of religious faith and seeks a partnership for science and religion because of their epistemological common ground shown in his theory of tacit knowing.<sup>29</sup>

### *Faith and Reason in Symbiotic Relation*

This relationship of faith and reason is a symbiotic one. The structure of tacit knowing shows a basic connection between the embodiment of the clues leading to and within reasoning that lead to our explicit knowledge. As is carefully demonstrated throughout *Personal Knowledge*, reasoning itself is a bodily action and relies upon much more than the explicit rules of logic, including such things as neural pathways, syntax, and the meaning of sentences. Tacit knowing provides the basic structure of this process. It shows how, by relying upon the tacit subsidiary awareness, a knower attends to a focal integration of subsidiary clues into a meaningful whole.<sup>30</sup> Our relying upon the tacit to guide us is an essential element of trusting in our powers to guide us toward truth.

### *Enlightenment Deities*

Moving on, Polanyi adroitly encapsulates western cultural, social, political, and intellectual development into his four deities which I term “idols.” My comments address them as idolatry and Polanyi’s pursuit of truth as a clue to the God of the Bible. All four of the deities that Polanyi criticizes are offspring of the Enlightenment and share the heritage of doubt as a supreme guide to truth. They are a family of causes that produce the ideal of objective detachment as true knowledge and its devastating consequences.

### *Ten Confessions on Inquiry, Truth, and God*

Polanyi confesses a number of things that are personal reactions to Christian experiences and points out his correlating faith, knowing, and truth-finding as a permanent quest. Distorting Polanyi’s eloquence, I condense them as follows. First, “My beliefs are surrenders....” Second, “I cannot hope that they carry more than one aspect of reality....” Third, “I hope it to be fully consistent with my belief in the transcendent origin of my beliefs that I should ever be prepared for intimations of doubts in respect to

them.” Fourth, “. . .our present physical theories tend to break down when pursued to certain ultimate consequences. . . .” Fifth, “When we come to the central mysteries of Creation and Incarnation the texts [of the Bible] on which we rely for our knowledge of them can give only one aspect of the truth and may well be compatible with. . .contradictory reports.” Sixth, “The number of questions we can ask about God in their context seems to me greatly in excess of their range. . . .” Seventh, “The doctrine of Encounter might reduce all references to God, that are not addresses in the form of prayer, to. . .crude statements.” Eighth, “Those who accord final authority to words of the Bible. . .must realize. . .their position turns into a claim of their own infallibility.” Ninth, “When we pray ‘Thy will be done’ we should offer to surrender to the will of God all our beliefs, excepting only what is logically implied in this act of surrender.” Tenth, as shown, “I concur with much of the tendencies that find expression in rationalist atheism of the kind I have put down to Athene.”<sup>31</sup>

### *A Matter of Life and Death*

Polanyi’s essay recognizes that how we understand the nature of knowledge is a matter of life and death, just as Polanyi once observed that the choice of language is a matter of life and death.<sup>32</sup> Modern science’s effect of discrediting the role of faith in knowing has led to destructive consequences and will continue to do so without an epistemology that includes the essentials of faith that he clarified through tacit knowing. The four gods of reason, history, ecstasy, and progress have combined in the modern world into what Polanyi saw as a dynamo-objective coupling and moral inversion that drove the thought of the totalitarian leaders.<sup>33</sup> This coupling is not sudden but the development and combination of ideas over centuries into a cultural and social force. Its basic logic and structure can be briefly stated as follows. Rational skepticism undermines God as the center of loyalty and values because God cannot be verified by natural scientific standards and therefore is dubious. The hopes of humankind for salvation arising from the God of the Bible are driven underground but are still alive. In the place of God, other gods appear to provide answers to human hopes: Athene as the power of scientific thought, Clio as the inspiration for historical progress, Dionysus as individual perfectibility, and Prometheus as utopian politics. The outcome of these subterranean gods is that they join and reappear in the guise of hopes of individual and social progress through doctrines that absolutize themselves. Today, it could be metaphysical capitalism that believes that the highest values are in free markets and individual initiatives.

Polanyi states that critical reasoning itself might have weakened the meaning of God to a leftover from the past if it were not dealing with “the God of the Bible.” Instead the biblical vision of salvation gave hope for moral and social improvement in this world. With the reawakening of reasoning through the successes of modern science and its positivistic interpretation, the guidance of the moral and spiritual ideals of biblical religion were weakened and the secular hopes of Europe turned to new ideologies. Nazism (not mentioned in this essay) and Marxism provided new gods of economic and political reform supposedly based on science.<sup>34</sup> These gods produced a belief in historical progress and perfection of society through Marxist science. Returning to my main thesis, Polanyi’s critique of Marxism and of capitalism is a significant part of his thought, but his criticism and protest arises in the spirit of his belief in the God of the Bible. This God reduces and criticizes all sciences and philosophies that claim absolute truth and close inquiry.

Through Eliot’s poem, Polanyi suggests the combined forces of reason, history, individuality, and reform are not enough to satisfy our human longings. Our power to know seems to leave us with nothingness unless it is the knowledge or experience of transcendence that draws us into the search for truth. Both Eliot and Polanyi suggest that self-giving is our way to pursue the truth, a truth like the God of the Bible will give to us. How do we give our selves to the truth? By seeking it and stating our findings. This answer would not be enough, however, if it were not grounded in the God of the Bible who presents us

hope. The search for truth through our knowing provides a purpose bearing on eternity, as Polanyi said at the ending of *The Tacit Dimension*:

Men need a purpose which bears on eternity. Truth does that, our ideals do it; and this might be enough, if we could ever be satisfied with our moral shortcomings and with a society which has such shortcomings fatally involved in its workings.

Perhaps this problem cannot be resolved on secular grounds alone. But its religious solution should become more feasible once religious faith is released from pressure by an absurd vision of the universe, and so there will open up instead a meaningful world which could resound to religion.<sup>35</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 299.

<sup>2</sup>H. Richard Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), pp. 132-133, *et passim*. Niebuhr developed the use of henotheism, monotheism, and radical monotheism.

<sup>3</sup>Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1966; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 33. See also pp. 55-92 for his discussion of the explorers confronting problems.

<sup>4</sup>Polanyi, *TD*, pp. 32-33 and Chapter III.

<sup>5</sup>Polanyi, *PK*, p. 324.

<sup>6</sup>*T.S. Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1952), pp. 143-144.

<sup>7</sup>Polanyi, *PK*, p. 405.

<sup>8</sup>Michael Polanyi, "Forms of Atheism," final sentences. Hereafter this work will be cited as "Forms."

<sup>9</sup>There are twenty eight references in the index of *Personal Knowledge* indicating how self-set standards lead us toward the universal in our intent.

<sup>10</sup>Polanyi, *PK*, p. 266.

<sup>11</sup>The Michael Polanyi Papers in the Department of Special Collections, University of Chicago, Box 23, Folder 1.

<sup>12</sup>John Baillie, *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956). See also my use of Baillie in "Discovery and Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 28 (August, 1975): 301-322.

<sup>13</sup>Baillie, p. 283.

<sup>14</sup>In my fourteen years working with Polanyi, he also showed a knowledge of the debate over Bultmann's demythologizing, Paul Tillich, H. Richard and Reinhold Niebuhr. Also, it should be noted that the first president of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute was Adolph von Harnack, a foremost leader of the liberal theology against which Karl Barth and others revolted.

<sup>15</sup>Baillie. p. 281.

<sup>16</sup>In this regard, Polanyi and Harry Prosch have given account of how Christian worship is a rite that brings together the infinite transcendence of God with the finite and ordinary elements of worship that

stage the experience of God, just as a drama stages the murder of a person. The murder is only true on the stage, but it tells us something about the meaning of murder. See Michael Polanyi and Harry Prosch, *Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 155-156.

<sup>17</sup>Polanyi, *PK*, p. 281.

<sup>18</sup>Polanyi, "Forms," paragraphs 6, 8, and 9.

<sup>19</sup>Polanyi's critique of totalitarian Marxism as moral inversion enabled by a "dynamo coupling" of scientific objectivity and moral passions is very carefully, critically, and helpfully examined in D.M. Yeager's "Confronting the Minotaur: Moral Inversion and Polanyi's Moral Philosophy," *Tradition and Discovery*, 29/1 (2002-2003): 42-48.

<sup>20</sup>Polanyi, "Forms," paragraph 1.

<sup>21</sup>For example, the index in *PK* lists eleven passages where Polanyi describes calling in response to finding truth.

<sup>22</sup>"Inaugural Address" is my term used in Richard Gelwick, *The Way of Discovery, An Introduction to the Thought of Michael Polanyi* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1977 and Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2004), pp. 42-47.

<sup>23</sup>Michael Polanyi, *Science, Faith and Society* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 7. The republished edition, *Science, Faith and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964) has a new introduction and omits this opening paragraph.

<sup>24</sup>By "new atheists," I refer to Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens and their followers.

<sup>25</sup>New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1986 and Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006.

<sup>26</sup>Polanyi, "Forms," paragraph 1.

<sup>27</sup>Some theologians would say "revelatory events" but the terms "revelation" and "revelatory" have become mired in the debates between fundamentalist and liberal theology.

<sup>28</sup>Polanyi, "Forms," paragraph 2.

<sup>29</sup>This issue has been explored concerning a dialogue between Paul Tillich and Michael Polanyi in 1963 in *Tradition and Discovery* by Durwood Foster, Richard Gelwick, Melvin Keiser, Donald Musser, Charles McCoy, and Robert Russell. See online [www.missouriwestern.edu/orgs/Polanyi/authors](http://www.missouriwestern.edu/orgs/Polanyi/authors).

<sup>30</sup>Polanyi, *TD*, Ch. 1.

<sup>31</sup>Polanyi, "Forms," paragraphs 2-4.

<sup>32</sup>Polanyi, *PK*, p. 113. Polanyi is discussing the importance of words and language.

<sup>33</sup>See note 19.

<sup>34</sup>Polanyi restrains himself from using his experience as a Jew according to Hitler's policies even though Polanyi had converted to Christianity at the time of his marriage.

<sup>35</sup>Polanyi, *TD*, p. 92.