

NEWS AND NOTES

Tradition and Discovery 45:2

July 2019

The online-only “News and Notes” section of *Tradition and Discovery* includes bibliographic information, calls for papers, annual meeting programs, and any other items possibly of interest to members of the Polanyi Society and other persons working with the thought of Michael Polanyi. Send material to Paul Lewis, Editor of *Tradition and Discovery*, at lewis_pa@mercer.edu.

Correction

Some time ago Mihály Héder sent in the following correction which unfortunately was mislaid until recently:

In the Héder and Paksi essay, “Non-Human Knowledge according to Michael Polanyi” (*TAD* 44:1 [2018], 50-65), we suggested that Harry Collins defined tacit knowledge as knowledge that could in principle never be explicated and implied that this may have grown out of a misunderstanding of Polanyi’s notion of the tacit. It is important to see, however, that Collins’s “tacit” and “explicit” knowledge cover different functions than the processes by which individuals come to know that Polanyi was interested in. Collins attempts to determine what sorts of knowledge cannot in principle ever be explicated adequately which he connects with digitization. What he calls relational and somatic knowledge have cause and effect attributes that he claims theoretically could be explicated, but language based collective tacit knowledge has social and intuitive features that are so complex and indeterminate that they are claimed to be inexplicable and thus are fully tacit in Collins’ sense.

University of Cambridge Conference “Tacit Engagement in the Digital Age”

The dense conference program (likely still posted [here](#)) for this June 26-28, 2019 Cambridge, UK, event featured Harry Collins as one of the keynote speakers. The schedule included talks or papers by scholars who have written for *TAD* and/or are interested in Polanyi’s thought.

In the roundtable titled “Self as Interaction in the Digital Age,” Kriszta Sajber gave a talk, “The Expressivity of Virtual Selves.” In the same roundtable, Walter Gulick presented “Mind and Machine: Questions and Comments for Harry Collins.” The roundtable on “Performance of

Algorithms” included talks by Mihály Héder, “Towards an Epistemic Transparency of Algorithms,” and Charles Lowney, “How the Body Solves Problems: Martial Arts, Tacit Knowing, and AI.”

Concurrent with a final session on the last day of the conference, there was a session sponsored by the Polanyi Society that included the following five presentations:

- (1) Phil Mullins, “A Polanyian Reflection on AI”
- (2) Chris Goodman and Gyuri Lajos, “An Engine Augmenting Tacit Awareness Rather than Mimicking Reason”
- (3) Andy Steiger, “Self in the Digital Age: What is Human?”
- (4) Zsolt Zeigler, “Dwelling In Cyborgs”
- (5) Esther Lightcap Meek, “The Unmediated, Indissoluble, Unformalizable Primacy of the Person in the Digital Age”

Some materials posted for this conference are still available for downloading on polanyisociety.org.

November 2019 Polanyi Society Annual Meeting

The 2019 annual meeting of the Polanyi Society will be in San Diego, CA, in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion. You do not need to register for the AAR meeting in order to attend the Society meetings. At the time this issue of *TAD*’s “News and Notes” was assembled, the program is being finalized, but there will be either two or three sessions with papers which will be posted on polanyisociety.org by early November 2019. The time and location for sessions is assigned in late summer by the convention planners allocating space for the AAR and other organizations like the Polanyi Society who meet in conjunction with the AAR. Sessions will likely be in the San Diego Convention Center or hotels near the Convention Center and probably will be on Friday, November 22, and Saturday morning, November 23. The 2019 program will be posted on polanyisociety.org as soon as it is set by the Program Committee and this posting will be updated as more information becomes available. The October 2019 *TAD* “News and Notes” should include the final annual meeting program with locations and times for sessions.

Input on the Annual Polanyi Society Meeting

NB: The note below was included in the last “News and Notes.” The link invites readers to complete a short survey about the location of future Polanyi Society meetings. If you neglected to complete the survey earlier, you still may do so. As the preceding entry indicates, the upcoming November 2019 Polanyi Society annual meeting will be held in conjunction with the AAR annual meeting in San Diego, CA. But the annual meeting pattern may change thereafter.

Where and when should the Polanyi Society schedule conferences and annual meetings? Some recent discussions have suggested that the current annual meeting, always held in conjunction with the American Academy of Religion (AAR) the weekend before Thanksgiving, has become problematic. A number who attend are interested in Polanyi but do not, after the annual meeting, attend subsequent AAR sessions. But it also appears that some attend annual meeting sessions because they are attending AAR meetings or meetings of other cooperating groups. The AAR venue has become increasingly expensive, and it is at an awkward time of year for some. Where do you stand on questions such as these?

The Polanyi Society Board of Directors recently agreed to solicit input about these matters. A link to an informal five-question survey was posted on the Polanyi Society electronic discussion list in early January of 2019. If you did not respond to this survey and wish to do so, the link is below:

https://hillsdale.col.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eFDNOHNMKMPK1il

Budapest Workshop on Philosophy of Technology 2019

Call for Abstracts

The second Budapest Workshop on Philosophy of Technology will be held December 12-13, 2019, at Budapest University of Technology and Economics. Preliminary information about the workshop is now posted at <http://budpt.eu>. Papers can explore any topics connected to the epistemology, ontology, and ethics of technology (see the suggestions on the website). The original period for submitting proposals has been extended by a few days. One-page abstracts (in English) for presentations can still be submitted in early July with notification of acceptance by July 21, 2019. There will be publication options for participants. Remote participation will be possible

via pre-recorded video presentations; the workshop organizers will provide assistance to those doing remote presentations. Inquiries can be directed to Mihály Héder (mihaly.heder@filozofia.bme.hu), Chairperson of the Program Committee

Gene Reeves—A Memorial Note¹

Phil Mullins

Gene Reeves died in Chicago on May 8, 2019. Most *TAD* readers will not remember Gene since he lived in Japan for most of the past 25 years. But he did maintain contact with some older members in the Society and asked to continue receiving *TAD* even after he moved to Japan; he continued to be a supporter of the Society. Reeves earned an undergraduate degree from the University of New Hampshire (1956), a STB from Boston University (1959), and a Ph.D. from Emory in 1963. He was an ordained Unitarian Universalist minister and taught at several places, including the University of Chicago’s Divinity School, Wilberforce, Tufts, and Antioch College. He joined the Polanyi Society when he was at Antioch College and is listed as a member beginning in the Society’s Spring, 1974 “News Bulletin” (Vol 2, No. 2). He was interested in the connection between process thought and Polanyi and presented a paper on this topic at a Polanyi meeting in the seventies. He served as Meadville Lombard Theological School Dean and CEO from 1979 to 1988 and hosted a small summer Polanyi Society meeting in Chicago at Meadville Lombard in the early eighties. Reeves also taught in Japan and China later in his career when he became a recognized commentator on the Lotus Sutra. There is a longer obituary for Reeves which includes several interesting YouTube lectures on the Lotus Sutra, at <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/monkeymind/2019/05/gene-reeves-unitarian-universalist-minister-buddhist-scholar-teacher.html>. He was a recognized Buddhist teacher affiliated with the Rissho Kosei-Kai movement. In addition to publishing a translation of the Lotus Sutra, Reeves edited *A Buddhist Kaleidoscope: Essays on the Lotus Sutra*, and was the author of *Stories of the Lotus Sutra*.

¹This note draws some details from James Ford’s May 9, 2019 comment on Reeves in “Monkey Mind” blog at the web site listed below.

Academic Papers, Blogs, Dissertations and Publications

Mary Jo Nye's contributions to scholarship were recognized in a January 16, 2015, campus event featuring papers by scholarly friends and former students. This material became a set of essays published in 2017 in an issue of *Historical Studies in the Natural Science* (Vol. 47, No. 3) edited by her friend and colleague Anita Guerrini. At least three components of this *HSNS* issue noted below should be of interest to Polanyi scholars.

Alan W. Richardson, "Neither a Confession nor an Accusation': Michael Polanyi, Hans Reichenbach, and Philosophical Modernity after World War One," *HSNS* 47 (3): 423-442.

This essay appreciatively discusses Nye's work on the history of philosophy of science. It reviews important elements of Nye's account of Polanyi and his historical context and suggests there are surprising similarities (as well as important differences) between some of Polanyi's ideas and those of Hans Reichenbach, a contemporary rarely viewed in relation to Polanyi's philosophical views.

Mary Jo Nye, "Afterword," *HSNS* 47 (3): 443-449.

This is Nye's response to the several essays in this issue of *HSNS* on a variety of topics that she has taken an interest in during her long career as a historian of science.

"Mary Jo Nye Publications (1972-2016)," *HSNS* 47 (3): 450-457.

This bibliography includes all of Nye's many publications through 2016 that treat Polanyi's work as a chemist and a philosopher.

Christopher Adair-Toteff and Stephen Turner (eds.). *The Calling of Social Thought: Rediscovering the Work of Edward Shils*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2019. ISBN 9781526120052.

Edward Shils was one of Michael Polanyi's closest intellectual friends from 1946 until Polanyi's death. Shils was a major speaker at the 1991 Kent State Polanyi Conference, and a version of his talk was published posthumously in 1995 in [TAD 22:2](#) along with Stephen Turner's obituary. Subsequently, there was in 2013 in [TAD 39:3](#) a full issue focused on Shils and Polanyi that included essays by Dick Moodey, Stephen Turner, Steven Grosby, and Phil Mullins. Early in 2019, Manchester University Press published the above-noted collection of essays on Shils' work, put together by Stephen Turner and Christopher Adair-Toteff. Included were essays by several scholars long involved with the Polanyi Society and with scholarly projects linking Shils and Polanyi. In a later issue of *TAD*, there will be substantial review essays focused on the Turner and

Adair-Toteff collection. But immediately below are titles and abstracts of essays included that were written by scholars who have taken a special interest in Shils and Polanyi.

Stephen Turner, "Introduction: Discovering and Rediscovering Shils"

Abstract: Edward Shils was well known, but his distinctive intellectual range, his multitude of personal associations, and his special affinities made him difficult to understand for disciplinary scholars. He identified as a "sociologist," but paid little attention to professional sociology. Instead, he worked with such people as Michael Polanyi on the understanding of the free society, with Indian and African intellectuals caught between their own traditions and the aspiration to modernity, and on intellectuals and their peculiar relation to their own societies. His uncompromising anti-Communism kept him out of fashion and led to the neglect of his main ideas on civility and social bonds, which continued to evolve until his death. Today his greatest interest is in the tensions he explored, between the pulls of civility, nation, and personal relations, between ideals and practical reality, between centers and peripheries, and so on, as well as his view of the university and its great scholars, and the diminution of the academic ethic in the present.

Steven Grosby, "The Philosophical Anthropology of Edward Shils," 32-46

Abstract: This essay examines the assumptions and preoccupations that unified the wide subject matter of Edward Shils' voluminous writings. Shils clearly understood his work as having been informed by a philosophical anthropology, for a section of his lengthy essay "The Calling of Sociology" is so designated. What was Shils' philosophical anthropology; what did it have in common with the work of such individuals as Frank Knight, Helmuth Plessner, and Michael Polanyi; why may it be characterized as a "principled pluralism"; and in what ways did it represent a *Lebensphilosophie*: these are the problems pursued in essay.

Lenore T. Ealy, "The Recovery of Tradition," 61-78

Abstract: Edward Shils opened his 1981 book *Tradition* by observing: "This book about tradition is evidence of the need for tradition." Shils offered his readers important insights that help reframe the modern tension between the authority of reason and the authority of tradition. Despite expanding technological capabilities and our growing ambition for directing social change, rapid and experimental social innovations can often be more disorienting than liberating. For Shils, a free society cannot lightly dispense with tradition, and the prospects that communities comprised of free individuals can successfully confront the challenges they face depends a great deal on whether people can rediscover the intrinsic value of *traditionality*—without succumbing to *traditionalism*. This task requires intentional efforts of ideological reconstruction, a reawakening of gratitude for the endowments of our cultures, and frank criticism and diminution of modernist orientations that sought to drive out traditionality and reenactment. New custodians must emerge, and they must employ and balance tradition and reason as they solve the problems that confront them.

Phil Mullins, “Edward Shils and Michael Polanyi: The Terms of Engagement,” 79-105

Abstract: Edward Shils met Michael Polanyi just after World War II just as Polanyi was beginning to articulate the several elements of his post-critical philosophy. Shils and Polanyi quickly developed a deep friendship and Shils both contributed to and was influenced by Polanyi’s evolving ideas. Shils’ *Minerva* obituary for Polanyi, his comments about him in *Fragments of a Sociological Autobiography*, some articles, and his letters to Polanyi show his great respect for Polanyi, and he identified Polanyi as one of his three mentors. Nevertheless, what Shils said about Polanyi and his philosophical ideas sometimes is surprising. The Polanyi-Shils correspondence suggests that Polanyi learned from Shils about social science and that he much valued conversation with Shils; he acknowledged that reading Shils’ writing at times jump-started his own efforts to write. Shils and Polanyi cooperated on many projects over the years. This essay, in sum, elaborates several important dimensions of the long Shils-Polanyi friendship.

Mark T. Mitchell, *The Limits of Liberalism: Tradition, Individualism, and the Crisis of Freedom*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018. ISBN-10:0268104298 and ISBN-13:978:0268104290.

In the July 2018 “News and Notes,” there was a link for an overlooked [article](#) in the NEH journal *Humanitas* by Mark Mitchell (author of the most recent Polanyi introduction, *Michael Polanyi: The Art of Knowing*); in e-mail about the article, Mitchell mentioned his forthcoming book, *The Limits of Liberalism: Tradition, Individualism, and the Crisis of Freedom*. This book was published by University of Notre Dame Press at the end of November 2018, and it includes a chapter on Polanyi’s account of tradition and freedom. A forum on the book is scheduled for the February 2020 issue of *TAD*. Mitchell, Professor of Government at Patrick Henry College, became Dean of Academic Affairs in March 2019.

Ted Brown is a retired emeritus chemistry professor from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and was founding director of the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology. He is also a philosopher of science, one who likes Polanyi’s work, and author of several interesting books and articles, including some things in *TAD*. One of Brown’s books was discussed in [TAD 36:3](#) and he also wrote a review article on Mary Jo Nye’s *Michael Polanyi and His Generation: Origins of the Social Construction of Science* in [TAD 38:2](#). In 2018, Ted published a historical novel, *The Beauty of their Dreams*. Recent postings in Ted’s blog, Science Oracle (<http://scienceoracle.blogspot.com/>), focus on climate change, a topic he has been working on in Florida with [Project Drawdown](#).

<https://britishpersonalistforum.blogspot.com/2019/02/thoughts-on-polanyian-collaboration.html>

Struan Jacobs and Phil Mullins recently contributed to The British Personalist Forum, a blog managed by former *Appraisal* editor Simon Smith. They comment on their informal practices, developed over several years, for cross-continental collaborative historical research (i.e., via e-mail) on Polanyi and on Polanyi's relations with several influential intellectual friends. They identify several ongoing inquiries, which use archival and other historical material.

Donations to the Travel, Grants, and Projects Fund and the Polanyi Society Endowment

The Polanyi Society Board of Directors in November 2018 combined Society travel funds into one fund, entitled the Travel, Grants, and Projects Fund. Particular disbursements may, however, be in memory of particular persons.

The Travel, Grants, and Projects Fund will continue to enable scholars to participate in Society meetings. One of the Society's goals is to involve persons who are presently, or have recently, been engaged in graduate studies. Recent Polanyi Society annual meetings have included a session with graduate student papers, and travel awards have supported this part of the program. These travel awards will continue and possibly some new awards will soon be added. Donations to the Travel, Grants, and Projects Fund are much appreciated.

The Polanyi Society Endowment was established a few years ago with a gift from the late Ann Herbert Scott, the widow of William T. Scott, the original Polanyi biographer. Slowly, the Endowment is growing. The eventual aim is to have an Endowment that generates each year some resources which can be used to support and expand Polanyi Society programming.

Please support these funds by sending a tax-deductible contribution to The Polanyi Society, C/O Charles Lowney, 10 Jordan Street, Lexington, VA, 24450. Checks should be made out to the Polanyi Society and marked Travel, Grants, and Projects or Endowment (or general operating). You can also directly access the Polanyi Society PayPal button (with accompanying tutorial) to make a donation (<http://polanyisociety.org/paypal/donate.html>). The actual PayPal transaction is handled on the secure PayPal site.

Back Printed Issues of *TAD* Available for Purchase

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