NEWS AND NOTES
*Tradition and Discovery* 47:3
October 2021

The “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 materials to Phil Mullins at mullins@missouriwestern.edu.

POST-CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL THEORY
1-3 JUNE 2022 Nashotah House Conference
Call for Papers

In June 2022, the Polanyi Society will sponsor a conference dedicated to exploring the abiding relevance of Michael Polanyi’s philosophical work, and in particular his social thought. Many of the socio-political and cultural dynamics of the early 21st century invite a reconsideration of the principles and practices that contribute to the maintenance of liberty, solidarity, and constructive pluralism. Events like the January 6, 2021 insurrection and the turmoil associated with the political and cultural responses to the Covid pandemic and vaccine programs in the US and elsewhere make this clear. This conference will explore the enduring relevance of Polanyi’s social philosophy but will also include papers dedicated to other dimensions of Polanyi’s work. The Society invites proposals for papers that examine Polanyi’s social and political thought, its development, and its relationship to other aspects of his work; comparative studies that examine Polanyi’s thought alongside that of others are welcome. The Society also encourages proposals on any topic related to Polanyi studies; the conference will accommodate presentations on a range of subjects. Initial proposals should be no more than 250 words, and can be sent to Andrew Grosso at (atgrosso@icloud.com). Proposals should be e-mailed by Friday, 1 January 2022; proposals submitted thereafter will be considered if the conference schedule allows it.

The first sessions of the conference (the afternoon of June 1) will be dedicated to discussion of selections from Polanyi’s writings that set forth his thoughts on social dynamics. Senior Polanyi scholars will facilitate collaborative discussions about these texts, and these conversations will hopefully provide a general framework for discussion in the conference.

There will also be a pre-conference seminar for graduate students and those new to Polanyi studies beginning in the afternoon of 31 May preceding the conference opening session on the afternoon of 1 June. This seminar will provide an introductory overview of Polanyi’s life and philosophy, and will focus on Polanyi’s philosophy of science and its roots in his ideas about skills and articulation, subsidiary and focal awareness, and tacit knowing (see the notice on the pre-conference seminar immediately below this call for papers).
The conference will convene at Nashotah House Theological Seminary in Nashotah, WI (west of Milwaukee). The nearest airport is General Mitchell International Airport (MKE) in Milwaukee, about 45 minutes away; Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport (ORD) is about two hours away. It is possible to take the train from O’Hare to General Mitchell and arrange transportation to Nashotah. As with other recent Polanyi Society sponsored summer conferences, the June 2022 conference will be organized to be a comparatively inexpensive academic conference which cultivates what Polanyi called “conviviality” and serious conversation.

Registration fees include access to all conference sessions and all meals. Early-bird registration is $250 and opens Tuesday, 8 February through Monday, 7 March 2022. Regular registration opens Tuesday, 8 March through Monday, 2 May 2022. Late registration will be $300, and opens Tuesday, 3 May through Tuesday, 31 May 2022.

Registration does not include accommodations; a limited number of rooms will be available at Nashotah House, and there are several affordable hotels within five miles of Nashotah House. Guest rooms on campus (with rates ranging from $50 to $75 per night, and some rooms can be shared) can be reserved by contacting Kelly Medina at (kmedina@nashotah.edu). Nearby hotels include the Hilton Garden Inn (3.3 miles away), Holiday Inn Express (4.7 miles away), and AmericInn of Delafield (4.5 miles away).

A limited amount of financial aid is available for those unable to meet the cost of registration, accommodations, or travel. For more information about financial assistance or other questions, please contact Andrew Grosso at (atgrosso@icloud.com). Updated information regarding the conference will be posted on the Society’s website (polanisyociety.org) and will also be in the “News and Notes” in the February 2022 issues of Tradition & Discovery.

Polanyi Society-Sponsored Pre-Conference Seminar
31 May 2022, Nashotah, WI

In conjunction with the 1-3 June 2022, conference at Nashotah, WI (discussed above), the Polanyi Society will sponsor a 31 May one-day seminar open to graduate students and others new to Polanyi studies. This small pre-conference seminar begins on the afternoon of 31 May and is designed to interface with the 1 June 1 opening conference afternoon workshop focusing on Polanyi texts addressing social dynamics. The 31 May seminar will provide an introductory overview of Polanyi’s life and developing philosophical ideas and will focus on key elements of Polanyi’s philosophy of science and its roots in his ideas about skills and articulation, subsidiary and focal awareness, and the “tacit dimension.” The 31 May seminar will dig deeply into parts of Personal Knowledge, which treat topics such as skills and articulation, and perhaps a short late Polanyi essay. Copies of primary texts will be provided to participants for study before the seminar; the seminar discussion of texts will be facilitated by seasoned Polanyi scholars. Those
who attend the 31 May seminar and the 1 June opening conference day workshop are also invited to participate in the subsequent conference events on 2 and 3 June. Financial aid for registration, accommodations, and/or travel is available to scholars new to Polanyi studies who wish to attend both the pre-conference seminar and the conference. For further details, contact Andrew Grosso (atgrosso@icloud.com).

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**Call for Proposals for Future Zoom Presentations/Discussions**

The Polanyi Society will likely continue to sponsor Zoom presentations/discussions in the final months of 2021 and in 2022. Earlier sessions have been lively and well attended, and they often bring together a set of participants from a wide area, participants who likely would not all be involved in in-person meetings. Nevertheless, several have noted fatigue with on-line meetings and a desire again to participate in Polanyi Society-sponsored in-person meetings. Elsewhere in “News and Notes” is a notice about an upcoming early June 2022 conference at Nashotah, WI, but Zoom presentations/discussions will continue to be organized as long as there is interest.

Online events are advertised well in advance on the Polanyi Society discussion list (michael-polanyi-discussion-list@googlegroups.com) as well as on the Society’s webpages (polanyisociety.org). Anyone interested can participate. To register, send an e-mail to both Gus Breytspraak (gus@ottawa.edu) and Phil Mullins (mullins@missouriwester.edu) and your e-mail address will be added to the list of those who receive a link for the session (early in the week of the session) and a reminder (just prior to the session). Normally, a short paper or outline for the upcoming presentation/discussion is posted a couple of weeks before the session. Since sessions focus on discussion (i.e., what is posted will not be read in the session), participants should review this posted material. After a session is completed, everyone on the sign-up list also receives a link via e-mail when the recording is available online.

If you are interested in making a zoom presentation, contact Walt Gulick (WGulick@msubillings.edu), chair of the Program Committee. Anyone who sends a paragraph proposal outlining a possible Zoom topic will receive feedback from the Program Committee. The Program Committee is interested in sponsoring presentations/discussions on a wide range of topics.

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**Zoom Sessions Recordings and Other Zoom Materials**

Links for recordings of Polanyi Society Zoom Presentations/Discussions can be accessed from polanyisociety.org. Under this link, are also other links for most materials used in the several Polanyi Society-sponsored online events in 2020 and 2021. After Zoom events occur, links for
papers and other materials related to the presentation and the following discussion are moved to this site and consolidated. You can find anything of interest from a Zoom session (e.g., an essay written by a particular person) simply by opening the top-level link for a set of Zoom sessions (usually listed by date). Since some materials used in sessions are copyrighted material and some may eventually be published in TAD or other journals, some materials may eventually be removed from this site.

In most cases, soon after a Zoom session there is a link for the recording of the session which is on the Zoom cloud. The player on the Zoom cloud is more sophisticated than that on most local computers, so try this link first to view a recording. Eventually, the Zoom cloud space (temporarily rented) will be reclaimed by Zoom and this link will cease to work. However, you can still access the recording stored on the Polanyi Society website, using the media player on your local machine rather than the more sophisticated player on the Zoom cloud. There is a link identified for the recording on the Polanyi Society website which will use your local media player. Inquiries about materials can be sent to Phil Mullins (mullins@missouriwestern.edu).

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**Academic Papers, Blogs, Dissertations, and Publications**


*Abstract:* The pandemic and some comments about it offer an opportunity to open searching questions about the relation between social policy and practices in contemporary society. This essay does this by considering how the three legs of the stool supporting public response to the pandemic, expertise, authority and the public, have become unstable.


Leandro Muniz recently finished his Ph.D. work with a dissertation (in Portuguese) focusing on Michael Polanyi. Basic information and his Abstract (in English) are below.
Michael Polanyi (1891-1976) is presented by the History of Science and Philosophy as one of the great thinkers of the 20th century, being considered an epistemological innovator and a political conservative. Polanyi is a philosopher recognized for, among other ideas, his appreciation of the importance of practice in scientific activity and, also, for ideas about tacit knowledge.

Polanyi stood out as a staunch opponent of any planning of scientific work initiated outside of science. According to Polanyi, it made no sense to control the scientist's work externally. This political-administrative model causes irreparable damage to the development of new scientific knowledge. From the perspective of Polanyi’s Liberalism, he proposed there is a sharp tension between types of knowledge with much at stake. On one hand, there is scientific or “pure” knowledge and, on the other, there is applied or “technological” knowledge. “Pure” knowledge will collapse and become extinct if scientific inquiry is externally controlled. Acquiring applied knowledge will become the main force driving the interest of private and state companies.

For Polanyi, the search for knowledge must be guided by the network formed by scientists and research groups in a wide range of areas. He called for a society of explorers whose members are personally committed to civil society. The fruits of the discovery must be universally shared in order to create a free and developed world. In this search for knowledge, biology is the closest research area to everyday reality. Philosophy is the area of thought capable of bringing together the network based on an array of new discoveries about reality.

This thesis analyzes and answers some questions related to Polanyi's model of thought. I identify possible philosophical descendants or lineages of Polanyi in different thinkers in different areas of knowledge. From these multiple approaches, I aim to extract the defense of my claim that in Polanyi it is not possible to separate political, epistemological, economical, theological, aesthetical, sociological and scientific thinking. Thinking, for Polanyi, is the amalgamation of the multiplicity of knowledge models, their foundations, methodologies and the structural plurality of reality that, in levels, emerges throughout this creative process.

Polanyi's epistemology is a “fiduciary program” of personal knowledge that is dependent on a personal commitment in the act of knowing, and this commitment relies on the structure of tacit knowledge. Much of Polanyi's philosophy can be better understood in terms of this tacit underpinning and action. My thesis discusses possible origins of Polanyi’s notions about tacit knowledge. I find clues in his accounts of field theory and Brownian motion and also in his discussion of ultrabiology. Much of Polanyi's philosophy can be better understood by examining the tacit roots of Polanyian thought. This also places Polanyi as a thinker of his own time as a person involved in the context that gives rise to his fundamental themes.
Keywords: Personal knowledge; tacit coefficient; personal commitment; epistemology; emergentism.


Abstract: Many believe that if a machine can perform skills typically reserved for human bodies and minds, then those achievements, once thought to be irreducibly tacit, are now shown to be explicitly reducible. This chapter shows how the structure of tacit learning and knowing in humans displays strong parallels to connectionist (Neural Network) architectures and dynamical systems—the computational processes and strategies most successful in machine learning and AI. But rather than reducing bodily skills and human intelligence to mere matter and determinate physical laws, this is shown to be a case of emergence that elevates machines, which can model forms of creativity, intentionality, and freedom.


Abstract: By way of dealing with the creation of an intelligent machine, Ava, the movie Ex Machina (Alex Garland, 2014) engages profoundly and seriously with fundamental issues like personhood: the very question of what it means to be human—but it can also be seen as a dark comedy bedroom farce. In this paper, we attempt a synthesis of these two views. The crux of our argument is that what is revealed by Ex Machina is that the notion of consciousness currently promoted is not only peripheral, but antithetical, to understanding what artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics are really about. Using Ludwig Wittgenstein’s insights, we attempt to show what is misleading about testing a machine for consciousness, what is helpful in trying to get a machine to model human thought, and how the games we choose to play with machines can either be vicariously dehumanizing or can encourage an empathetic extension of language.

Andy Steiger recently submitted and successfully defended his Ph.D. thesis, A Critical Exploration and Theological Critique of Michael Polanyi’s Structured Ontology, at the University of Aberdeen.

Steiger’s thesis seeks to contribute to Polanyian scholarship by exploring and critiquing Polanyi’s structured ontology, particularly as it applies to cybernetics and human persons. Scholarship has tended to focus on Polanyi’s critique of objectivism that led to his philosophical contributions, predominantly in epistemology—what Polanyi calls personal knowledge; however, Steiger shows that Polanyi’s critique is equally tied to his ontology—which can be similarly referenced as personal existence. Although Polanyi himself does not provide a fully developed ontology, Steiger proposes one, pieced together by appealing to the broad corpus of
Polanyi’s published and unpublished works. What emerges from Polanyi’s fragmented ontology is a basic structure connecting epistemology and ontology, built on dual control between a world of particulars, subject to natural shaping—and composites, subject to artificial shaping, as defined by boundary conditions and operational principles. Polanyi demonstrated that persons are able to create meaningful composites and also decipher them, with examples found from observations of language, machines, and even persons. Steiger advances that an appreciation for Polanyi’s moral and duty-bound concern is largely missing from Polanyian scholarship—a concern that underpins Polanyi’s philosophical project and ultimately grounds his ontological conclusions of what defines humanity’s purpose. In critiquing objectivism, Polanyi advanced a more ontologically balanced structure that values both pure and applied science but, given the irreducibility of boundary conditions and operational principles, his ontology requires greater existential top-down priority upon composites and persons in particular. In his dissertation, Steiger concludes that Polanyi’s ontology, applied to human persons, reveals a deontic operational principle that philosophically requires further top-down structural support. Steiger’s critique indicates that theism can provide the top-down support necessary to ground Polanyi’s ontology, without it collapsing into objectivism.

Quaestiones Disputatae Issue on Polanyi

Quaestiones Disputatae is a philosophy journal sponsored by Franciscan University of Steubenville; it addresses questions and topics of contemporary philosophic interest in the spirit of the medieval quaestiones disputatae. Like a number of other journals over the last 50 years, Quaestiones Disputatae is dedicating an issue to Michael Polanyi’s thought (see the list of articles in special issues of other journals here posted in the Polanyi Society web materials). The next issue of Quaestiones Disputatae is one guest edited by Charles Lowney and has the theme “Michael Polanyi’s Social and Political Philosophy, and the Future of Liberalism.” This issue (Volume 11, Issue 1) may be available online by the time TAD 47 (3) is posted in early October 2021 but if not, it should be posted before TAD 48 (1) in February 2022. Online issues of Quaestiones Disputatae (as well as subscription information) are currently available for downloading through Philosophical Documentation Center, but that relationship is changing and soon QD will have its own website. QD’s webpage at Franciscan University is also a point of access for QD and will post updates concerning QD’s upcoming website: Quaestiones Disputatae Institutes and Centers (franciscan.edu). Immediately below is a list of authors and article titles for this issue. Below this are abstracts for these essays.

Michael Polanyi’s Social and Political Philosophy, and the Future of Liberalism

1. Introduction: Charles Lowney
2. Phil Mullins, “The Growth of Thought in Society as a Major Motif in Polanyi’s Philosophy”
4. Struan Jacobs, “Polanyi’s New Liberalism and the Question of Democracy”
5. Eric Howard, “Polanyi and Rawls on Higher Autonomy as the Basis for a Stable Liberal Society”
7. Richard W. Moodey, “Confronting or Denying the Minotaur: ‘Moral Inversion’ Today”
8. Jon Fennell, “Michael Polanyi and the Theologico-Political Problem”

1. Introduction: “Michael Polanyi’s Social and Political Philosophy, and the Future of Liberalism”
   Charles Lowney

This introduction summarizes the main themes of the contributions to this special issue of Quaestiones Disputatae. I draw out a thread that gives the reader a general understanding of Polanyi’s approach, and comment on some issues brought up by the contributing authors. For example, I suggest that there is a stronger Polanyian defense of democracy implicit in Struan Jacob’s paper, and I suggest that Polanyi’s approach to the differences between revelation and philosophy might be happier and more productive than Jon Fennell concludes.

2. “The Growth of Thought in Society as a Major Motif in Polanyi’s Philosophy”
   Phil Mullins

This essay argues that Michael Polanyi regards ideas as extraordinarily important for human beings and that the growth of thought in society is a major theme running through Polanyi’s philosophical perspective from early until late. The importance of ideas and the growth of ideas are motifs that help unify Polanyi’s diverse philosophical writing. However, they are also motifs that make clear important social and political dimensions of Polanyi’s perspective. This historically-oriented discussion comments on Polanyi’s philosophical development and a number of his major publications, lifting up his emphasis upon the importance of ideas and the growth of thought and their bearing on social life.

3. “Liberty and Tradition: Michael Polanyi and the Idea of Progress”
   Edwardo Beira

This essay uses a textual and historical approach to examine the relationship between liberty, tradition, and progress in Michael Polanyi’s thought. I focus on the secular foundations of Polanyi’s ideas, relying on what Polanyi explicitly said in both published and unpublished sources about progress in his era. We will see that stable liberal social orders rely on a dynamism related to traditions and their progress. I then look for differences between Polanyi’s early and late writings, which move from the social and political to the metaphysical and epistemological. We see that although Polanyi criticizes the Enlightenment, he still sees progress guided by its ideals. Finally, I examine how Polanyi's progress fits well with some current ideas of progress that emphasize local action, equality, liberation, and environmental sustainability.
4. “Polanyi’s New Liberalism and the Question of Democracy”
Struan Jacobs

This article has two aims. It seeks to understand the way Michael Polanyi constructed his social-political philosophy. He largely finished this project by 1951 with his essay-collection, *The Logic of Liberty*, capping it in 1958 with his essay “Tyranny and Freedom.” Polanyi emphasizes a new Liberalism, built on dynamic orders, that highlights public freedom and supervisory authority, but the role of democracy in his liberalism seems unclear. The second aim is thus to outline Polanyi’s diffuse ideas of democracy, juxtaposing them with the theory of democracy Karl Popper developed in his book *The Open Society and its Enemies*. While Polanyi may not see it, Popper’s critical rationalism and theory of democracy complement Polanyi’s conceptions, and provide democracy with a stronger defense.

5. “Polanyi and Rawls on Higher Autonomy as the Basis for a Stable Liberal Society”
Eric Howard

Michael Polanyi, the Hungarian chemist turned philosopher, and John Rawls, the American political philosopher, explored the challenges facing the stability of modern liberalism. Both Polanyi and Rawls shared a similar critique of Millian individual autonomy. Despite some striking similarities regarding their views on autonomy, the limits of markets, and the need for some redistributive policies to address wealth inequalities, there has been very little written exploring these affinities. This paper seeks to begin to fill that void by examining the affinities, as well as outlining some significant differences. For instance, both Polanyi’s concept of “public liberty” and Rawls’ use of “political autonomy” are proposed as solutions to problems of stability in modern liberal societies, but while Polanyi invokes metaphysical principles by invoking transcendent values, Rawls believes that political autonomy cannot rest on the metaphysics of a comprehensive moral doctrine.

6. “Three Freedoms and an Emergentist’s Hope for Social Progress”
Charles Lowney

Michael Polanyi’s understanding of science and value, and of social, economic and political systems in a free society, can help us in today’s divisive political climate. Polanyi was conservative in his respect for tradition and the free market, his criticisms of socialist central planning and government control, and his advocacy of an individual’s freedom to follow their passion. But he was also liberal in giving the government a role in controlling the monetary system, and in issuing regulations, taxes and subsidies that reduce harms (e.g., pollution) and promote social goods (e.g., education). Polanyi’s understanding of the emergence of higher-order social structures, and higher-order values provides a “higher middle” ground that help us understand which values (e.g., private liberty, social liberty, or public liberty) take precedence in which contexts. Polanyi provides a basis for a generally formal but “positive” understanding of Rousseau’s general will, and also the basis for a relatively “neutral” but binding political liberalism, along the lines of John Rawls. I argue that Polanyi—who sought to find common ground between socialism and capitalism—is best described as a “liberal conservative,” who seeks social progress in the way that science seeks progress, via both conservative stability and
progressive innovation. I close by asking whether or not Polanyi would be in favor of policies, such as universal health care or a guaranteed minimum income, and find that, to the extent practically possible, he wants our lower needs accommodated if that would promote the vita activa and the exercise of public liberty.

7. “Confronting or Denying the Minotaur: ‘Moral Inversion’ Today”
Richard W. Moodey

In “Confronting the Minotaur: Moral Inversion and Polanyi’s Moral Philosophy,” D.M. Yeager says that diagnosing moral inversion and devising a remedy for it was Michael Polanyi’s “social objective.” The Minotaur was Polanyi’s metaphor for both moral inversion and for the monstrous totalitarian dictatorships generated by moral inversion. In this essay I use the Minotaur to stand also for climate tragedy. I argue that even many environmental activists who urge us to take decisive action “before it’s too late” are denying, rather than confronting, this Minotaur. It’s already too late; humanity is experiencing climate tragedy. Polanyi’s philosophy and social theory cannot eliminate the tragedy, but it can help us to follow Jem Bendell’s “map” for navigating climate tragedy. It contains four points: resilience, relinquishment, restoration, and reconciliation. "The fiduciary program" is Polanyi’s name for his ideal type of moral orientation, and it is the remedy for "moral inversion," his anti-ideal type of moral orientation.

8. “Michael Polanyi and the Theologico-Political Problem”
Jon Fennell

Michael Polanyi in his magnus opus, Personal Knowledge, declares that reason and revelation are so different in kind that they cannot conflict. This assertion appears to deny the existence of the theologico-political problem that, from the earliest years, is central to the writings of Leo Strauss. How is such disagreement possible? What might it teach us? This study, after clarifying the theologico-political problem, establishes that Polanyi’s rigid bifurcation is, ironically, the product of an unnecessary concession to the very modern rationality of which he is a prominent and effective critic. Were Polanyi comprehensively to abandon the modern orientation and instead more fully appreciate pre-modern (Socratic) rationalism, he would help us understand that reason and revelation, due to a common enterprise, rather than speaking past one another, exist perennially in fruitful tension.

The Travel, Grants, and Projects Fund and the Endowment
To simplify our accounting, the Polanyi Society recently consolidated several old funds into the Travel, Grants, and Projects Fund. Disbursements from this new consolidated fund may be made in memory of particular persons. The fund will also continue to support the participation of younger scholars in Society (in-person) meetings. Some new awards and projects aimed at younger scholars may soon be added.
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. The Walter B. Mead estate in 2019 provided a substantial contribution to the Endowment. The Polanyi Society Endowment is slowly growing, and each year modest distributions help cover expenses.

Please support the Travel, Grants, and Projects Fund and the Polanyi Society Endowment by sending a tax-deductible contribution to The Polanyi Society, C/O Charles Lowney, Treasurer, 10 Jordan Street, Lexington, VA, 24450. Bequests and large donations are very important to the Society, but the many smaller donations to the Society, often made in conjunction with dues payment, are also significant and appreciated. Checks should be made out to the Polanyi Society and, if so intended, marked Travel, Grants, and Projects or Endowment. Unmarked donations will go toward general operating expenses. You can also directly access the Polanyi Society PayPal button (with accompanying tutorial) to make a donation:

http://polanyisociety.org/paypal/donate.html

All PayPal transactions for the Polanyi Society are is handled on the secure PayPal site.

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**Back Issues of TAD Available for Purchase**

A limited number of back printed 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 through 46:1 (the final printed issue) 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 46:1, 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 the back issues requested.