

THE POLANYI SOCIETY

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APOLOGIA

The publication of the Polanyi Society Newsletter has been delayed by the change in co-ordinators. Dr. Bruno Manno, last year's co-ordinator, took an academic leave from his position at the University of Dayton and turned over the co-ordination to me. On November 14, just a few days before the "Polanyi and Theological Ethics" Symposium at the American Academy of Religion meeting in New Orleans, which I was to chair, I had a heart ailment which led to hospitalization immediately and open heart surgery in December. Now after several months of rest and of part time teaching, I am able to resume the activities of co-ordinating the Polanyi Society and anticipate several Newsletters for this academic year. I regret very much the discommodiousness of these circumstances. R.G.

Literary Executor of Polanyi Papers Honored

The Reverend Professor T. F. Torrance of Edinburgh University, literary executor of the Michael Polanyi papers, has been honored in 1978 with the awarding of the Templeton Foundation Prize for Progress in Religion. The award of \$97,000 was presented at Buckingham Palace by the Duke of Windsor and followed by a banquet at Guildhall, London. In his acceptance address, Professor Torrance spoke of Polanyi as follows:

The old-fashioned science that tried to reduce everything to hard causal connections in the rigidly mechanistic universe damaged the advance of knowledge in all the higher levels with which we are concerned in our culture, but that is now going and the new science gives ample room for the human sciences and the sciences of the spirit, and all sciences concerned with living connections, within the framework of an open-structured, dynamic universe in which the human person is not suffocated but can breathe freely transcendent air, and yet be profoundly concerned with scientific understanding of the whole complex of connections that make up our universe. No one has pioneered this way of heuristic thinking in science more than Michael Polanyi whose thought reveals an unrivalled subtlety and delicacy in showing how the different levels of human understanding are co-ordinated in such a semantic focus that meaning is brought back to our world with new force and direction, for here instead of fragmenting in disintegrating specialisations the whole enterprise of science recovers in depth and breadth an uplifting unitary outlook that begins

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to match the character of the universe itself, and indeed the relation of the universe to God its transcendent Creator and Sustainer. (THE TEMPLETON PRIZE 1978, Dublin, Ireland: Lismore Press)

Prof. Torrance was also honored by The American Scientific Affiliation and Oxford University Press at a forum at Princeton Theological Seminary in October of 1978 where he spoke on "Christian Theology in the Context of Scientific Revolution." Two of Torrance's books pertaining to this theme, THEOLOGICAL SCIENCE and SPACE, TIME AND INCARNATION, are now available in paperback.

NEW IMPLICATIONS OF POLANYI'S EPISTEMOLOGY WITHIN THE ARTS

by Doug Adams

New articles stressing new implications of Polanyi's epistemology within the Arts have appeared since our last survey which was entitled "Implications of Polanyi's Thought Within the Arts: A Bibliographic Essay." The Polanyi Society Newsletter (Spring 1975), pp. 3-5. Notice of these articles is given below. Other articles of which Society members are aware should be sent to Doug Adams at Pacific School of Religion, 1798 Scenic Avenue., Berkeley, California to be included in future notices.

Adams, Doug; and Mullins, Phil, "Meaning With the Arts: The Implications of Polanyi's Epistemology For Aesthetics," Studia Mystica (Summer 1978), pp. 28-48. The ways in which a person must hold loosely to the forms already known in order to be newly informed by an art work are elaborated in terms of Polanyi's tacit-explicit structure, the via negativa in meditation, and methods employed in modern art museums and literary criticism.

Adams, Doug; and Mullins, Phil, "Deciding With Judgment: Implications of Polanyi's Thought for Ethics," (paper for "Polanyi and Theological Ethics Symposium" the American Academy of Religion New Orleans Annual Meeting, 1978), 14 pp. The role of aesthetics in ethics is one dimension in this paper that explores the reliance on imagination in procedures of judges and juries. These procedures present a paradigm for ethicists that would help us reassess pluralism more affirmatively. The article moves beyond the observations of Polanyi in Personal Knowledge and Elizabeth Sewall in "Law Courts and Dreams" (The Logic of Personal Knowledge, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961) in suggesting a new paradigm for ethicists that values the observations of those inexperienced in the subjects under discussion.

BRIEF BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Greene, Marjorie. "Sociobiology and the Human Mind." Society, September-October, 1978, pp. 23-27. Marjorie Greene, a distinguished American philosopher and a prominent Polanyi interpreter, takes on sociobiology in this issue of Society devoted to that topic. In a way reminiscent of Personal Knowledge, she argues against a reduction of the mental to the biological. In her characteristically incisive and cordial style, she carves up sociobiology and dismisses this "new synthesis" in the hope that it "may soon join other interesting relics that lie about the lumber room of our intellectual history." (from Phil Mullins)

Gelwick, Richard. "What It Means To Be Human," WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN: ESSAYS IN PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY, POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY, Ed. Ross Fitzgerald, Pergamon Press, 1978, pp. 142-63. In this volume of essays by thinkers from England, Canada, the United States, and Australia, Gelwick argues that the meaning of our humanity is most clearly seen in our creativity. Following the concepts of "A Society of Explorers," he traces the objectivist

eclipse of creativity; Polanyi's illumination of science and creativity, Polanyi's contribution to understanding intuition, and Polanyi's recognition that creativity is "I-Thou." The twelve other essays in the volume also present views relevant to the impact of science upon our understanding of human nature today.

CONVIVIUM: Michael Polanyi Newsletter, ed. Dr. R. J. Brownhill, Number 6 (Summer, 1978). This issue reports the conference of the British Society of Aesthetics on "Polanyi and Poetry" in April, 1978. Persons wishing to obtain copies of CONVIVIUM should write to Dr. Brownhill at the Department of Philosophy, University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey GU2 5XH. Annual overseas subscription is \$5.00.

IN MEMORIAN

Dr. John Brennan, member of the Polanyi Society and also of CONVIVIUM, died in a fire last May. He was a scholar of Polanyi's thought and participated in the Dayton Conference of May, 1972, that led to the founding of the Polanyi Society. His recent book, THE OPEN TEXTURE OF MORAL CONCEPTS, showed his power as a moral philosopher. Prof. John Apczynski will review this book in a future issue of the NEWSLETTER. We deeply regret the tragic loss of Dr. Brennan.

REPORT ON POLANYI CONSULTATION, AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION San Francisco, December 1977

Approximately fifty members of the Polanyi Society and observers participated in a morning session of the American Academy of Religion devoted to implications of Polanyi's philosophy for Christian Theology. Three papers circulated in advance were discussed as follows.

- 1) Professor Charles F. McCoy, Pacific School of Religion and Graduate Theological Union, "Polanyi and Pluralistic Theology", 10 pp.

In his abstract Professor McCoy said: "Pluralism has become increasingly important in the contemporary world, with special significance and problems for theology. The thought of Michael Polanyi can be helpful formulating a theology which takes pluralism seriously yet remains 'belief-fully realistic.' In particular Polanyi is instructive when one approaches theology, as does the author of this paper, from the perspective of a federalism informed by the biblical notion of covenant, by the Platonic conception of dialectic, and by the fruitful line of American thought represented by Peirce, James, Royce, Mead, and H. Richard Niebuhr. Polanyi's contributions to this theology may be summarized under several headings: 1) his rejection of the objective subjective dichotomy in epistemology and his inauguration of the post-critical era in human thought; 2) his philosophic realism rooted in a fiduciary understanding of human location; 3) his view of knowing as personal, communal, and historical; and 4) his view of truth which is federal rather than substantialist, comprehensive rather than positivistic, and oriented as much toward the future as toward the past.

In discussing the importance of Polanyi's "Post-Critical" philosophy, McCoy said that "location is no longer an embarrassment." "It is no longer necessary to pretend to have transcended all human location and perspective in order to discuss our own or other

religious and cultural frames." This sense of the wholeness of knowing and the fiduciary character of the knower, whether believer or unbeliever, formed a central theme throughout the paper. It is expressed in the way we may be particularly situated within differing histories and communities and also in pursuit of the truth. McCoy said "such a view permits us to affirm the plural character of communities of commitment and interpretation in our world and to appreciate the seriousness of the universal intent of others." He concluded by showing that such a sense of truth makes it possible for us to understand the truth as oriented as much toward the future as toward the past and "therefore pluralism becomes not a peril but the means for appropriating liberation and receiving the future."

2) Robert T. Osborn, Duke University, "Polanyi and Liberation Theology", 41 pp.

Professor Osborn did not provide an abstract of his paper, but in his conclusion he said:

"I have sought to make heuristic use of Polanyi's epistemology in analysis of some aspects of so-called liberation theology. After a brief presentation of one example of liberation theology, I analyzed the concept of the "person" in Polanyi's interpretation of personal knowledge in order then, by means of a critique from the perspective of liberation theology, to separate Polanyi's epistemology from ontological and ideological commitment which hamper its usefulness for an analysis of liberation theology. I contended that Polanyi was committed to an undialectically rationalistic view of reality, whereas liberation theology opts for a dialectical materialism, understanding this not in deterministic nor necessarily in orthodox Marxist fashion, but in historical, eschatological terms. With these basic, formal elements of Polanyi's epistemology distinguished from his ontology and ideology, I was able to show how, *mutatis mutandis*, it clarifies the nature of the theological problem, the role of praxis as an indwelling of the problem and the indwelling of the theological past as a tool, and the heuristic function of the theological vision.

In the first part of the paper he described Latin American liberation theology in the perspective of Jon Sobrino of San Salvador. The common denominator of liberation theology is its "contextualisation within a concrete historical situation that is characterized by oppression and suffering." Contrasting Latin American liberation theology, Sobrino, says Osborn, sees European theology as "university" theology and Latin American theology as "political" theology. The critical difference is that the European tradition has clarified more the meaning of faith for the subject while Latin American liberation theology has been more concerned in liberating "reality from its wretchedness, for it is this that has obscured the meaning of faith." Furthermore, Sobrino shows that in traditional Catholic theology the solution to the problem of theological understanding has been sought "in the nature of a development or fulfillment of the present situation, whereas in liberation theology . . . the solution must involve both a contradiction and a transformation of the present reality." The contrast is sharpened with Osborn's words, "the beginning of discovery is not wonder, as tradition has held, but sorrow and pain." Finally, the contrast between European theology and Latin American theology is expressed forcefully in this statement, "the death of God . . . refers in European theology and the American tradition to the death of human knowledge and the personal experience of God--i.e. . . ., to the loss of meaning when revelation and the understanding of reality appear irreconcilable." "In Liberation theology, the death of God is the death of the suffering and oppressed, the implication of the apparent failure of God to transform reality according to his will."

Next Osborn took up critically his understanding of Polanyi from the perspective of liberation theology. This particular criticism produced much debate and discussion at the meeting. He said that "Polanyi's notion of personhood is highly individualistic and elitist. . . ." Secondly, Osborn asserted that "Polanyi's person is pre-eminently the rational individual." Thirdly, Osborn said that in Polanyi "the rational individual is the cosmic person, the rational microcosm centered in the rationally ordered material macrocosm or universe." The ideal person as conceived by Polanyi then becomes more like the scientist and the purpose of a free society is to give freedom to its "culturally elite, above all to its scientists, to pursue truth". Finally, in Polanyi's thought "the essential person is also the moral person, the person who is driven by 'moral passion' in the pursuit of truth".

In the next section of Osborn's paper, he developed a critique of Polanyi's view and charged Polanyi with emphasizing the freedom and role of the person mainly in the pursuit of cosmic truth. The result of this emphasis, according to Osborn, is that Polanyi does not recognize adequately the values of the person and the community because these are used mainly for attending to the discovery of rational and cosmic truth. Osborn makes his point by comparing the role of the body in both types of thought. In liberation theology, "the body is possibility and reality of being located in the material world" For Polanyi, "the body is essentially a tool for attending to truth." Polanyi's view of history moves from concreteness to the eternal and timeless. On the other hand, liberation theology moves to the human in a social, personal, relational, material reality that belongs essentially to time and history. Osborn then stated that Polanyi would have helpful implications for liberation theology only if his understanding of the person were amended according to the view of liberation theology.

Having made these criticisms, Osborn turned the tables and looked at what Polanyi's point of view contributes to liberation theology. Here the emphasis was upon the way liberation theology understands human suffering as a theological problem. Within liberation theology, according to Osborn, there seems to be disagreement on when human suffering becomes a theological problem. Polanyi's analysis of the relation of a problem to tacit knowing shows that "it is the very logic of a radical problem that it is not self-evident . . .," and when "liberation theology says that the problem to which theology addresses itself is the oppression, suffering and death of man and that this problem is so radical as to be theological in its implication of the death of God, then a Polanyian analysis would strongly suggest that presupposed in the recognition of the problem is a prior vision of something like resurrection" A further contribution of Polanyi would be to show that not only the problem but also the discoverer must be "involved in the community of faith seeking to understand the general phenomena in which the problem arises." Another Polanyian contribution would be to clarify the indwelling of a problem for liberation theology. Osborn notes a tendency to "apotheosize a situation" by suggesting that if one is Latin, black or female it is not only to have a problem but to possess a solution. In Polanyian terms however, one indwells the problem not only to attend to it but also to attend from it.

Finally Osborn's last section dealt with the theological vision in liberation theology and Polanyi. Here he found a need for two changes growing out of Polanyi's own thought. The first is to note that "the vision of a new, heretofore undiscovered scientific truth, is personal in the sense of individualistic, the new theological vision is not, at least at the primary level." "It is personal, but communal as opposed to

individual". The second change is that truth that the scientist discovers is already ontologically present. Whereas the truth found by the theologian ontologically is not yet present. "It is the wholly other new and renewing theology of the God who comes as historical event of Revelation." In this way, Osborn seems to give a more radical heuristic emphasis to theology than to science." One can anticipate the final achievement of scientific discovery when the vision becomes finally explicit and unambiguously articulated." "That possibility is always ahead of the theologian; he neither knows nor anticipates a final, unequivocal statement." "Theology is always in a new quest of its old vision; always indwelling a present vision in order to attend to the reality it represents unto the end of a reformulation of the vision."

3) Professor Joseph Kroger, St. Michael's College, "A Theology of Discovery", 22 pp.

In his abstract Professor Kroger said:

This paper explores some implications of Michael Polanyi's "logic of discovery" for theology's self-reflective task of understanding its own nature and operations--specifically, in this case, the task of differentiating and relating various theological specialties (historical, systematic and practical) within a comprehensive view of theological understanding as a whole. While there are many different ways of distinguishing specializations in theology, the approach adopted here is "functional", i.e. grounded in an account of the methodical process of discovery. The logic of tacit integration reveals the structure of inquiry to be an integral process which falls into three stages: the heuristic surmise of a problem (discerning clues which anticipate discovery), the passionate quest for coherence (systematically integrating clues), and the persuasive claim to discovery (affirming the true significance of clues and their bearing on future inquiry). A differentiation of specializations based on the structure of tacit knowing discloses three distinct moments of theological discovery, each centering on a logically different kind of question: historical theology indwells tradition to discover what Christian faith has been, systematic theology seeks a coherent integration of what Christian faith is, and practical theology demonstrates relevance by affirming what Christian faith should now become.

Professor Kroger's paper, as suggested in his abstract focuses primarily on the nature of theological method in the light of Polanyi's epistemological emphasis on discovery. The paper was marked by a very strong internal consistency that can be seen in the following ways. First, Kroger showed how Polanyi's logic of discovery applies in the same way to all sciences whether theological or not. He also showed that this logic of discovery applies to each of the major theological disciplines, but with a distinctive emphasis, so that each part of theological enterprise has a common epistemological method. Having seen the coherence of the whole of theology, he then took Polanyi's "cognitional" theory into showing how it illuminates the three major areas of theological function, historical, systematic and practical. Historical theology is more related to what Polanyi calls the "heuristic surmise of a problem", though never separated completely from the other movements of integration toward discovery. Systematic theology is more related to the "passionate quest for a solution, and also never separated from the other processes of integration. Finally practical theology is more related to "the persuasive claim to discovery," and not separated completely from the other movements of tacit integration and

discovery. In this way, Kroger is able to show how Polanyi's philosophy helps each major area of theological inquiry and at the same time shows their mutual interdependence and partnership in a comprehensive inquiry. It is the recognition of this set of relationships within theology to which Kroger claims Polanyi makes his most important theological contribution. He says, "it is my firm belief that the most significant theological implications of Polanyi's thought are those which bear on the question of method--a question which falls within the scope of fundamental or foundational theology." The two concluding paragraphs of Kroger's paper show his emphasis on Polanyi's contribution to this task.

The special task of foundational theology is to provide theology with a method and with criteria of meaning and truth firmly rooted in cognitional theory. It answers the question, "What is theology?" In doing so, foundational theology clarifies the various tasks theologians perform and indicates how each presupposes and complements the others. As a theological specialty, the foundational task differs from the specialties of historical, systematic and practical theology--which constitute moments in the integral three-phase process of theological discovery--in its fully self-reflective character. Thus, foundational theology is not directly concerned with the objects that theologians discover: the witness of faith (historical); the human situation (practical), and their integration (systematic), but rather it is concerned with the operations that theologians perform. It seeks, in short, to discover the conditions and possibilities of theological discovery itself.

The importance of the foundational task for theology as such makes it incumbent on all theologians in each of the three functional specialties to engage in reflection on their own operations and criteria of discovery and to establish communications between them. At the same time, the difficulty of the foundational task means that some theologians will make this task the object of their special attention. It is my belief that those who do will find the cognitional theory of Polanyi, in particular his account of the informal logic of scientific discovery in terms of a three-phase process of tacit integration, to be an invaluable philosophical resource.

Besides the above discussions in Kroger's paper, two other features should be noticed. First, is his distinction between theology as science and religion as faith. He compares theology as science to Polanyi's distinction in Meaning where he speaks of "self-centered" integrations as belonging more to the scientific act of discovery or theoretical meaning through self appropriation. He associates religion with Polanyi's use of "self-giving" integrations described in experiential acts of discovery that achieve existential meaning through self-surrender. Kroger therefore says "religion or faith . . . is an existential act of self-giving integration while theology is a scientific act of self-centered integration." "Thus as the science of religion, theology is the integration of an integration, that is, a self-centered integration (scientific and theoretical) of a self-giving integration (religious and existential)." The other feature to be noted is Kroger's discussion of how Polanyi overcomes the "paradox of understanding," that is, faith vs. reason. By Polanyi's model of discovery Kroger says, "it becomes clear in what sense rationality implies a faith commitment and in what sense faith demands a rational quest for understanding."

Out of the discussion of these papers a common problem was recognized for the next discussion at the American Academy of Religion. With McCoy's paper pointing to the

usefulness of Polanyi's work in looking at pluralistic issues, and Osborn's paper sharply raising questions about Polanyi's relevance to liberation theology, and finally Kroger's paper showing that theology drives toward the relevance of its discoveries for authentic human existence as expressed in practical theology, it was decided to focus on the problem of "Polanyi and Theological Ethics." The papers of that meeting will be reported in the next issue of the Polanyi Society Newsletter.

NEW RELIGIOUS STUDIES COORDINATOR

As indicated on the letterhead, Dr. Phil Mullens of Missouri Western State College has assumed the responsibilities for coordinating the Polanyi Society's efforts in Religious Studies. Plans for the next American Academy of Religion meeting are now in progress. A request has been made to the AAR for the Polanyi Society to be recognized as an affiliated organization which will give us the freedom to hold our own meetings as we design them at the annual meeting. So far there has not been a final response to our request. Dr. Mullens hopes to have an announcement for the next Newsletter this Spring.