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BOOK REVIEW

John V. Apczynski, St. Bonaventure University

John M. Brennan. The Open-Texture of Moral Concepts. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1977. Pp. 171.

(The following review, besides being informative to Polanyi Scholars, is also indicative of Brennan's influence. Professor Apczynski was once a student of Brennan when Brennan was teaching in the United States. After Brennan went to Oxford, it was through a friend of Brennan that Apczynski heard about Personal Knowledge. Later Apczynski wrote his doctoral dissertation on Polanyi, Doers of the Word, Scholar's Press, 1977.)

John Brennan's The Open Texture of Moral Concepts is a provocative argument intended to substantiate the claim that ethical discourse is a cognitive activity conducted from a unique (i.e., non-reducible) point of view, whose disputes are in principle resolvable by rational procedures because such discourse requires the acceptance of moral standards with claims to universal validity. The intriguing feature of the argument is that it bypasses (one is tempted to say goes beyond) the frame of reference within which the debate on the cognitive status of ethical propositions has been conducted in contemporary analytic philosophy.

For the students of Polanyi, it must be emphasized that Brennan has not attempted an exegetical application of Polanyian principles to the question of the status of ethical discourse. The argument, in fact, is dependent upon insights drawn from several thinkers. With respect to the technical statement of the argument in terms of moral philosophy, Brennan acknowledges the work of Prior, Kovesi, Mitchell, and Lucas. The principal influence for Brennan's overall perspective, however, is undoubtedly Michael Polanyi. This is evident from the fundamental conviction from which Brennan writes, namely "that the only plausible approach to the question of the basis of ethics is to work back toward it from a careful study of the practice of which it is the basis"(10). The imposition of an a priori foundation on ethics, whether drawn from logical or factual discourse, vitiates the entire procedure, just as Polanyi discovered to be the case with prevailing conceptions of scientific knowledge. Brennan's procedure, accordingly, is to try to determine whether any "first principles" are capable of being discovered in moral discourse through a careful analysis of the process of moral discourse itself. Brennan's is the ambitious, almost audacious, attempt to do for one aspect of moral discourse what Polanyi attempted to do for knowledge in general.

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The argument begins, appropriately enough, with an analysis of the phenomenon of moral perplexity. Such perplexity does not derive principally from any decision on our part, nor from an extensive analysis of the "facts" about which the perplexity ostensibly revolves. Rather, the perplexity derives from the context of meaning within which it arises. This context is the "moral point of view" and is irreducible to any other. Without moral standards, in other words, there would never be any moral perplexity.

What moral standards do is to define certain classes of action as appropriate or inappropriate. Such classification of actions is governed by moral concepts. Moral judgments are thus affirmations that a particular action in fact is right or wrong because it is a member of a class of actions governed by a moral concept. This means, furthermore, that moral judgments have interpersonal validity, at least in the sense that the cognitive content of the moral concept would allow one to claim that anyone who considers the case properly would agree that what has been judged appropriate in light of the moral concept is in fact so.

In the second part of the work Brennan examines the question of whether ethical disputes can in principle be settled. Here he argues that moral concepts have an underlying "rationale" which governs their use. Unlike certain formal concepts, however, ethical concepts are "open-textured" in the sense that the necessary and sufficient conditions for their correct application cannot be explicitly stated (104). Such "boundary questions" can be settled if there are some "objective" controls. These are available even though, as in the case of the verification of a scientific hypothesis, the explication of its rationale remains essentially incomplete. The reason moral concept can be explicated is that there is an established "sense" of the term which consists in the rationale and its explication. From these considerations Brennan identifies four types of moral problem, depending on (1) questions of fact, (2) the need for further explication of the concept in light of its rationale, (3) doubts as to the correctness of the explication, and (4) doubt as the validity of the rationale itself (135). Moral problems of these types are then shown to be capable of resolution in principle.

The scope of Brennan's study is at once modest and momentous. It requires a perspectival shift which allows the distinctively moral point of view to function in ethical theory. When it does, moral concepts can be understood to be governed by a rationale and moral judgments by logical consistency. Ethics, therefore, is a rational and cognitive activity. Further crucial issues, such as the relationship of non-moral beliefs to ethical beliefs and the "basis" of ethics itself, are not dealt with specifically. Yet the clarification of the status of moral discourse as cognitive provides a rich beginning for pursuing these questions.

What I have attempted here is not a critical evaluation of Brennan's argument, but simply a brief statement of its contours, with two ends in view. I hope that those whose primary interests lie in exploring the implications of Polanyi's thought will be encouraged to work through the argument on their own. For here is a creative model which perhaps may be emulated in other realms of inquiry. For those who, unlike myself, are professionally trained in moral philosophy, I would hope that they explore the intricate details of the argument and offer careful analyses of its strengths and weaknesses. I believe it is a work that merits such consideration.

REPORT ON POLANYI AND THEOLOGICAL ETHICS SYMPOSIUM
New Orleans, 1978

Professor Phil Mullins of Missouri Western State College reports that thirty-three persons participated in the symposium on "Polanyi and Theological Ethics" at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in New Orleans, Nov. 18-21, 1978. The reception of the four papers for discussion was very good and discussion was lively. Mullins further reported that there were fundamental differences over how Polanyi is to be understood. An example of these differences was the question of whether Polanyi's notion of truth is dynamic or whether truth is already complete waiting for discovery. There was not enough time unfortunately to explore all of the papers thoroughly and the last paper of the day especially suffered the lack of time.

Following the symposium, a business session was held with a number of suggestions made for the future including wider advertisement of these meetings, more regular publication of the NEWSLETTER, and topics for future sessions such as Polanyi's implications for ecology or for theology as story. The following sections are summaries of the four papers considered at this year's symposium. In order to have more papers, presentations were limited to approximately ten pages. The papers were circulated in advance in order that most of the time could be devoted to the discussion.

- 1) Professor Phil Mullins, Missouri Western State College, and Professor Doug Adams, Pacific School of Religion, "Deciding With Judgment: Implications of Polanyi's Thought for Ethics," 14 pp.

The paper treats its subject in four parts: 1) Polanyi's critique of objectivism: a reaffirmation and re-interpretation of conscience; 2) The art of judgment; 3) Value pluralism: Polanyian responses; and 4) Ethics and the imagination. In the first part Mullins and Adams develop the importance of the person in Polanyi's thought. "Polanyi ...transposes the problem of knowledge into a problem of human personhood which he resolves by affirming persons as active, creative, responsible heirs of tradition. Polanyi's philosophical perspective in terms of its usefulness for moral philosophy must thus be recognized as a perspective intensely interested in persons and attentive to their capabilities and modes of functioning." Polanyi's concern for the knower as a person grew out of his understanding of the way conscience plays a role in deciding about knowledge. "Personal judgment is pervasive and cannot be avoided," but the criteria of judgment are largely tacit. "Conscience thus takes on a certain 'deep structure.'" Polanyi's grasp of tacit knowing means that 'ethicists must study persons and decision-making in terms of their larger human involvements in a social and historical context which informs perceptions."

In the second section on "The Art of Judgment," Mullins and Adams show how Polanyi's theory of tacit knowing and his understanding of judgment in courts of law "undermines for ethics the insistence that good ethical decisions can be made only when a complete specification of ultimate criteria is developed." A judge's decision is a "traditional, skillful activity." In terms of tacit knowing, the judicial decision is an integrative action and "is the basis for after-the-act explicit sorting out of rational criteria...." Furthermore, articulate reasons do not "adequately represent the dynamic nature of what were proximally held elements shaping judgment." "Reasons thus appear to be rules of art in matters of judgment." Therefore, "ethics as a discipline certainly ought not to be exclusively devoted to rational argumentation." "...There are practical public arts which underlie our doctrinal or rational formulations about action; it is these public arts which the discipline of ethics must artfully learn to shape." "As popular symbols for justice (the scales and blindfold) suggest, justice involves a sense of balance and not the explicitness we associate with sight."

Next Polanyi's thought is developed with respect to living a creative moral life in a pluralistic world. First, Polanyi accepts that the person is socially rooted in a community where values are taken up and become the subsidiaries of our personal judgments. Second, Polanyi values this human social location as "an important ground of human knowing." Polanyi's view then contradicts ethical relativism because he sees our involvement in diverse communities as the way "persons have the ability to discover and have knowledge of aspects of reality." "Responsible human judgments, while reflective of the social conditioning of persons, can and must be judgments of universal intent." "Taken together, these elements of Polanyi's perspective suggest a novel approach.... On the one hand, Polanyi is clearly unwilling to say that knowledge valuing and 'truth' are relative to the individual. On the other hand, Polanyi can be interpreted as in principle affirming a certain relativity among different communities or social contexts. The resolution of such relativity rests finally in personal commitment." "Polanyi seems to counsel while recognizing, respecting, and learning from the moral intuitions and perceptions of those informed by another community or interpretation. ...Polanyi's judgment claims 'Here I stand; I can do no other.' But a third clause, indicative of Polanyi's sympathetic understanding of the dynamics of human judgment, might well be added to this dictum: 'Here I stand; I can do no other; but I understand why you judge as you do.'" Rather than a hinderance, pluralism becomes a "boon" in Polanyi's philosophy. "Human knowledge as personal knowledge is never absolutely final." "...The future may reveal a deeper, more comprehensive and more beautiful pattern within which a particular understanding may fit." The pluralism of moral life is then a creative opportunity providing occasions for "re-making ourselves and for re-learning the art of judgment.

In the final section, Mullins and Adams explore the implications of "Polanyian poet" Elizabeth Sewell, as well as Polanyi himself, and they argue that the role of the jury in matters of ethical judgment demonstrates the way that tacit knowing, imagination, art, or comprehensive discernment are crucial. Balanced against the formalized expertise of the judge and the lawyers is the unformalized, but perceptive skill of the jurors. This example of decision making is "a radical shift from the idealized image of disembodied thought in objectivism...." Mullins and Adams then conclude that "The image for doing ethics and deciding with judgment is the jury."

- 2) Professor David W. Rutledge, University of Houston, "A Caveat on the Rationalism of Polanyi," 13 pp.

The main concern of this paper for Polanyi and theological ethics is to caution followers and opponents of Polanyi in their understanding of Polanyi's ideas in terms of traditional and conventional notions. Rutledge argues throughout that Polanyi is using familiar words and concepts in a new way arising from Polanyi's fresh grappling with knowing and doing. Furthermore, Rutledge understands Polanyi's purpose not to be the presentation of a complete and finished theory, but the beginning of a new approach that calls others into taking their own life more fully and seriously than they could under the ideal of objectivism. Rutledge states in his final conclusion:

But in each and every case we must remember not to use Polanyi's thought as a blueprint, or rule, or calculus, the implementation of which will reveal to us the right thing to do. In the Christian scheme each man and woman must learn for himself and herself - patiently and painfully - how to indwell the mysterious clues of his life so that an ultimate answer may be heard.

Besides this overall aim, Rutledge especially focuses on the problem of understanding the meaning of Polanyi's rationalism by showing how two critics, Robert Osborn and Paul Holmer, have partly misconstrued Polanyi's thought, recognizing, however, that each has made significant contributions to Polanyi discussion.

Rutledge finds it striking that Polanyi is accused of being both an irrationalist and also a rationalist. Such contradictory claims "provide us with our first clue: reading Polanyi is a deceptive and hazardous enterprise." To illuminate this problem, Rutledge extracts "five charges from the general critiques of Polanyi presented by Robert Osborn and Paul Holmer." These charges are:

(1) Polanyi defines Man as essentially, primarily rational, neglecting other dimensions of faith, freedom, will, or spirit (Osborn). (2) Polanyi's own analysis of the fiduciary base of knowing clearly establishes the priority of faith over reason, but he fails to take this seriously (Osborn). (3) Polanyi understands human rationality solely in terms of a scientific paradigm... (Osborn). (4) Polanyi is insensitive to the subtle ways in which our presuppositions about what words mean can confuse our thinking about those words (Holmer). (5) Polanyi is still the metaphysician... arguing that (a) a fundamental structure of human reason exists and can be isolated; (b) in "tacit knowing he has found such a structure; and (c) it is present in all human intellection... (Holmer).

Taking up the first two charges, Rutledge acknowledges "that Polanyi understands men primarily through their intellectual activities without having to agree that he views the 'nature of man' as 'rationalistic.'" "For to criticize him in this way is to read him as some sort of metaphysician within the mainstream of the philosophical tradition, and to assume that from PK we can abstract an ontology, an anthropology, even a nascent theology, in addition to an epistemology." "To do this indicates that we do not see Polanyi's approach as fundamentally, even radically, at odds with our usual ways of talking." Looking at Polanyi's own discussion of "the mind," Rutledge notices how this notion is being redirected toward newer meaning. A key example is the ending of PK where Polanyi equates "the mind" with "centres of thought and responsibility." This passage "immediately draws us into Polanyi's redefinition of knowing in terms of the body, the convivial extensions of the individual mind, and the person who 'unites' these many instances in one center, one knower." Here 'responsibility' "is a clue to the wider circles of knowing which Polanyi discussed under 'commitment,' 'intellectual passions,' 'affirmations,' and 'acceptance of calling.'" Rutledge grants that there is "a kind of rationalism" in Polanyi, but he sees Polanyi subtly adjusting our conceptions of "what mind might mean to include a wide variety of human modes and activities which would not be so included in traditional accounts."

The same passage is also used by Rutledge to show how Polanyi "undercuts a simplistic view of 'faith' and 'reason' as discrete entities." "The use of 'fiduciary'... is ubiquitous and complex in PK, and cannot be simply translated as 'faith.' It is explained through such terms as 'affiliation,' 'conviction,' 'passion,' 'reliance,' 'assent,' 'accredit,' and 'grace.'" Polanyi "sees the fiduciary and rational modes ('relying on' and 'attending to') as distinct ways of handling a given experience, as different postures we adopt toward the same thing."

The confusion concerning Polanyi's rationalism is explained by understanding Polanyi's focus upon knowing in science. "Polanyi's starting point does not reflect a prior conviction that science was the place to start, for that starting point was given to him by his culture." "Secondly we should note that in solving the problem posed by a standard of objectivity, he actually freed knowledge from the exclusively scientific domain to which positivism had consigned it." "Third, a large portion of Polanyi's work is concerned with extra-scientific matters, and the argument of PK itself moves constantly between individual and social poles." "Polanyi's strength stems directly from his focus on the field he knew so thoroughly

...his work was important, not because it provided an epistemological summa, but because it countered the malign myths of Absolute Certainty and Strict Objectivity."

Turning to the fourth charge, Polanyi's confusing use of language, Holmer claims that Polanyi not only observed the "presence of unspecifiable feature in knowing, denoted by such words as 'subsidiary' or 'tacit,' but Polanyi also "committed the speculative sin of creating substantitive realities (the 'structure' of tacit knowing) where there is only grammar. 'The structure' of tacit knowing, like 'the nature of knowledge,' is a body, and should be exorcised, not courted." While such linguistic philosophy may be applied to Polanyi, Rutledge points out that it must also acknowledge "the scientific setting of Polanyi's reflections..." "'Tacit' and 'subsidiary' ...have a specific origin in Gestalt psychology's experiments with perception..." "On the grounds of the experimental evidence of the psychologists, 'tacit,' and 'subsidiary'...refer to a particular, observable kind of behavior which, though it cannot be completely described experimentally, most certainly exists." Rutledge does concur with Holmer in seeing 'very thin ice under'the structure' of tacit knowing, but Rutledge concurs because he thinks Polanyi was more concerned in PK with "pointing a way, not propounding a theory." Polanyi does speak in TD of "my theory of knowledge," yet Rutledge sees enough variance in all of Polanyi's writings and sees FK as the principal standard so that he cautions those who attack Polanyi solely on the basis of his shorter works. At least it is clear that "'a structure of knowing' is not obviously ungrammatical or illogical, for its sense depends on the particular ways and contexts in which it is used." Finally, on Polanyi's use of language, Rutledge points out that some scholars - Daly, High, Churchill, and Poteat - have regarded Polanyi an "an important model for the contextual exegesis of a word and its near relations."

To the fifth charge of Polanyi's being a metaphysician, Rutledge offers four considerations. The first is that PK is the crucial text for Polanyi interpretations and "that work is not metaphysical in the theory-laden sense...It is an invitation to look at things from a new perspective, not the proclamation of a new theory..." Second, metaphysics needs to be clearly defined. "...Even Wittgenstein and Ryle seem bent on saying things about language that are generally so." Third,..."Holmer's charge is launched by a view which is itself 'metaphysical.'" We might call Holmer's the minimalist' test, whose principle is 'the less asserted, the more reasonable the statement.'" Fourth, "Polanyi's view of knowing is such that a total 'theory' of it is impossible."

From these perspectives, Rutledge concluded that "there is an obvious need to understand Polanyi before 'applying' him..He is not just 'conventionally unconventional'..." "The center of personal knowledge is not 'the structure of tacit knowing,' but the act of appropriation whereby we claim our vision and our speech as our own, an as real."

3) Professor Harold Kuester, The Defiance College, "Polanyi and Free Society," 8pp.

Harold Kuester's paper is a part of a longer paper "Polanyi on Religion" that could not be accommodated under the limitations of the symposium; nevertheless, he brings to our attention his view of some problems of internal consistency and adequacy in Polanyi's ethics. After following the reasoning process in Polanyi on the nature of religion and of morality in a continuum of degrees of involvement and participation, Kuester states his chief concern:

It is not evident to us upon what grounds Polanyi is able to judge that total self-involvement tends toward only one set of universal moral standards and thus that other universal moral standards are mistaken, except by appealing to the nature of truth -- i.e., of universally valid standards. However, is not such an appeal misleading in that it seeks to settle a question regarding actual knowledge -- i.e., the nature of morality -- by appealing to epistemology --, i.e., the nature of the knowing process? Indeed, is this not the crucial weakness of Polanyi's view of morality, an unwarranted and unexplained conflation of questions regarding actual with purely epistemological questions? An egocentric individual...could conceivably accept Polanyi's conception of truth while rejecting his conception of morality. Hence, for this individual the moral-intellectual continuum upon which Polanyi's view of morality depends would be shattered.

The same questions Kuester finds to be present in Polanyi's discussion of the free society in Meaning. He, therefore, concludes that the problem is unresolved.

The clues that led Kuester to his concern came from the observation of a "lack of systematization" in Polanyi's thought on the nature of the knowing continuum. On the one hand, Polanyi "regards religious knowledge as the recognition of complex wholes" (see PK, p. 279). "Religious knowledge is in this respect essentially similar to other human knowledge and thus, at least in principle, subject to influence by other knowledge." On the other hand, "religious knowledge is farther removed from 'factuality' than are other wholes. Statements about persons require a greater degree of personal participation than statements about persons. Kuester finds that Polanyi did on some occasions, such as his 1962 article on "Science and Faith," compromise religion as a part of the continuum of knowledge by making sharp distinctions between science as study of the natural and religion as study of the supernatural. In Polanyi's 1970 lectures and seminar at the University of Chicago, Kuester heard Polanyi maintain religion as part of the continuum of knowledge but qualified it by saying: "The mysteries on the scientific end of the continuum carry one's imagination in distinct directions, whereas those on the religious end do not." Kuester states, therefore, "to argue as Polanyi did in the seminar that religion does not carry one's imagination in any distinct direction is equivalent to saying that the religious imagination does not yield knowledge...."

Kuester finds a similar lack of systematization and consequent problem in Polanyi's discussion of the free society. In PK, "the 'free society' appropriates many functions associated with traditional religion - most notably, guarantor of the viability of a tolerant, open society committed to the fostering of truth." The free society is an extension of the principles of the scientific community, which for Polanyi is paradigmatic. In both the free society and the scientific community, Polanyi finds truth and morality to be essentially similar. In Meaning, however, "Polanyi refines his view of the free society and departs from his earlier position...by distinguishing between truth and morality."

The problem of these differing perspectives in Polanyi's thought is brought to a focus by Kuester's question: "Why should not a man strive to pattern his life after truths which are in conflict with what Polanyi regards as universally valid moral-intellectual standards?" "For example, in spite of total self-involvement, is it not possible that the individual might choose relatively selfish interests for the sake of greater wealth when choice of less egocentric moral standards would result in less wealth...." An answer seems to be provided in Polanyi's thought, namely,

that "Polanyi's view of morality allows some to choose relatively selfish standards because they are lacking in commitment to universal moral standards." "The assumption here is that the commitment required by total self-involvement includes acceptance of what Polanyi regards as universally valid moral standards." "It requires that total self-involvement tend toward only one general set of universal moral standards, Polanyi's set." Kuester considers "this assumption to be unwarranted, because some men have lived and continue to live by other general sets of universal moral standards." Consequently, Kuester is led to the concern that Polanyi has "conflated" the questions of epistemology and of morality.

- 4) Professor Allen R. Dyer, Chief Resident in Psychiatry, Duke University Medical Center, "Idealism in Medical Ethics, the Problem of the Moral Inversion," pp. 18.

Dyer begins with a description of a central moral and epistemological problem in medicine. "Modern medicine is increasingly vexed by the tension which has arisen between a humanistic view of medicine and a technological view of medicine." "The basic epistemological issue in ethics is one of knowing, in this case knowing right from wrong." "Part of the tension between humanistic and technological views of medicine stems from a "Two cultures" dichotomy in our society." "Ideally, medicine should be in a good position to bridge this cultural gap with its dual epistemological heritage -- the so called 'art and science' of medicine, bringing the advances of science to the service of humanity." "Realistically, it must be acknowledged that there are many forces in our society and in medical education which tend to depreciate the humanistic side of things and contribute to the dehumanization of physician as well as patient." Dyer then sees two major areas for discussion of this problem. One is the conflict of two ideals of our age, "scientific skepticism and moral perfectionism." The other area is the need for "bridging the 'arts-sciences' culture gap."

Taking the culture gap issue first, Dyer expresses disappointment that "medical ethics" has "often copped out on the humanities and has been seduced by more scientific or positivistic approaches such as logical analysis, policy planning, administration, policy advocacy, legislative consultations, and the like, thus leaving a gap in the area of individual decision making and guidance in facing moral dilemmas." "...Much of the work in medical ethics has further contributed to a dehumanization of medicine by abstracting ethics from the arena of clinical decision-making and appropriating it for the specialist in ethics and for the policymaker." Dyer gives an example of a prominent medical ethicist who entered an orthopedics ward and "asked the residents if they had any ethical problems." "Thinking he meant terminal patients on respirators...headline issues...the residents replied that they currently had no ethical problems." The ethicist then examined the charts of two patients with similar fractures and found that one had received Demerol^R for pain and the other had received only Darvon^R. He then smugly concludes that these were not medical decisions, but ethical decisions instead." "To say that these concerns are not medical reinforces the prejudice that medicine is a merely technical enterprise and that science is value neutral which implies that the physician may or must defer ethical reflections to a specialist in that area. This view is nothing short of scandalous and dehumanizes not only medicine but ethics as well."

This dehumanization Dyer sees as one of the consequences of "the epistemological tradition of critical thought." "Although critical objectivity has become for several centuries a social imperative as a criterion for valid knowledge, it leaves the indi-

vidual person at something of a loss in grappling with moral alternatives and fails to account for the ambiguities inherent in moral choices. From the perspective of the individual, the critical tradition has left two very divergent approaches to ethics, neither one complete or satisfactory: (1) the systematic articulation of beliefs or values, such things as creeds, catechism, rules and laws; and (2) the critical analysis of such beliefs, either as they are articulated or as the articulation is implied in action." "It is as a counter balance to such excesses that the epistemological work of Michael Polanyi becomes useful." Then Dyer says: "I believe it may be shown that ethics follows quite legitimately from epistemology by rooting one's knowledge in the commitments one holds." Reminding us that Polanyi was trained as a physician as well as a physical chemist, Dyer states that Polanyi's "post-critical epistemology seeks unification of the sciences and the humanities by stressing the role of the knower in knowing."

Turning to the second major area, the conflict of the ideals of scientific skepticism and moral perfectionism, Dyer shows the relevance to medicine of Polanyi's concept of moral inversion. "Polanyi sees the moral inversion as deriving from conflicting aims of our knowledge." "...Moral passions and intellectual skepticism, 'locked in a curious struggle in which they combine and reinforce each other.'" Then Dyer gives an example from clinical experience where a disturbed mother was released from a psychiatric ward against medical advice. Later the mother returned saying that she was afraid she might harm her baby, and she was committed against her will. A team of civil liberties lawyers succeeded in obtaining her release. Several months afterwards, the mother was arrested for creating a public disturbance. Then Dyer reports that "In jail she hanged herself, not deprived of her civil rights, but deprived of the psychiatric help she so desperately needed." "Here we see two moral principles in conflict. The one which says people should not be detained against their will.... The other...acknowledges that people's wills may be ambivalent and risks compromise with the former principle. Civil rights, however, argued in abstraction and with a vengeance, risk being inhuman and cruel." Balancing this criticism, Dyer continues by showing that "In modern psychiatry and behavioral science examples of the moral inversion are also quite common. These disciplines bound by the tenets of positivism, disclaim any moral intentions. Yet, the vast enterprises of psychiatry, psycho-analysis, behavior modification, and counseling, proceed according to value judgments with the metaphors health or illness, or the measurements normal or abnormal surviving as surrogates for the moral terms good or bad (valued or disvalued)."

Dyer observes in modern medicine "that there are basically two kinds of moral inversions, following the remnants of Cartesian dualism: (1) the body treated as a machine (res extensa) and (2) discarnate mentality (res cogitans)."

Taking up the moral inversions seen in the body as a machine, Dyer discusses these four: (1) "Definitions of death on physiological grounds simplify certain decisions, such as when to pull the plug, but obscure quality of life considerations and the 'will' of the patient...." (2) "As an abstract ideal, abortion may be usually considered morally wrong, yet as a practical consideration, it may be more wrong morally to require the birth of an unwanted child. Right to life advocates speak with precise certitude, but ironically debase their definition of life to physiologic concerns." (3) "... Should medicine be involved in treating the person with no demonstrable organic pathology? A 'yes' answer is expensive..., but 'no' reduces medicine to the care of the body not the person." (4) "In medical ethical literature, the use of placebos is often treated as an issue in 'truth telling' or 'deception of the patient' implying their use is unwarranted."

Moral inversion as "discarnate mentality" is seen by Dyer in two ways" (1) "Informed consent involves both 'information,' to which we give a great deal of attention in written documents, and it involves the 'consenting,' to which we give little consideration at all." (2) The concern for civil rights in involuntary commitment as an abstract ideal often results in "frank cruelty to 'gravely disabled' individuals when 'dangerousness' becomes the exclusive criterion of involuntary hospitalization."

Dyer, therefore, concludes "that the force of critical tradition tends to de-personalize ethics by abstracting thought from action." "Modern medicine seldom offers us the clear cut alternatives which could neatly be dissected either good or bad, either right or wrong." "Often ethical norms serve as impossible ideals, which we should strive toward, but may never be able to live up to. If we recognize these ideals as just that, then I believe we have set the stage for a humanistic medicine. If we try to translate these ideals into imperatives, we run the risk of further moral inversions as the already grandiose expectations of medicine become inflated even further, and we begin to think perfectionistically rather than realistically."

NEW BIBLIOGRAPHY OF MATERIALS ON POLANYI

Professor Sam Watson, during a year as a fellow at Carnegie Mellon University, has prepared a review article of materials about Polanyi. Besides listing 17 of Polanyi's primary works, the article gives 141 references to articles dealing with Polanyi's thought. This valuable contribution is being published by the RHETORIC SOCIETY QUARTERLY. Persons interested in writing Watson during the summer may reach him at: 205 Union St., S. Concord, N.C. 28025.

1979 AAR POLANYI MEETING TO FEATURE PROSCH

The Polanyi Society and interested persons will convene at a special reception for Professor Harry Prosch during the 1979 American Academy of Religion meeting, Nov. 15-18, at the Statler Hilton in New York City. The meeting, besides the pleasures of drink (no host bar) will focus on a dialogue with Prosch, co-author with Polanyi of MEANING. The exact time and place will be announced in a later PS Newsletter, once the AAR Program is published. Persons wishing to address questions or comments on MEANING should send their offerings to Professor Phil Mullins by Oct. 1. Questions or comments should be brief (750 words) in order to allow for a meeting of genuine dialogue, rather than one of formal presentations.

MATERIAL FOR PS NEWSLETTER

Relevant articles, bibliographical information, queries, comments, and notices of meetings and dissertation abstracts are especially welcome. Please send them to the PS General Co-ordinator and Editor, Richard Gelwick.