

THE POLANYI SOCIETY

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REVIEW OF POTEAT'S POLANYIAN MEDITATIONS Foreword

One of the earliest and most influential interpreters of the thought of Michael Polanyi is Professor William H. Poteat of Duke University. Poteat's fostering of the lectureship for Polanyi at Duke, which contributed to *The Tacit Dimension*, his co-editing of *Intellect and Hope*, his supervision of the largest number of doctoral dissertations on Polanyi, and most of all his own creative teaching have significantly developed and disseminated the thought of Polanyi. Many members of the Polanyi Society have not had the opportunity of acquainting themselves with the depth of Poteat's work. Below is a review of a 392 page manuscript on what Poteat calls a "long colloquy." It has been bound, copyrighted, and circulated among Poteat's students and Polanyian friends. A revised part of it is included in the special issue of *Pre/Text* (see announcement after the review).

Sounding-out 'Logic': A Review

William H. Poteat's *Polanyian Meditations: In Search of A Post-Critical Logic* (unpublished manuscript, 1979, 392 pages) is a marshalling of clues—which clearly have been accumulating for him over a period of two or three decades—under the lure and auspices of a reformed vision (or *hearing*) of 'logic,' a vision which offers promise of greatly enhancing our powers and inclinations for comprehending human experience in its wholeness. Poteat's sense that "the nature of rationality and logic in an intellectual climate in which Descartes' legatees have prevailed . . . (has) left us culturally insane" (p.9) and his pilgrimage toward an alternative, post-critical vision were already manifest in his 1950 dissertation on "Pascal's Conception of Man and Modern Sensibility." They received accreditation and enrichment through affiliation, beginning in 1952, with the work of Michael Polanyi. The present work is something of an act of confirmation. It gives voice to a major issue of these concerns and affiliations as they have emerged from a truly remarkable career of intense reflection apprenticed preeminently to the teaching of graduate and undergraduate students at Duke University.

Poteat maintains that ". . . rationality, that is, the 'hanging togetherness' of things for us, and logic, that is the form of the 'making sense' of things for us . . . derive(s) from and remain(s) parasitical upon the 'hanging togetherness' and the 'sense-making' of our integral mindbodily rootedness in the as yet unreflected world and in our unreflected thinkings and doings in that world" (p. 13). The extension of this basic perspective lends itself to the claim that "language—our first formal system—has the sinews of our bodies which had them first; that the grammar, syntax . . . meaning, semantic and metaphorical intentionality of our language

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are preformed in that of our prelingual mindbodily being in the world, which is their condition of possibility" (p. 13). The central thesis of the work is that 'logic' intended from the matrix determined by these affirmations with all of their implications—particularly for describing the way of our speaking-hearing—is commensurate with the phenomena of human being and knowing in a far different and more comprehensive way than is the case with 'logic' insofar as it is a function of the dominance of the visualizing or picturing of relationships and "hanging togetherness" which is the legacy of Cartesianism. An important by-product of the argumentation of this thesis is that Poteat's exegesis of Polanyi makes it abundantly clear that 'logic' in the former sense is all but ubiquitous in Polanyi's writings; however this usage is largely unfocussed and unreflected and, as a result, Polanyi occasionally drifts into modes of thought and rhetoric which are entirely at odds with the modalities which have been overwhelmingly intended by the rest of his work. In other words, it seems clear that Polanyi has not been explicitly aware of the more radical implications of his own thinking specifically for logic. In making this point, Poteat's essay indirectly broaches a kind of Rosetta stone for the reading of the variant minor tongues which Polanyi sometimes spoke. (Most readers of this review will be familiar with the disconfigures and controversy occasioned, for example, by some of the material to be found in the posthumously published *Meaning*.)

Like Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge* Poteat's treatise is at once a constructive statement and a polemical one. An imagined interlocutor, the voice given the positivist-explicitist model against which the polemic is cast, is always just over the author's shoulder. Those of us long inured to Polanyi studies might do well once again to ask both Poteat and ourselves where, in the present, we see incarnate any such being as the one represented by the interlocutor. Hasn't this positivism and the affiliated logicism been laid to rest? Do we see it in current texts on philosophy of science? in the social sciences? among physicists? in pop culture? among politicians? in jurisprudence? perhaps everywhere and no where? Certain contemporary developments—notably in physics—have made the formal and theoretical asseveration of the objectivism cognate to this position less than modish. Indeed, it is often denied when there is an occasion for explicit statements about epistemological-ontological assumptions. Viewed in this context, the object of Poteat's (and Polanyi's) polemic seems increasingly rare. On the other hand, it is precisely incarnate, in practice (disregarding for the moment the sense in which it may be said to be impossible of practice) that it may be found wherever Western culture has a hold. Amidst the apparatus and disciplines of formal education such as the techniques of measurement and evaluation, the methods of the social sciences, dominant popular modes of approach to ethics and value judgment and, most of all, in the student *in situ* in the classroom the *objectiver Geist* of the Cartesian legacy is all but infallible in its embrace. If this is the case, in spite of what seems to be an increasing willingness to acknowledge the Procrustean nature of our situation in this connection, one must ask the obvious question: Why? There is, of course, a plethora of answers. But, clearly, one major dimension of any answer has to do with the fact that real alternatives and radical surgery vis-a-vis the Cartesian visually dominated sense for 'logic' have not been forthcoming. "Polanyians" have sensed that Polanyi has provided a true groundbreaking here and has thrown the gauntlet with respect to the whole range of epistemological problems associated with the positivist tradition. Poteat has picked it up, taking hold of the challenge precisely at this crucial juncture: What do we or ought we—given a more comprehensive description of actual practice—to mean by 'logic'?

Poteat describes the nature, conditions and implications of our enthrallment to an imagination dominated by the visual mode of apprehending relationships. This enthrallment is gratuitous and preemptive in the sense that visual apperception is an

aspect, no more and no less, of our total "mindbodily presence in the world." Hence the move by which it takes over our sense for the connectedness of things issues in an abstraction whose claims to primacy have no greater a priori status (!) than those of hearing or of any other aspect of the sensorium.

One of the key moments of Poteat's discussion of these matters centers on Polanyi's claim that "Our acceptance of what is logically anterior is based on our prior acceptance of what is logically derivative, as being implied in our acceptance of the latter" (quoted, p. 55). Poteat focusses upon "the fascinating and bewildering interplay in this passage between the temporal and the strict, logical senses of 'logical,' 'anterior,' 'prior,' 'derivative,' and 'being implied'" (p. 53). At the heart of his discussion there seems to be a fundamental claim of the following sort: The legacy of the Cartesian cogito would have been of an utterly different order had the Cartesians paid attention to the "I am," in all of its temporal thickness, as being present--proleptically--and, hence, assumed in the presumptive premise, the "I think." Indeed, no subject-object split, no dichotomies of knowing and being, mind and body, percept and concept, belief and doubt, and no subordination of 'knowing' and of 'logic' to a purely timeless visual metaphor ever could have emerged so thoroughly to usurp the Western intentional horizon. In face of that usurpation Poteat speaks to us of a 'logic' informed by assuming the total mindbodily phenomenon with a specific focus on hearing--paradigmatically, the hearing of human speech in which these concepts ('anterior,' 'derivative,' 'implied,' etc.) receive a temporal qualification. This is a decisive point of departure for Poteat's comprehension of 'logic.'

Reading--listening to Poteat's essay is not to be undertaken as a single evening's assignment. There is a kind of dialectical reduplication here. There is a thickness in the text which, for instance, to a reader whose Cartesian schema has never been questioned, may seem almost impenetrable. Without needing to defend all of the particulars of the style, the reader would do well to reject at the outset the kind of objection so often made by those suborned by the tradition from which Poteat is seeking to disentangle himself and his reader--the objection that anything worth saying can be said "clearly, distinctly, explicitly" (as defined, of course, by the critics present state of mind). It may be appropriate here to replace the Wittgensteinian "Don't think. Look!" with the simple admonition "Listen!" My own reading--listening suggests that comprehension here, in essence, is no more or less difficult and no more or less important than freeing human intelligence from that kind of perennial bewitchment, a kind of tunnel vision of its own life, which is suicidal in every important sense of the word. It is not the point here that there are no particulars in which Poteat seems to be in error or not to have made his case. But the basic undertaking is of such scope, richness and significance that the thought of its probable fate in the ambience of the objectivizing spirit is more than a little disturbing. Hopefully, of course, that thought is totally off course, and Poteat will be heard by many whose only custom in ontological--epistemological matters has been picture-seeing.

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SPECIAL POLANYI ISSUE OF PRE/TEXT

Prof. Sam Watson, co-ordinator of Communication and Rhetorical Studies for the Polanyi Society, has edited a special issue of Pre/Text, An Interdisciplinary Journal of Rhetoric. The twelve essays deal broadly and deeply with Polanyi's thought and are not confined to a narrow or technical application to rhetoric. The titles and authors in their order are:

A Breakfast in the Tacit Tradition: Preface 3. Sam Watson

Some Ideas of Michael Polanyi and Some Implications for Teaching Writing,
James A. Reither
Tacit and Explicit Tulips, Diane Sautter
Into the Tacit Dimension: Reflections on Michael Polanyi's Personal Knowledge,
Reambert Herbert
Making Sense and the Means for Doing So, Robin A. Hodgkin
Polanyi and Peak: A Short Semantic Symphony, William E. Goding
The Tacit Dimension and Rhetoric: What It Means To Be Persuading and Persuaded,
Robert L. Scott
Michael Polanyi and the Problem of Toleration, James L. Wiser
Reconstructing the Conditions for Cultural Coherence, Loyal D. Rue
The 'Primitive'/'Civilized' opposition and the Modern Notion of Objectivity:
A Linkage, Dale W. Cannon
Further Polanyian Meditations, William H. Poteat
Polanyi and Rhetoric, Harry Prosch

Besides the essays the issue has nine pages of photographs of Polanyi. Copies of this special issue, Vol. 2, Nos. 1-2, 1981, may be ordered from Victor J. Vitanza, Pre/Text General Editor, Department of English, P.O. Box 19035, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, Texas 76019. The price is \$4.00.

ON OUR HISTORICAL PARTICULARITY AND OUR PUSUIT OF TRUTH

Prof. Edward J. Echeverria of Rockmont College, Lakewood, Colorado has published Criticism and Commitment: Major Themes in Contemporary 'Post-critical' Philosophy (Rodopi: Amsterdam, 1981). It is available through Humanities Press Inc., 171 First Ave., Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey 07716. Done as a dissertation at the Free University in Amsterdam, Echeverria has taken post-critical as designated by Polanyi to include those contemporary philosophies that recognize that all knowledge presupposes knowledge that is historically conditioned. His survey deals basically with the common ground and differences of Heidegger, Gadamer, Habermas, Rorty, and Polanyi. The key issue addressed is how to understand our pursuit of truth once the complexity of including historical context into epistemology is introduced. Echeverria tries to go further than Polanyi's notions of personal responsibility to the universal pole of truth by introducing a notion derived from a "normative dynamic of a comprehensive history." He finds this normative dynamic in what the Judeo-Christian heritage has "reverently called 'Creation.'" Hardly reducible to this brief account, Echeverria's work is valuable for both the problem and major philosophers that he considers.

Polanyi AND LIBERATION MOVEMENTS

Since the end of January, your PS editor and co-ordinator, is on sabbatical at Union Theological Seminary in New York City where there is a vital voice of the contemporary liberation theologies - Black, Asian, Latin American, and feminist. Against this background, I have been reminded of Polanyi's own distinctive and passionate concern for human rights. Below is an address from a meeting held in London, November, 1957, and published as part of a report, "Apartheid and the World's Universities," No. 10, February, 1958, in the Science and Freedom pamphlets of the Committee on Science and Freedom. The selections are photocopies to convey some of the historical nature of the document.

I found this particular report in the Library of Teachers College, Columbia University.

THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND FREEDOM

... was established in July, 1954, under the auspices of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, a permanent organization with headquarters in Paris, to carry on the discussion of issues in the field of academic freedom which was begun at the Hamburg Congress of July, 1953. The Committee will seek to maintain contact with all who are interested in these issues and to prepare the way for a further Congress on Science and Freedom.

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THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND FREEDOM AND APARTHEID

by

MICHAEL POLANYI

After the opening address by Dr. J. W. Cook, chairman of the meeting, who welcomed the participants and outlined the programme of speakers, Professor Michael Polanyi of Manchester University, chairman of the Committee on Science and Freedom, spoke on the background and activities of the Committee and showed how the apartheid issue fitted into the series of 'campaigns' which the Committee has fought on behalf of academic freedom.

I should like to welcome, particularly, Professor Du Plessis, who has come at our invitation all the way from South Africa to convey to us the point of view of the South African government. His presence is a challenge both to our arguments and to our courtesy. We take up both. We may not convince him, but we hope to impress him, and to do so without discourtesy or disrespect. I assure him that we will listen to him carefully and with interest.

The Committee on Science and Freedom is an international Committee which has been active for about three years. I will tell you a little about our campaign record and try to derive from it the principles for which we stand here to-day.

The first of the Committee's bulletins gives you an account of our starting point. It dealt with the Marxist control of ideologies, which of all such controls that have ever been exercised, is the most cruel and the most bigoted. It has the distinction of being the only form of government ever to have hounded a scientist to his death—a great scientist, merely for his scientific views.

In the second issue of the bulletin we turned to McCarthyism and its evils. You may find this concern to be out of proportion, since the terrors of Marxist ideological control are so much more fierce than anything that happened in America. But the settler surrounded by a wilderness is still interested in the weeds in his own garden; and surely Senator McCarthy was a poisonous weed.

In our third issue you find our reaction to a cry for help which came to us on the 26th May, 1955, from Germany, from the famous University of Göttingen, which felt itself endangered by the appointment to the office of Minister of Education of Lower Saxony of a

neo-Nazi of doubtful character—Leonhard Schlüter. We heard that the chief officers of the university had resigned in protest. Within a few hours we succeeded in getting our sponsors and members from all over the world to sign a telegram to the government of Lower Saxony, to which great publicity was given in the whole German Press. I think we contributed to the fact that Mr. Schlüter resigned eight days later.

Next we received a desperate call from a Professor in Tasmania (Australia)—at the other end of the world—who felt that the Council of the university was treating Professors in a high-handed manner which menaced their academic freedom. We intervened there, and I think that we contributed to the fact that the University of Tasmania now has a stronger academic opinion and a more balanced constitution.

I pass over the tragic incident of the rebellion of students in Spain to which we tried to devote some attention. I pass over, too, the contact which we made at an early stage with the Polish universities at the time when open connections with East European countries were not yet possible. This summer in Austria I met one of our correspondents, and it was with profound pride that I received his expression of gratitude for the comfort we offered them at that time.

This brings us to the 3rd November, 1956, of which to-morrow will be the anniversary, when we received a telegram from a Hungarian university asking for our help. As you know, on the following day the Russian troops invaded Hungary. We could not do anything, no more than anybody else. But we did collect 1,200 signatures from university people all over the world for a statement of solidarity with the Hungarian universities, and this document, which was presented to the Soviet Embassy in London, subsequently reached our Hungarian colleagues. I trust it showed them that if they were abandoned, they were not forgotten.

And now this Apartheid. I will say about this here only what I have derived from our past experience. In every single case we were told two things. First, that the issue had nothing to do with academic freedom; and second, that, if it did affect academic freedom, then academic freedom must yield to considerations of higher social interest. We are now told the same things again about apartheid. We are told that the separation of races does not infringe academic freedom; and that, in any case, it serves an overriding social interest, which good citizens must accept.

I would like to place before you, briefly, the principles on which we answer these ever-recurring objections. Universities have obvious duties to society: they must train doctors and technicians and other specialists useful to the community. But these duties are trivial compared with the claims universities have on society. For we are the chief transmitters and interpreters of the intellectual heritage of modern man, and it is this heritage which defines the duties of man and sets up the standards that society is obliged to respect. Indeed, I suggest that

our principal obligation to society, as universities, is to teach young people, and the future rulers of society in particular; and to teach them those ideas which it is the duty of society to maintain—the service of which is, in fact, the proper reason for the existence of society.

Our definition of academic freedom, derived from our experience of threats which endanger it, is therefore, that we cannot tolerate within our walls any violation of the ideas which we teach.

To exclude black students from a university is an insult to their human dignity; it is inhuman. To force them into native reserve under the supervision of white authorities is oppressive. To pretend that this is done in order to preserve their native culture is intellectually dishonest. To demand the participation of universities in a programme of inhumanity, oppression and intellectual dishonesty is a violation of academic freedom.

NEWS AND NOTES

Walter R. Thorson, Professor of Theoretical Chemistry at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada; Adjunct Professor of the Philosophy of Science, Regent College, Vancouver, B.C.; and lay theologian has three addresses to the American Scientific Affiliation published in their journal that deal extensively with the thought of Polanyi. The American Scientific Affiliation is an evangelical organization of scientists, but it is not dogmatic nor closed. Thorson's addresses are clearly written and well grounded in science, philosophy, and theology. The addresses are published as follows: "Reflections on the Practice of Outworn Creeds," March, 1981; "Science as the Natural Philosophy of a Christian," June, 1981; and "The Biblical Insights of Michael Polanyi," September, 1981 - all in Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation, Vol. 33, Nos. 1, 2, 3, respectively.

Durwood Foster, Professor of Systematic Theology, Pacific School of Religion and the Graduate Theological Union and Ian Barbour, Professor of Religion and Physics, Carleton College are members of the founding board of directors of The Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences in Berkeley. Both Foster and Barbour have been participants in AAR Polanyi consultations. The purpose of the Center is to sponsor and conduct research and teaching in the interdisciplinary field of theology and the natural sciences. Further information may be obtained by writing: Dr. Robert J. Russell, Executive Director, The Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, c/o The Graduate Theological Union, 2465 Le Conte Ave., Berkeley, CA 94709.

Robert Brownhill has an article in the New Universities Quarterly, Vol. 35, No. 3 Summer, 1981, on "Objectivity and Subjectivity in Polanyi's Personal Knowledge." The article intends to defend Polanyi against the charges of subjectivism. In a review of the Brownhill argument, Drusilla Scott says that Brownhill has reduced "the richness and originality of Polanyi's thought to make it more respectable at the cost of making it hardly worth defending." Scott's review is in Convivium, Newsletter No. 13, October, 1981.

After seven years of special programs on Polanyi at the American Academy of Religion's annual meeting, we regret to announce that Phil Mullins, our co-ordinator of Religious Studies, has been informed by the AAR Program Committee that we will not be allowed a program at the next meeting in New York in December of 1982. Instead of a Polanyi program, the AAR Committee asks that the various Polanyi papers be submitted to the other sections. This decision is supposedly a part of a larger new policy to end groups and programs that are focused on a single figure. While we may find some value in entering into the other sections as a way of sharing Polanyi scholarship, we will lose the quality of informed criticism and discussion that have been possible in our own sessions. In our view, the AAR decision is illegitimate, contrary to the organization's by-laws, and an infringement of academic freedom. We will be protesting this new policy which was not made by the membership of AAR.

James A. Hall, M.D. has published two papers of interest to Polanyi scholars, especially those interested in psychological sciences and religion. The first paper, "Psychiatry and Religion: A Review and a Projection of Future Needs," Anglican Theological Review, LXIII (No. 4, October, 1981), concludes that while there is much writing in this area there is an insufficient theoretical and experimental foundation for dealing with these issues. As both a review of the area of psychiatry and religion and as a suggestion about next steps, the article will be valuable. The second paper, "Jung and Polanyi: Scientific Intuition of a Natural Religious Function in the Unconscious," Proceedings, Association for the Scientific Study of Religion: Southwest, 1982, shows a significant number of parallel or converging points in Polanyi and Jung and asserts that both suggest that "there is a natural religious function in the psyche and therefore in the universe as are permitted to know it."

DRUCKER'S ERRORS

Peter Drucker's recent autobiography has a lively chapter on the Polanyi family, which while it is probably accurate on Drucker's relatively recent memories of Karl, is grossly in error on a number of facts about the family. Lest any of our readers be tempted to utilize this chapter as source material, I give here those errors I am in a position to correct. Drucker's opinions about the "failure" of the brilliant Polanyis will, I am sure, be criticized severely, but history will have to be the ultimate judge.

Wm. T. Scott

Peter Drucker's errors in the chapter "The Polanyis" of his autobiography Adventures of a Bystander (Harper & Row, N.Y., 1978), pp. 123-140:

1. Page 126. Karl was the 3rd of 6 children, not the 4th of 5: Laura (1882), Adolf (1883), Karl (1886), Sophie (1888), Michael (1891), Paul (birth date unknown, retarded, died before 1920).
2. Pages 127, 140. Michael's aim for society was "liberal" and heavily dependent on economics. His view of an adequate, bearable, but free society was close to that described by Drucker.
3. Page 127. Father Polanyi was born in 1850; the story of his participation in the 1848 revolution, etc., is fabricated. His railway operations were more or less as described; he died in 1905, not 1900. He married Cecilia Wohl in 1881, not 1868. She was not a Russian countess but the daughter of a rabbi. They met in Vienna, not Zurich.

4. Pages 128-129. Otto Pol was not a Polanyi. There is no evidence in the standard biographical dictionaries and encyclopedias that "Otto Pol" as described by Peter Drucker, ever existed.

5. Page 130. Adolph went to Brazil about 1940, not before WWI, and there is no record of his having changed his name. He died in Brazil, not USA.

6. Pages 130-131. Mousie's given name was Laura. She obtained a Ph.D. in history in Budapest in 1903. I do not know about her tracts. But at the age of 70 she took up history again and wrote a scholarly account of the colonial Captain John Smith's exploits in Hungary.

7. Page 131. Michael never became an assistant to Einstein - by the time he was in Berlin, his correspondence with Einstein had essentially terminated, and the two men hardly ever conversed. His nomination for the Nobel Prize must have been made about 1961 or later, not in the '20's.

8. Pages 131-132. Michael viewed human existence as an individual dwelling creatively in tradition, rather than being "isolated." "Beyond Nihilism" is not well known, but Personal Knowledge is.

9. Page 132. Ilona and Karl were married in Vienna in 1923, long after Hungary made peace in October 1918. Their daughter Kari was born there.

AN APPEAL FOR SCOTT

Bill Scott's work is proceeding on the Polanyi biography, but his grant support calls for matching funds which are becoming increasingly hard to get. If any reader knows of a philanthropic organization or a person of means who might be persuaded to contribute to this project, please pass on the information that checks should be made out to the Board of Regents, UNR and earmarked (on the check or in an accompanying letter) "for matching the NEH offer and to be used for the Polanyi biography." They should be sent to Prof. Wm. T. Scott, Dept. of Physics, University of Nevada, Reno, NV, 89557. The National Endowment for the Humanities will then add an equal amount to the grant total. Most needed are funds to support two year's part time work of Professor Scott's biographical assistant Monika Tobin.