

Saturday Morning Transcript

1993 Polanyi Society with Poteat Saturday Morning #2

(Recording picks up mid comments by Dale? First three minutes are very garbled, and you may want to fast forward to 3:25)

Poteat: For those who have not yet put down Merleau-Ponty. That is what you are talking about.

????? personal aspects...sound like some of the things you are talking about ???

Poteat: Yeah. And what I am able to do as a person ...is to take responsibility for myself... all the way down

???: Bill Scott?

(Long inaudible question and comment)

Poteat: Well I start out thinking that answers are wrong(long inaudible) Bill do you see what I am saying?

(more long inaudible..along with some chatter and jokes about the recording technology)

??????: ...what you are saying makes good sense

Poteat: Now you have got really heavy duty mistakes in mind here...professional strength...give me an example, if you will, of a heavy duty mistake in your sense to which I can address myself.

(inaudible)

Poteat: And you want to know how I know that that is a mistake?

(more inaudible) How anybody would...in your frame of reference....

Poteat: The first thing that would have to happen is that they would have to indwell my frame of reference to use your language ...and when they did they would see "By Golly Poteat is right and I made a mistake!"

If they didn't, then there is damn little that I could say. Especially of the knock down sort, that would disclose to the person in question that he indeed had made a mistake of the following sort and for the following reasons...

But then you see we don't generally settle anything of any importance this way.. we do it on a piecemeal basis and you and I are right now embarked upon a piecemeal effort to get at the question of what a mistake is of this large scale sort and what starts to happen is that I say something and you respond to that and I say something back and either this goes on for eternity, a thought that is sobering in the least....

Or alternatively you begin to see that what I am talking about presents an alternative perspective on things or the other way around I begin to say, damn Poteat you are wrong and you should whisk off from publication further sale all of the books for which you are being paid so lavishly.

????? Metaphysics of persuasion

Phil?

5:47

???? (sounds like Phil Mullins) I want to follow up on John's question although you may have just answered it ...you suggested that universal intent in Polanyi makes you a little uncomfortable, you think it is kind of backsliding... I appreciate what I take to be your emphasis on mindbodilyness (inaudible always want to remember that and you kind of come back to that as bedrock).....

It does seem to me that one thing in Polanyi that I think is very interesting is the kind of dynamism that is there. There is in Polanyi a tremendous emphasis on breaking out ...So there is a certain sense in which the world is dynamic and the person that we are is always developing and changing ...and our mindbodilyness is itself growing and it seems to me that it is partly because of that truth...direction toward the future that Polanyi is interested in things like universal intent... I wonder what your response to that is...

Poteat: Well my response is that you are absolutely right with everything you have to say about the dynamism of Polanyi's thought – there is no question whatsoever about it. And if I have picked up the single example of the danger the pitfalls that are resident in the from-to image it was for the limited purposes that I used it for and nothing more. I want to be sure that you understand what I mean and what I don't mean when I say what I said about universal intent.

Polanyi felt obliged – this is the way I imagine it ...what was going on when he wrote this out ...was of course not even known to Polanyi. But in saying that I assert X with universal intent – seems to be what would be for me a gratuitous assertion of the reality of the world between which and myself nothing can be intruded. And in saying that universal intent takes care of the threats of that possibility, namely that something can be intruded, he is to such an extent, paying dues to a foundation which I would avoid to begin with.

8:50

And it might be of some interest for you to know that I don't understand these books that I have written.

And what I mean by that is that, in order to write them, I had to enter into a different mode of being. When I did, **it was easy, because all I did was to report on what it was like in this mode.** But of course I very quickly got out of this mode, not by re-entering a commonsense world, of getting my oil changed or picking up the dogs at the vet's, or that sort of thing

But I re-entered the world in which coherence versus correspondence and all of those things become problems and in order to do the next day's work I had to undergo, as it were, a kind of ?? aphasia to give in, to surrender to a reality, the reality of myof the thisness of my mindbody to which I had an unmediated relationship more powerful than any I can have to the various mediated ways in which that mindbody appears in its whatness. I am after all a father, an organism, a sinner, sometimes a penitent, (coughs) (Freud would be able to interpret why I am coughing at this point), (laughter) a member of the AAR which I am not, in other words all of these particulates? which could be used about my whatness from time to time and the appearance that I have as that whatness do not command me with anything like the importunity that the unmediated thisness of my mindbody does. And so in order to put these things down in writing, I have to submit to the discipline of this mode.

12:16

Rob?

????? We used to always say graduate school... If we were to take of the position that you articulate and that we talked about in our seminarsthe world would look different but would stay absolutely the same...and I guess I am wondering...and I mean this as a serious question ...If we look at all the categories that we use as intellectuals that are all products of the enlightenment ...religion is a category, politics is a category, social life is a category, technology is a category ...and then we decide let's rework all these ...let's think through them...but nothing changes...although they look different...and I ask seriously... is it worth it to do that? Is it worth it to think through, to re-think through those when we live them through with integrity?

Poteat: Only if you are going to get a PhD and teach in an academic institution. I know that you want a different answer from that...you want a different in a sense of a different kind of answer..

?????No I don't

Poteat: But no. I don't... I often find myself wondering, well what difference has all this made to you and I guess the answer is that it has served to deepen my depression. And the reason for that is that the signs of the bondage that we suffer at the hands of the tradition that you just outlined in terms of categories is ubiquitous – everywhere you look in this culture even in its most trivial activities.

Charles McCoy: Polanyi of course would say this is not something that we can really relax ourselves into...this is the disease of modern life and the things that we value will disappear if the let the kind of Enlightenment clarity destroy them ...so he is committed to overcoming them.

Jerry?...oh you want to take a break? We will take a 5 minute potty break

15:20

.....

15:45

Moderator: If we will take our seats we will let Jerry stand and we will get started again...the floor is yours –

Jerry (maybe Eidener????): One thing that I noticed going on here in these two sessions that I would like to hear more about..

There has been a kind of a contrast between all the traditions that we use to talk about the world out there and us here and how to get across that gap ...so what we are doing with the Copernican Revolution...suggesting that with the mindbody concept we are already in the world and don't have to cross that gap ...it still seems to me a little bit...individualistic ...to contrast that to me my mindbody and occasionally there are some people in terms of dialogue or something ...it looks kind of like...the worldin here....

One contrary way to put this occurred to me when we were talking about about universal intent...I guess I have always been guilty of giving that term a Poteatean interpretation....as poets doto talk about

US...as we are universally intended ---that kind of lateral mindbody stuff.....between...I'd like to hear more about that...

Poteat: Well this is a criticism that I have received before and in the light of the criticism that was made early on in response to a version or part of a version of *Polanyian Meditations* by someone known to many of you, namely Tom Langford, who said pretty much exactly what you just said about what he regarded as the deficiencies of my argument. And I took that to heart ...Langford is also the author of the most illuminating and chastening evaluation of my work that I have ever heard and I cherish him for this and other reasons. He said: "Poteat accepts too much" and I know that this is true, but let me just say that your alarm is well founded in the sense that nothing I say ought to suggest what you have felt that it does suggest.

And over and over again to the point where I have felt it becomes excessively wordy I have always tried to ally references to my mindbody to our jointly or our convivial mindbodies in the world...in other words saying that the world is not something between me and something else but is something that is shared and participated in by all of us at the same time.

But the reason that you get this impression is because of a tactical move that I make. And that is that this Copernican Revolution that I found emerging in my own transactions with the unmediated thisness of my mindbody in the world was always, as I tried to articulate it and get hold of it, in the first person. And so I found that if I didn't talk about it initially in the first person it would get away from me.

In other words I was drawn away from the actual source of my inspiration by the attempt to give it universal intent. So I think Jerry, that if you will look particularly at the *Philosophical Daybook* and perhaps even more in the book that is yet to appear you will see that I have been, on the one hand, more confident that I can hold on to the original inspiration so that I could speak more openly and more often about this being our convivially shared world.

I could not agree more with the pitfalls of thinking in these first person terms exclusively ...so it is a tactical rhetorical device rather than a philosophical one that is at issue here.

21:50

?????The question would be ...I'd like to shift this just a little bit but I don't think it is shifting very far.... I teach in a situation in a school where only intentional hostages can ignore the issues related to diversity and multiculturalism. And you said earlier that you have not been as interested in issues of politics and ethics as a part of your study of Polanyi and your work with him but it seems to me that what you have talked about is at the very center of the entire nexus of issues that we roughly refer to as multiculturalism and diversity. And it seems to me furthermore that there are direct and immediate political implications...not for political structures as such but for us in the way we teach.

(Poteat: Oh Yes)

And in my own case I am having trouble communicating with colleagues and others that the issues of how we teach relate to whether we can create an ambiance in the classroom that is different from this kind of constructed world that we have been talking about in some of the questions we have been dealing with this morning.

What I am interested in is what steps we can take to alter power equations in such a way as to create a kind of awareness that the world is the way you are describing it....That gives us a sense of weness and not just myness...because students bring the other kind of world into the classroom, it seems to me that if you don't do something to change that world...changing the power equations somehow or another that being able to communicate in the way you are talking about it and opening them up to those kinds of possibilities is just virtually a waste of time.

Poteat: Well I could not agree more with what you have just said. And if I have not commented in writing upon the whole nest of questions that arise with multiculturalism, and political correctness, and the fascist police that are taking over our faculties, it is simply because I found that what I have done demands so much of my time and energy that I can't go the next step and do what you are proposingneeds being done and which I agree it needs being done. All I can do is keep up with what is going on on college and university campuses in this country and take more doses of Maalox as the result of learning what is going on.

Now, Thank God, at least it seems up to this point, the teacher is still sovereign in his classroom. It may happen the day after tomorrow that that is no longer so. But as long as you are sovereign in your classroom you have the opportunity of dealing with the student on a face-to-face basis on these very questions.

26:07

I made the discovery in the mid-sixties...I had some grand schemes about how we could reform graduate education in order that liberal arts colleges could be made better than they in general were. And I proposed at a meeting called by Victor Butterfield, who at the time was the President of the American Association of Colleges, convened for the purpose of discussing this question...that something needed to be done in order to help liberal arts colleges. And when we had spent two or three days on this I finally said, "Well isn't what's wrong with liberal arts colleges, what's wrong with the graduate schools, and everybody said..yeah..that's right.. and I said well isn't that where we ought to do our work? And they said yeah, where would you begin?" And I suggested, as a modest beginning, that we have a convocation that meets at Duke on one day and Carolina on the next and we take 20 faculty from each of these two institutions whom we deem to be, on the face of it, sympathetic to discussion of this sort of thing and in positions of sufficient power in their institutions for their opinions to matter. And I said, I'll write a position paper that takes apart the creature of the Enlightenment...which is the creature of the Enlightenment at its worst..which is the German university that had been imported to these shores.

Well I was lucky to survive these two meetings on successive days. I mean the hostility that was directed at me for having written this paper was quite literally frightening so I decided, it is pointless to take on the graduate school frontally.

From now on I am going to use all of the energy that I have with trying to corrupt the minds of graduate students. And, as some of you will have noticed, by some of the comments that have been made in here, I was not an entire failure in this objective. Indeed the poet Elizabeth Sewell paid me the rather equivocal compliment of saying that Poteat has educated a whole generation of misfits.

Now that is what you are in your place in your classroom. And the thought police may come knocking on your classroom door and usher you out and take you to a place that we dare not even think about. But

until that time you have got 50 minutes or whatever it is with this group of students in order to meet them face-to-face on these questions. And it will not be a pretty sight but what else is there to do?

29:50

????I want to ask a question that ties together several questions and that is essentially the ethical import of focusing on our mindbody...I know you don't address that directly but from your perspective does a recovery of our rootedness in the world have ethical import and if so in what direction?

Poteat: Well it certainly has ethical import, first and foremost, insofar as it places us where we ought to be. And that is the *conditio sine qua non* of thinking about ethics and acting...what is right and what is good..and that is very different from doing what is right and what is good. But we know... we have far greater clarity, I would argue, on the basis upon which we would say about the right and the good if we are located at the place that I am suggesting that **we in fact are!**

You know, I am not telling you....I am not saying anything that you don't already live your life on...I am simply telling you something that you are not accustomed to talking about...now, is that responsive to your interest, Jeffrey?

????Well yes it is....As you know ...Martin Heidegger ..in your work there is an ethical import too...and it is related to any notion of the alienation that the Cartesian world and the games that we play in that world will lead us into...

Poteat: Preeminently, my ethical category is responsibility and preeminently my preeminent category in philosophical anthropology is my taking responsibility. For me to take responsibility is for me to be.

Dale? Oh I am preempting the ...

32:40

Charles McCoy: I was going to call on some people that haven't spoken yet...

Poteat: By all means...and Dale has spoken far too much... (laughter)

McCoy: Well maybe not this morning but let's go to Jim and then Dale

Jim Stines: Your comment to Walter that there is no way you can get a surgeon's scalpel between yourself and the world.

A couple of observations. Polanyi ..my historical situation as the stage upon which I receive my calling.

Kierkegaard's Abraham who hears the word to take his son to Mt. Moriah ... Kierkegaard seems to me to be suggesting that at that moment his world has exploded That in a sense he is under pressure to have it taken away. Comment on that appropo.....

Poteat: What I have been saying has nothing to do with that case (Laughter) What I have been saying is about something else

Jim Stines: Well I think it is too, but I think this other needs to be said because otherwise you sound like Jean Paul Sartre....lording it over being..

Poteat: Oh my God..(laughter) this is a viper that I have nurtured in my own house (loudest laughter of the day)

Jim Stines: Obviously I am going back to the same ??? that you do. I mean you have quoted from time to time ...the one that is closer to us than we are to ourselves.... Kierkegaard talking about the concrete self-relation being convivial if you will...in relation to another...And it seems to me that when we talk about shifting dwelling places...it is at the edge of the world...it is neither in the world nor out of the world...it is transcendent not without immanence somehow...but that is part of what is bugging the conversation...

Poteat: Well would you subscribe to the proposition that you can explode from one world into another world?

Jim Stines: Well I am not sure but that in a certain sense that's not exactly happened in the pathos of Abraham's encounter on Mt.

Poteat: I would go farther than that and give you permission to say that is exactly what is happening there...

Jim Stines: But then it is not happening in some sort of a vacuum...the dialectic here in Kierkegaardian terms would be a pathetic dialectic not a rational....

Poteat: Exactly so, but none of our shifts from one world into another, whether they are trivial or of a magnitude such as infanticide is different in its logical structure...that is to say the shift from one world (this sentence has got to be completed) (several try to help)...

Poteat: Let me put it this way, Jim, in a very commonsensical way, I dare say, I certainly hope that as a result of my being here last night and my being here this morning, some of the people in the room have had their worlds exploded and find themselves, if not in a world, at least in a mess. And I want to say that is happening to us all, individually, and in our relationships, and in our intellectual endeavors, and in our efforts to bring an intellectual argument to some kind of intelligibility, and so on..

36:40

Charles McCoy: Would you say also that in Polanyian terms, the Abraham case, and others too, would be a dwelling in, which is not only mindody but also cultural and traditional ...and that is a pre-condition of the breaking out that it is not merely that breaking out is incidental to it ..

(Jim Stines says something inaudible about "stage on which is my calling")

Dale?

Dale Cannon: (much inaudible) My question puts it differently.... Polanyi...a great deal of *Personal Knowledge* is concerned with what Polanyi called intellection and moral passions..... balance of mind...and that whole dimension of, if you will, finding balance without ?enerving it?..... moral passion or losing it ..not just moral passion...intellectual passion...heuristic passion ... I don't find you attending, very much explicitly, ...you are attending more to sort of ground level things and the body side of the equation and you don't spend a whole lot of time talking about passion...

Poteat: I thought that I was spending a lot of time exhibiting it,

Dale Cannon: Yes, I think that's right. And what I am asking is an open ended question not about what you have done but do you want to say any more about how you would see the passions...particularly around the whole notion of calling.

Potreat: I would take it for granted that everything that appears in our personal life is grounded in this unmediated thisness that is our individual and convivial mindbodies in the world and I see the same, in principle, the same passion at work in the melodic movements of a neonate in concert with its mother's voice and mother's movements and the articulations by Johannes Sebastian Bach of, let us say, the Musical ?Art Arche? Opera? which is one of the most complex pieces of music, certainly of contrapuntal music ever written.

The same thing is going on in both cases. And it is ubiquitous. And you can call it intellectual passion, you can call it a heuristic passion, and whether you will call it the one or the other will depend on what it is you are trying to say about these things in a given moment...

But you are right. I don't... haven't said anything in anything I have written that sounds like what I just said. In a way I guess I take this all quite for granted. I find indeed that in trying to put this stuff down I am being born along by these passions.

????? in audible ?But you are also saying...???mindbody???

Poteat: Very good Robere...It is good to hear youafter all these years...still crazy

41:40

Wally?

Wally Mead: (key words inaudible) It seems to me that a major thrust of your thought is not only to examine the mindbody(inaudible) but also ...to go back to ...undifferentiated...background of the ground...that itself is impersonal ...I use in commenting on thatblack hole.... When we get into those kinds of concepts...no differentiation it seems to me Jim had this problem with my manuscriptwhen we get to a dimension...kind of origin... I am puzzled by what this leads to in my own thinking. Can you say something about that?

Poteat: Now just talk aboutJust Pinpoint what puzzle it is that you want me to speak to....

Walter Mead: I guess it is how does intentionality arise from a lack of intentionality ..how does the ground emerge from the background ...how the distinctly different from the impersonal ...

Poteat: I find myself, as I listen to you Wally, translating what you are asking into the way that I apprehend that most dense of all entities in the universe, namely myself, and I don't think about it in the categories that you have used to pose your question. I, in a sense, don't **think** about it. What I do is I try to surrender to the claim upon me of this increasingly elusive reality which is itself intentional and which I experience as intentional . I don't impute that to it until after the fact -until I begin think about it and talk about it. But I just find myself walking around in the world.... projected out of this as yet unarticulated intentionality.

And in one sense I would say, in answer to the question of "Well how do you know that, Poteat,if you don't talk about it?" and the answer is "Well, I just notice what I do and what I am doing and how what I am doing requires ..that.."

45:12

Jim Stines? But you would not...I thought Wally..we would say it sounded like without equivocation that the self has neither spatial nor temporal extension, and I can see you saying that in a certain mode, but that is to say it is not without qualification...In other words are you saying that the self has neither spatial nor temporal extension?

Poteat: Well it depends on the context in which I am talking about it. And the context in which I would be talking about it would define the sense of space and the sense of time that had a bearing on that sense of the self that I was trying to articulate and communicate to you and to myself.

McCoy: Those sentences that he read from Polanyi on page 191-192 would, of course, be very relevant, here. When we talk about space and extension in the light of something that is already there.

Jim Stines: That is why I said without qualification ...and upfront ...gnostic?

Poteat: You know Jim that you are out like that old figure on the Dutch Cleanser bottle, chasing dirt but the dirt ...

Jim Stines: I am not chasing dirt I just trying to figure out if you assent without qualification what I thought...

Poteat: I never say anything without qualification! (Loud, long laughter)

47:10

McCoy: Let's see we have Walter and Jerry... I saw Jerry's hand first and then Walter

Jerry: ??? question here...I recall your telling us, many years ago (it is impossible to believe) about **McNeil**. When you were looking for a new neighborhood that **McNeil** (Poteat explains McNeil is my son)

Jerry continues: **McNeil** was 3 and he wandered next door and the neighbor was digging in his garden and he looked up and said ..."Well you a nice looking little boy..what is your name.. (My name is **McNeil**) "Well do you have any brothers? "

....inaudible and you said **McNeil** looked off into space and said: "No But I got two sisters and they've got a brother and that's me." Now there is a Poteat!

Someone (I have used that story for thirty years!)

Jerry: ???about one self and how one comes to be aware of oneself in terms of relationships, defined in relation to other peopleinaudible..

Poteat: Oh I do subscribe to it and **McNeil** reminds me of it even though he is now in his forties...he got old while you and I got old Jerry ... but I tell my other kid story...which is also full of philosophical import...also my two daughters who were born about 20 months apart ..both had measles at the same time ...and they were supposed to stay in bed and be still and not cause trouble and not get themselves excited....and I came home from a late afternoon seminar and walked into their bedroom and said how are you getting along, how do you feel and let me look at your faces and see how broken out they are...and they were rather tolerant of me ...

And I noticed that they were playing some kind of game, or so it seemed, they had a deck of playing cards and I noticed that they had them all face down, each had half the deck, and first one would take the top card off the deck and put it down face up and the other one would do the same thing, and they would take turns picking up the two cards,

And I watched this for a while and I said: "What are you doing?"

"We are playing a game"

"Well does the game have a name?"

"No" (growing more and more irritated with this obtuse parent)

And I said "Well what do you do?"

And they said: "Can't You see?"

I said "Yes. But that leads to a question" (this is the way I talk to kids) "that leads me to the question... What are the rules?"

And the older one looked up at me with this look of utter disgust and said: "The only rule is you can't cheat!" (long laughter)

You can see the quality of the moral education that these kids had (all of the above punctuated with much laughter throughout)

51:03

Walter?

Walt Gulick: I want to reflect upon the question we were talking about right before the break about what happens when we inhabit your world view. And relate it maybe to the question Bob Osborn had,,,?? Theology.... I can see different ways of understanding what goes on there. One would be that when you make your point of view as a fully embodied person ...(inaudible)...not thinking about ordinary categories...

And that that, in fact, is a very enlivened kind of experience because (inaudible) ...And if that is the case then it seems to me that maybe your teaching does make a difference and things aren't just the same ...and that maybe taking on this mindbody world view ...even if we want to come back to a kind of theological stance ...(inaudible) involvement of the Holy Spirit in the sense that love, peace, joy in a kind of spontaneous sort of way...and maybe you are (inaudible)...

Poteat: I am quite comfortable with that ...that is to say insofar as it is possible to be comfortable with the categories love, peace, and joy, it is not all that easy

Walt Gulick: And if that is the case than maybe all that you have been teaching makes a real difference...and I think you believe that too, of course,....

Poteat: No...Oddly or not, it never bothered me whether or not it made a difference or not because the reason I was doing it was that I felt that this was what I had been called to do...if in answering my calling all of these odd things happened, and some of them I enjoyed seeing happen, that was a bonus.

?????: That is a very Polanyian note

Poteat: Well, that is the ultimate compliment, John.

Araminta? Beth? It's also very Baptist? (lots of laughter)(also very Quaker)

Jerry?

Jerry Moorman: Bill, as you know I was intrigued with the line in your book "Imagine a man who has no sense of melody?...and would like to use that in a paper on what your work has to do with....understanding what happens in humor and another goal that I have for this is that perhaps someday someone may look at the peanut comic strips and be reminded of some of these things you are trying to point out.

And so I'd like to ask what ..Harry Prosch asks about the notion that the name of a building bears on the building but the building does not bear back on the name...not the other way around ...Polanyi talks about trying to find out the meaning of a word and then when you try to find out the meaning of the word you look at the word bear on and you can't do it the other way. And so my thinking for many years has been that trying to do it the other way...to get the building to bear back on the word is what humor is all about.

One question I have is that when humor takes place there is this explosion... I like the concept of explosion. Perhaps you could even make a parallel with the explosion of Abraham into another world. Could you comment on anything that happens in this explosion that might be more than just a trivial realizing that there were two meanings of a word ...it seems to me that there is something that happens there when you are thrown into the mess or when you are able to explode to the other world ...happens during these moment of humor ...its's an oscillation and a double take...a looking at the ground and then you get alienated and then there is a laughter ...an explosion..is there any thing you can say about the structure of the way that happens that is similar to when a scientist makes a discovery ..and there is a leaping out of the bathtub with Eureka I have found it..

56:40

Poteat: Well I am not sure I am prepared to comment at great length on what seems to me to be a most interesting line of exploration and I hope you will do it and send me a copy. I have always just thought that comedy was a situation in which one had a contradiction of some sort and I think that is what you are saying. And that the response to this contradiction, providing that the contradiction does not cause pain, and does not admit of resolution ...we call this comedy.

However, the contradictions in life that are the cause of pain, and are not susceptible of resolution are tragedies. Now I have not thought at all about the import for a theory of comedy that is implicit in what I took you to be saying, namely Prosch's argument about the word bearing on the building but the building not bearing on the word, for myself...it ain't so. That in our actual dwelling in the world the building bears upon the word quite as much as the word does upon the building. That does not in any way, however, imply that your use of this strange kind of reversibility as a medium for comedy is not a sound one. And I guess I have really said a good deal more about that than I am competent to say.

Charles McCoy: Time is getting short so we will have one more question and then we will give Bill a chance for a final word...and then I have a little benedictory quote..

?????????inaudible...mindbody..

59:55

Poteat: Well, the basic motif of our relationship was that of a young and on that account essentially physically vigorous junior taking care of somebody who was incompetent to do this for himself. And this was one of the reasons that Michael Polanyi was irresistible to me. I remember being in restaurant one night and talking to my companion about Polanyi and I said that he was handsome, and he was charming, and he was witty, and he was absolutely helpless. And the waitress..the waitperson...overheard this and she said "Oh my God" The import of her gesture being "How could you resist him?"

Now I loved Michael Polanyi first and foremost as a man whom it was a pleasure to make laugh. And I don't mean to suggest by this that it came hard for him

(Some lost because of tape change) 1:01:40

We were visiting professors at the university of Texas for a semester and saw each other regularly. He was in a great state of anxiety because his arteriosclerosis had become crippling in a way. He was as lucid as he ever had been in abstract matters but he could not remember names, he mixed up events of the first world war with events of the second world war, he could not remember the name of the book *Personal Knowledge* and so he subjected me every afternoon at 4:00 at the Forty Acres Club on the University of Texas Campus to an absolutely grueling experience, though this was not intentional.

What I mean by that was he would say "You must come by" – he was staying at the Forty Acres Club – you must come by and we will have a chat..and we could go to the bar and we would sit down and we would have this chat ...and the chat consisted of Michael talking and then saying: "Who was that?" Or "What did he say?" asking me and so that the two hours that we were together left me absolutely exhausted because I was trying to figure out where it was he was going.

I am feeling very anecdotal as this point and perhaps it is not inappropriate. He was the youngest member of his family, as you know, and he had never been on very good terms, particularly with his brothers...they were Marxists and they had married women who were Marxists and there was a great deal of estrangement among them.

I remember when he was a Visiting Professor at Duke in 1964, I took him with me over to the University of North Carolina Greensboro where I was conducting an honors seminar and we were reading *Personal Knowledge*, and I said "Girls, this is Michael Polanyi," and he immediately began to charm them in his usual way. On the way home...it was an early Spring night, a full moon and it seemed as if this were the time to ask the question which I had refrained from asking because the right time had not yet presented itself... But I turned to him and asked him, "Michael, was you father a practicing Jew?"

And he said: "I don't know. I never asked him."

I thought this was quite astounding! I report that because 20 years later when we were at Austin together he was trying to recover all of those things that he had lost in various ways..There was a huge oil painting of the family – it would have covered all of that wall over there – with mother Polanyi who was a strikingly beautiful woman and a salonnière into whose salon people like ...the elite of Budapest at that time regularly repaired for philosophical discussions.

And Michael, in this painting, was sitting at the front as if he were the mascot of the soccer team, with this beatific expression on his face. And I had never seen this but he pulled out of his briefcase a color photograph and he said "This is my family and I am trying to recover them." And then he went through the painting pointing out who these people were and what happened to them. And he said I am trying to write a memoir on behalf of my sister-in-law from whom I was estranged for thirty years. She was the wife of Karl Polanyi and a vigorous Marxist who disliked Michael extremely because Karl and he got along better than any of the other two brothers.

Bill Scott can correct my impressions here because he knows the facts. But he was trying to write a memoir about his brother Karl to be presented to the Hungarian Academy memorializing the great economic historian Karl Polanyi. And he said "this chore that I am doing, this task that I am doing, is the mark of the healing that has at least been achieved among those of us that are still alive." Several of them and their wives or husbands were taken off and killed in concentration camps. So here, barely able to remember the events of the day before yesterday could vividly remember those of forty and fifty years earlier -even though he mixed them up – was Michael Polanyi trying to return to his mindbodily roots in the world.

Now what else would you like for me to say on this subject?

???????????????? How young were you when you met him?

Poteat: How young was I? I was an assistant professor already at the University of North Carolina and this was 1952. (Editor: I think this was few years later, probably 1955, see biography p.226)

We had corresponded because I had read some of his early articles and I sensed that we had something of mutual interest to talk about. So I wrote him a letter and said I am going to be in England at a couple of conferences and could I come by Manchester and see you. And he wrote me back and said we can meet at such and such a restaurant and we will have a ??? and we will have a chat. And it was of course a delight for both of us because nobody had ever paid him any attention as a philosopher. And I was taken far too seriously by him because he had found someone interested in what he was doing and therefore I was taken far too seriously by Magda his wife who had a party at their flat to which the intellectuals of the British empire were assembled. I mean the chief justice of the British Supreme Court, the headmaster of the Manchester Ground School which is even a more important post, the editor of the Manchester Guardian, and many more important people who took me to be a very important person because Polanyi thought I was important (laughing) which I was certainly not. And it was a very odd experience to be approached by people who asked, "What is going on philosophically in America?"

Moderator: That may be a good place to stop. Are there any final words you want to say about these two sessions together, Bill?

Poteat: I have had a hell of a good time...that's my final word.

McCoy: That's your mindbody state of existence. I want to read two passages to wind things up.

In our culture the time for relocating the axis of our existence is very late...perhaps it is already past. It is still possible, nonetheless, for us to remain steadfast at our posts. (Editor: *Philosophical Daybook*, p. 5)

And then: **Under this regime being at once steadfast and intentional is seen to be the provenance of reality and truth, coherence and value, closer to each of us than we are to ourselves. (Editor: *Philosophical Daybook*, p.115)**

Thank you very much, Bill. Its been exciting and interesting...long applause....Bill: You are very kind....