

The Critical to Post-Critical Shift: What It Means and Why It's Important By Dale Cannon

Preface. My intent in this essay is to explain what is involved in what Polanyi refers to as the shift from a critical philosophical perspective to a post-critical philosophical perspective, and bring to light some of its larger but often unnoticed implications. Those of us who are academics live much of our lives in an intellectual ethos that is still largely critical, This makes it often difficult to escape being critical despite wanting to be post-critical and to think and behave in a post-critical way. I offer this paper as a kind of manual for negotiating, and re-negotiating, the shift to a post-critical perspective. Other than myself and my principal academic mentor, William H. Poteat, not many Polanyi scholars have attempted to explicate its meaning. I acknowledge that Poteat's interpretations of Polanyi's writings and ideas have had a strong influence in forming my own understandings.¹

The nature of this shift is one that I have been exploring for my entire career (since 1967) and have previously published several articles and essays addressing.² The present effort is a kind of distillation and summing up of the work I have done, to render that work clearer, and to communicate the importance of understanding what the shift to a post-critical perspective is all about. In some respects, though, it goes beyond what I have previously published.

A Development within Western Intellectual Culture. Polanyi himself understood the shift from the critical to the post-critical to be of larger significance than simply being a feature of his own philosophical thinking or his own idea—although at times even he seems to lose sight of this larger picture. He interpreted the shift to the post-critical to be a development within 20th Century Western intellectual culture (and therefore a feature of the thinking of many persons independent from himself and often in terms other than he would use), a development much

larger than, but nevertheless including, his own philosophical work³: specifically, a breaking free from the critical movement that has dominated Western thought for the last three centuries. It was something Polanyi sought to call attention to, to understand and explain, and to support and carry forward as best he was able. Although he had important things to say about it, even giving it special prominence as the subtitle to his magnum opus *Personal Knowledge*—“Toward a Post-Critical Philosophy”—he did not explain the concept systematically nor did he give it much attention in publications beyond *PK*. Nevertheless, I maintain that it is of central and vital importance, as I shall try to demonstrate in what follows. When I speak about it here, it is not primarily an exposition of what Polanyi wrote but about the shift from the critical to the post-critical to which Polanyi directed our attention. In this respect there is much more to discover about it than simply what Polanyi had to say. Moreover, we ourselves need to have a firm enough grasp of it to be able to recognize and acknowledge post-critical thought in other writers and thinkers.⁴

Polanyi’s Own Clues to the Transition from the Critical to the Post-Critical. Let us begin by reviewing some clues from what Polanyi himself has to say about it:

The critical enterprise which gave rise to the Renaissance and the Reformation, and started the rise of our science, philosophy, and art, had matured to its conclusion and had reached its final limits. We have thus begun to live in a new intellectual period, which I would call the post-critical age of Western civilization. Liberalism today is becoming conscious of its own fiduciary foundations [i.e., foundations that it already had in place but of which it was largely unconscious and in denial] and is forming an alliance with other beliefs, kindred to its own. (*LL*, 109)⁵

I have given to the book called *Personal Knowledge* . . . the subtitle “Towards a Post-critical Philosophy.” This was meant to say that in my view the great intellectual revolution which is marked by the names of Descartes, Hume, Kant, J. S. Mill, and Bertrand Russell, is nearing its final limits. This movement was guided by the principle that doubt is the solvent of error [applied to the beliefs that our cultural traditions have passed on to us] which leaves behind truth.⁶

The method of doubt is a logical corollary of objectivism. It trusts that the uprooting of all voluntary components of belief [i.e., of all subjectivity, that modern critical thought presumed to be the source of uncritical beliefs] will leave behind unassailed a residue of knowledge that is completely determined by the objective evidence. Critical thought trusted this method unconditionally for avoiding error and establishing truth. (*PK*, 269)

Finding nothing more to feed on, the critical movement has exhausted its creative functions and has begun to destroy its own foundations [as in so-called ‘deconstructive post-modernism,’ that questions the very possibility of objectivity and universality]. The task of a post-critical philosophy is to rescue our minds from this peril. I shall urge that it can attempt this only by assuming a frankly fiduciary character [i.e., accepting on trust and confidence what can nevertheless be doubted—“We could be wrong.”—giving primacy to the unavoidable heuristic faith that has generated (though covered over and disguised) all of our creative advances in the modern era].⁷

Tacit assent and intellectual passions, the sharing of an idiom and of a cultural heritage, affiliation to a like-minded community: such are the [fiduciary] impulses which shape our vision of the nature of things on which we rely for our mastery of things. No intelligence, however critical or original, can operate outside such a fiduciary framework [the pretensions of modern critical thought to do so notwithstanding]. (*PK*, 366)

I want to establish an alternative ideal of knowledge, quite generally. Hence the wide scope of this book and hence also the coining of the new term I have used for my title: Personal Knowledge. The two words may seem to contradict each other: for true knowledge is deemed impersonal, universally established, objective. But the seeming contradiction is resolved by modifying the conception of knowing. . . . Such is the *personal participation* of the knower in all acts of understanding. But this does not make our understanding *subjective*. Comprehension is neither an arbitrary act nor a passive experience, but a responsible act claiming [by intent] universal validity. Such knowing is indeed *objective* in the sense of establishing contact with a hidden reality, a contact that is defined as the condition for anticipating an indeterminate range of yet unknown (and perhaps yet inconceivable) true implications. [Note Polanyi offers here a new definition of what constitutes objectivity in knowledge—or rather, a re-definition, or recovery of the commonsense meaning, and a recovery of commonsense.] It seems reasonable to describe this fusion of the personal and the objective as Personal Knowledge. . . . Throughout this book I have tried to make this situation apparent. I have shown that into every act of knowing there enters a passionate contribution of the person knowing what is being known, and that this coefficient [this “voluntary component of belief?”] is no mere imperfection but a vital component of his knowledge. (*PK*, xiiif, Torchbook edition)

I have arrived at the opening of this last chapter without having suggested any definite theory concerning the nature of things; and I shall finish this chapter without having presented any such theory. This book tries to serve a different and in a sense perhaps more ambitious purpose. Its aim is to re-equip men with the faculties which centuries of critical thought have taught them to distrust. The reader has been invited to use these faculties and contemplate thus a picture of things restored to their fairly obvious nature. [Note the appeal here to a sense of what was already known, to a restored commonsense.] This is all the book was meant to do. For once men have been made to realize the crippling mutilations imposed by an objectivist framework—once the veil of ambiguities covering up these mutilations has been definitively dissolved—many fresh minds will turn to the task of reinterpreting the world as it is, and as it then once more will be seen to be. (*PK*, 381)

A Paradigm Change. Despite what may seem to be the clarity of these passages, what is involved in the shift from a critical to a post-critical philosophical perspective is not as easy to state or comprehend as one might at first suppose. Primarily because it involves a shift from one comprehensive paradigm to another in the manner that Thomas Kuhn identified in his *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.⁸ This is especially difficult for persons who find themselves caught in a conflict of loyalties to both the critical and the post-critical paradigms or who have never quite made the transition from the one to the other. It is not simply a change from one conceptual framework to another (conceiving things differently, understanding things making use of a different set of concepts, using many of the same words but now with different meanings), especially because it involves a profound existential shift, a transformation in the idea we have of ourselves as thinking persons—indeed, a change in our very being (how we stand within the world and relates to things generally).⁹

To make sense of what is involved in the shift from the one to the other, it is valuable to have a heightened sense of the perspective one is leaving behind. There is, within the critical perspective, by virtue of its insistence that all claims to knowledge and truth be subject to skeptical doubt and critical scrutiny, a requirement that, to be considered as a viable candidate, a

claim must be fully explicit (or aim at full explicitness), from which anything ambiguous, indeterminate, or ‘subjective,’ anything suspicious, anything about it that cannot be ‘pinned down’ exactly and made certain has been expunged (realizing Descartes’ ideal of being a “clear and distinct” idea), or else the claim itself is simply rejected and dismissed as having no merit. Note how this establishes the would-be critical thinker’s focus upon explicit representations considered unto themselves, in abstraction from whatever concrete relation they may have to what it is they represent and from whatever context they initially may have had, but also upon those representations as needing to be in an impersonal, universalized, ‘objective’ form. Critical scrutiny requires that its focus be explicit propositions (clear and distinct statements). Note also how and in what sort of abstracted reflective posture this places the person engaging in critical scrutiny. For the contemplation of such a detached mind, there are nothing but representations of the world soliciting its credence to be considered and analyzed, representations of a world somewhere out there, beyond (these abstractions). Its critical scrutiny includes no encounters with the realities represented, nothing concrete, and no concrete context of utterance. Any ‘backing’ given to these candidates for acceptance, if such there be, will have to be made up of similar abstract, explicit statements. The critical attitude seeking to avoid being taken in by what seems plausible on the surface will insure that whatever survives this sort of scrutiny will be fully explicit representations in a universal, ‘objective,’ fully parsed out form

Prisoners in a Cave. An analogy may be of help in understanding what is involved¹⁰: I suggest that the shift from a critical to a post-critical perspective is akin to the struggle to escape from the condition of being a prisoner in a cave (according to a story adapted from Plato’s *Republic*¹¹). And what specifically does that involve?¹² Recall, if you will, that the condition of the prisoners in the cave in Plato’s story is that of persons wholly accustomed and habituated to

taking impersonalized representations of reality (‘objective representations’ projected on the wall of the cave by the ‘prison custodians’) for reality itself (or at least not significantly different from reality), for they know of no reality beyond these representations. (These representations, in principle, could include representations devised by the prisoners themselves, but being, as it were, in the third person, they are for all intents and purposes anonymous.) *The fundamental problem for the prisoners is a matter of coming to realize the predicament they are in, struggling to break free of it, struggling to grope their way out of the cave (out of the condition of being captive to these representations of reality as not other than [or not in any significant way different from] the realities they represent), and eventually coming directly and freshly to acquaint themselves with realities outside the cave, which formerly they had known only representations thereof.* According to the analogy I am proposing, to be ensconced within the critical perspective is like being one of these prisoners in the cave, captive to explicit representations of reality—and, as Ludwig Wittgenstein has said,¹³ “captive” as well “to a picture” of oneself being fixated on impersonal representations of reality that are supposed to be the closest one can hope to come to reality). To shift to a post-critical perspective would be to escape the cave and find oneself in a quite different place (a very different perspective, or orientation): in a direct and fresh acquaintance with reality beyond the cave, beyond the representations of reality on which one had been formerly fixated as the closest one can hope to come to reality, but which are now seen to be abstract representations distinct from reality.

Imagine a Person Who Might Undergo the Shift. (1) Imagine a person ensconced in a modern critical frame of reference, wholly accustomed to taking knowledge, genuine knowledge in the standard modern critical sense to be a matter of impersonal explicit propositions (whose propositions they are, being impersonalized, is not at issue) that have by one or another modern

critical methods been refined and supposedly ascertained (or at least claimed) to represent accurately certain states of affairs in the real world. Indeed, the critical perspective habituates a persons to suppose there is no other way ‘objectively’ to conceive of the world at large, no other way to think of it as genuinely real and known, than in terms of such impersonal, universal representations. All other propositions are regarded as statements that fail in various measures of refinement and accuracy of representation and, accordingly, fail to qualify as knowledge.

Imagine also another somewhat similar but quite distinct example: (2) Consider a mind/consciousness located (somehow) in an interconnected net of neural networks within the brain of a living human body. According to the standard (Empiricist) account, all that such a mind can directly know or be aware of is a sequence of perceptual representations [sense data, ‘objective’ bits of neural information] that are presumed to represent aspects of the real world beyond/outside the body, mediated, of course, by the body’s sensory organs and their neural connections to the brain. However, think not of the mind in this example as a person but think rather of a person supposing herself to be such a mind ensconced in the brain of her body. As such she would be thinking of herself as *a detached spectator of a third-personal, objectified account of her neural autonomy* imagining herself somehow located within that neural network. In effect, she would be, accordingly, two levels or more of abstraction removed from the ordinary realities represented in this example by concatenations of sense data in the brain.)

First Step of the Shift: Become Aware of the Tacit Dimension. Now consider either of these two persons (whether in case 1 or case 2) going through the process of learning and coming to think about knowing and knowledge according to Polanyi’s post-critical account. Think of the process of coming to insight into, and realization of, herself as knower in the world alongside of others and taking notice of what lies outside her critical focus of attention (the

ambient *tacit* dimension, the concrete context of her knowing—indeed, her life—all of which she is aware of to some degree, but not as the preoccupied focus of her attention). Think of Polanyi’s assertion that begins *The Tacit Dimension*: “[In all of our knowings,] We know [not explicitly, but tacitly] more than we can say.” This “more,” that Polanyi dubs “tacit knowledge,” is a knowing that is quite distinct from whatever can be said, whatever that can be rendered explicit and ideally pass the muster of critical scrutiny—namely all that the critical perspective takes to be knowledge. Yet being distinct, such tacit knowledge is not unrelated to what can be said. It includes a great range of things, but especially, and most important for Polanyi, it includes all that a person tacitly relies on to understand what is said (in this case, what is focally explicit) and to establish it as justified (what might be called the taken for granted tacit background to the meaning of statements and their truth), but also all that a person is acquainted with via the personal relationship that Polanyi calls “indwelling” of what a statement or any other representation is presumed to represent (the reality, the state of affairs, it represents). In order to make sense of what Polanyi is explaining, the person in each of the two cases (whether 1 or 2) must come to understand herself as being placed (bodily) in the world in relation not only to the representations formerly taken as the focus of her knowing, but more so in an acquaintance-relationship to the realities being represented—to both simultaneously—and, of course, to whatever other persons may be involved.

Escape from the Cave: From Explicit Knowing by Representation to Tacit

Knowing by Acquaintance. A person’s shift from the initial condition described in the two examples to the second condition (which is the condition Polanyi post-critically describes) in each example is therefore profoundly akin to the shift a prisoner in the cave has to go through to escape to the world outside, a shift from ‘knowing’ (attending to and being acquainted with)

nothing but impersonalized representations critically considered, to dealing directly with realities (via contact with them) as well as with these representations and others like them, alongside such realities. Knowing in the former perspective is critically focused on a set of (explicit) representations which can only be analyzed, compared, and contrasted with other similar representations. In the latter perspective, knowing is fundamentally an embodied relationship of acquaintance with and indwelling of (a fundamentally tacit relationship to) realities more and less well known, along with their representations (however explicit they may be), including what the knower is able to identify linguistically and conceptually about them, now seen as being distinguishable from, other than, and in various respects derivative from, those realities.¹⁴ True representations/propositions thus may, with our tacit “backing,” be understood to “bear upon” [Polanyi’s phrases] and articulate our contact with the reality in question; their truth derives from this connection, and makes no sense apart from our own participation in establishing and maintaining this contact. Apart from this connecting, this backing, this grounding, they are meaningless, like ‘unsigned checks’.

To Be Post-Critical, then. Is to Understand Oneself to Be (Located) in the World and More or Less in Contact with It, with the realities making it up as well as with whatever representations are made of it, as well as other persons knowing the same realities. It is to move from a formalized sense (meaning) of abstract propositions for no one in particular to a sense in common (a genuine commonsense) among and between an indefinite plurality of other person-knowers.¹⁵ Whereas to be in the critical frame of reference is to confront, and have to be more or less content with, only representations, some better some worse, to be determined as such only by comparing, contrasting, and analyzing them (including, of course, representations of evidence that purport to support and justify them. ‘Knowing,’ thus, in a post-critical frame of reference,

cannot be reduced to mere possession of an ideal representation of the thing or matter in question, as with “a justified true [propositional] belief.” On the contrary, it would have to be a relationship of more or less direct rapport (partly articulate, partly not) with the reality in question; that is why I speak of it as knowledge-by-acquaintance or acquaintance-knowing.¹⁶ Polanyi calls it “contact with reality.” A critical frame of reference, by way of contrast, does not itself locate/situate/make reference to/or ‘picture’ the reflecting person being in the world at all, but implicitly locates the knower as it were ‘outside the world in an abstract ‘theater of reflection,’¹⁷ cut off from direct interaction with the world and all realities therein, as well as from interaction with other person-knowers [making it seem reasonable to ask, e.g., an absurd question such as “How can you possibly know that there is a world out there, outside your mind and beyond these representations, at all?”]. In this respect, to become post-critical is, among other things, to jettison this picture of oneself altogether. Instead it is to recognize for oneself directly that *map* (our representation of reality, however sophisticated—indeed, however accurate) is not the same as *territory* (the reality being represented), nor is *territory* the same as *map*. And, that we are actually in a position (or can come to place ourselves in a position) to see, to some extent at least, beyond the map and glimpse in some respects that the territory is more than, or other than, our current map, and *how* it is more or other than, what the map succeeds in representing—that is, to be in contact with reality in its transcendence beyond our explicit, representative grasp. This includes, of course, even representations/images/pictures we have of ourselves. We too are more than the representations we and others may have of us. In Polanyian terms, to be post-critical is to be in a position to glimpse and begin to gain rapport with the indeterminate transcendence, the inexhaustible future manifestations, of whatever realities are at issue. This will, of course, include many sorts of things: the full range and scope of what

Polanyi calls “comprehensive entities;” aspects of things that transcend objectification; qualitative features that resist quantification (representation in quantified terms); living things in their autonomy from us; the emergence, development, and achievements of living things and persons; their successes and failure; the intrinsic valuational aspects of things that cannot be reduced to their manipulable parts (or their extrinsically valued aspects); matters of intrinsic merit, beauty, and rightness; etc.

From Skeptical Detachment to a Risk Filled Active Searching into Things and Aspects of Things Not Fully Known, Obscure, or Hidden.¹⁸ The shift from a critical to a post-critical perspective is fundamentally a shift from an attitude of habituated doubt and critical suspicion (i.e., an attitude of skeptical detachment) to an attitude of trust and methodological believing (because the risk and uncertainty of exploration and inquiry are unavoidable)—specifically, believing that something hidden can be found, that something unknown or incompletely known is going to be revealed, and that it calls for and calls into action one’s involvement and participation to find it out and bring it to light.¹⁹ Take note, however: the shift does not involve repudiating doubt as such, especially when there is good reason to doubt. But it does involve subordinating such doubt to the faith-governed-quest to reach out and learn new truth (even about something that happens, despite supposition to the contrary, to be untrue), to trust intimations of aspects of reality yet undisclosed or yet unarticulated. It invokes trust as well in the community, practices and traditions in which one has built up one’s competence in inquiring into such matters (what Polanyi calls the fiduciary framework of the ongoing tradition of inquiry into such matters). Outwardly it is a shift from passivity to activity, from being withdrawn and detached to participation, from withholding oneself to “pouring oneself” into the situation or matter in question (to use Polanyi’s phrase) and thereby come to dwell within it

(Polanyi calls it “indwelling”). All knowing, once viewed post-critically, is participatory and a matter of indwelling, of personal connection—indeed, *first* personal connection, being present to, and present with, what is known. The precedent of this movement goes back to Augustine of Hippo (and beyond), who contended that only a person who loves and seeks the truth about something for its own sake, in its transcendence beyond our power to make it serve our self interest, can truly know it for what it truly is, transcending the desire to know for the sake of self-interest, or the interest of the group to which one belongs. Thus conceived, reality in its more profound aspects is known only through contemplative love, cherishing it in its transcendence beyond my grasp of it for its own sake versus subjecting it to my self-centered interests. So also, this movement of methodological faith-knowing invokes one’s creative powers to forge new words, new concepts, new descriptions to articulate what one thereby comes to discover, beyond current descriptions and understandings. This is the creative locus of new theories about things in the sciences as well as new creations in the arts, literary, visual, dramatic, musical, etc.²⁰

Universal Intent and Commonsense-Making: From Detached Intellection to Communal Venture.

It is important to note at this point that the shift to post-critical methodological faith is not individualistic as it might at first seem, for it aims at realizing the possibility of making sense-in-common, where all genuinely interested inquirers might come together in *mutual recognition*, in a recognition of truth in common among competent knowers—*not despite their differences but in virtue of their different perspectives*.²¹ This is what Polanyi identifies as *universal intent* at the heart of methodological faith/believing—i.e., responsibly soliciting the response of other competent knowers that they might come to recognize the same truth for themselves (and/or to correct or amend where the initial knower’s discovery may fall short in one respect or another). Note that the universality sought here is not realizable in

advance—e.g., by insuring *a priori* that the *form* of representation is the same for all—but is achievable only with the contingent coming-together and mutual recognition of other competent knowers.²²

Become Cognizant of the From-To Structure of Awareness and the Power of

***Subsidiary* [or ‘*From*’] Awareness in Particular.** A principal feature of the shift to the post-critical arises at this juncture, namely, becoming aware of what Polanyi calls the *tacit* “from-to” structure of awareness (including consciousness, understanding, and other related concepts too), and particularly of the notoriously difficult to articulate “*from*”-rootage of our awareness.²³

Polanyi stresses how all of our awareness has this dynamic, directional, integrative structure, rooted in our bodily self, our body-as-subject (versus our body as known from without and thereby rendered an object, ‘objectified’), our “lived-body,” our being-in-the-world (our being aware always from within a specific context, our basal place *here*, from which all else is *there*), The *from*-rootage of our awareness figures in our experience and understanding as subsidiarily locating, orienting and enabling it. This is not just true of ourselves and our own awareness, but we recognize this same sort of structure in others’ awareness no less. It provides clues which we subsidiarily integrate, and upon which we rely, to integrate and thereby bring to realization whatever is the Gestalt focus of our awareness, understanding, and comprehension. They, these subsidiary clues (which function as clues only as we subsidiarily rely on them), cannot be focused on directly; to try is to disable their indispensable subsidiary role. This includes, of course, all that neurologically goes on within our bodies, our muscles, our skeletal structure, our kinesthetic movements, and our nervous system that bears upon our present experience and understanding of a dance performance, for example. As such, functioning in this way, they cannot be the object of our focal attention. We become cognizant of them as “that *from* which we are attending” only

indirectly, by bringing to notice their bearing and influence on the comprehension and focus that they enable. (Marjorie Grene has argued that this tacit, from-to structure of awareness is Polanyi's chief contribution to philosophy, and to epistemology in particular.²⁴) Polanyi speaks here of two kinds (or perhaps, better, two dimensions) of awareness: on the one hand, our "to," "at," or "focal" awareness and, on the other hand, our "from," "with," or "subsidiary" awareness; the two invariably function together.

Discover the Power of Subsidiary Awareness to Incorporate and Transform Things Outside Us into Transparent Extensions of Our Touch with the World.

The power of subsidiary, "from" awareness/attention, in turn, has a remarkable capacity to transform and incorporate tools, signs, instruments, and language (this range of things is meant to include much, encompassing more than it specifies). That is to say, certain things that initially lie *outside* our lived bodies, once *indwelt* and *attended from*, become *incorporated into* our bodies, at first apparently 'mediating' between us and the focus of our attention but subsequently they become extensions of our lived body's presence (that is to say, our *personal* presence) to, our 'touch' with, our rapport with the world. They become *things we perceive, think, and comprehend with*: dwelling places of our minds. The dynamic from-to structure of which Polanyi speaks is thus not only true of basic perceptual awareness. Polanyi calls attention to how a great many things, which may at first (when first we turn consider them and attend to them) be 'external' to us, such as tools, signs, and instruments (indeed, all significant elements of our cultural heritage), become altered and changed as we come to dwell in them and attend from them to meanings they intimate and open up to us. When they are 'external' to us, we look *at* them, we focus upon them, and as we do they are for the most part opaque, even a barrier to our awareness. But our awareness of them changes as we come to attend *from* them and *with* them,

especially as we develop skill, fluency, and competence in their use. In this way, tools, signs, and instruments become assimilated to our bodies as we come to attend from them to that to which they give/grant/gift us access. This is a marvelous tacit power that we have. Attending from the sign to that in the world to which it points and signifies brings about a transformation in the appearance and feel of the sign, just as with the tool and the instrument as well. But not just a change in appearance; the mediating element *becomes itself access to aspects of reality, a means of contact*, that we did not have before. It becomes, as it were, *an extension of our body (an extension of our embodied person)* and the sensing boundary or ‘touch’ of our body shifts outward to the point at which the tool, the sign, the instrument touches (i.e., puts us in touch with) the reality in question. Just as our live, healthy, touching body is transparent (not opaque) to what it touches, this mediating tool, sign, and instrument becomes transparent as well, a part of the transparency of our perceiving, touching body. This is not a mere phenomenal change; something ontological is going on here. It enables us to be present to what is being touched through its skillful use in a way that otherwise would not be possible. In that respect, though when considered in detachment it seems natural and appropriate to say that it *mediates* our contact, our confident, trustful, competent use (indwelling) of it makes it no longer simply a mediator *qua* something standing “between” us and the reality, connecting us ‘at one remove.’ For, when assimilated to our lived body, it enables our contact to and presence with the reality in question—and more.

Sometimes We Say More than We Know.²⁵ Note that this is where and how language (and other symbols and systems of symbols, including works of art and scientific theories) comes into play—not as an explicit focal object or set of objects, but as a transparent medium of meaning, extending our powers, whereby we access new and deeper dimensions of

reality. Note here also, being an ‘artificial’ extension of our lived body, we can, if we choose to, shift back out of them and turn our attention to them focally, externalizing them, so that for the moment we are no longer dwelling within them. Thereby they become opaque again, or at least not so transparent. But when serving as an extension of our embodied knowing, as we fully indwell them subsidiarily, such ‘mediators’ can in different respects limit and even distort our grasp of a reality. Nevertheless, as Polanyi points out how good theories in natural science when subsidiarily indwelt by a competent scientist in search of further unplumbed aspects of the realities in question, as Copernicus’ theory of the Solar System indwelt by Kepler and later Newton, lead to new discoveries beyond those which first gave rise to the theory in question; the theory itself becomes not just an account of the original discovery but an instrument of discovery of further aspects of the reality, aspects not noticed before. So also, creative words, phrases, and entire passages in creative literature as well as entire works of literature and art—but especially good metaphors—when indwelt subsidiarily may become means of more and further creative insight. The same is true in all of the arts and other creative disciplines. *Recognition of this transforming power of subsidiary awareness, whereby mediating ‘objects’ become transparent means of access to aspects of reality beyond us, is a crucial mark of a post-critical perspective.*

The Extended Mind (Polanyi-Style) as Indwelling, Personal Presence: The Ongoing Emergence into the World of the Human Person. As we assimilate and incorporate tools, signs, instruments, language, and our cultural heritage into our lived bodies, we are in the same action extending ourselves into the world and among the things we are exploring and manipulating.²⁶ We are no longer confined to our body, even less to our cranium or our brain, as the critical paradigm has maintained. We are extended into the world, a personal presence within the world,²⁷ and our instruments (physical such as probes, telescopes, microscopes,

computers, etc., but also conceptual and symbolic instruments such as theories, good metaphors and works of art) extend our reach into the universe multiple light years distant, into the very small (molecular, atomic, and subatomic), into foreign cultures, strange peoples, and into time and history. Some instruments such as the Large Hadron Collider are massively large, some others such as intravenous cameras are extremely small. But all extend our reach into and our touch with the multiple aspects of our world—indeed, of the universe—that we would not be in touch with at all without them. Knowing is thus profoundly and complexly relational and extensional in a first personal way; knowing with our bodies and beyond them. Also it is situational/contextual, beginning with our bodies and the parochial subculture within which we were raised, and confined for the time being within the (always in certain respects) straightened limitations of our present instruments and present intellectual culture. In multiple respects they limit us (for the time being) at the same time that they enable us to reach out to what transcends us. Nevertheless, to use Polanyi's phrasing, we have this marvelous capacity to "break out" of the present framework on which we have been relying (as well as to modify and improve it), and come to indwell new and different frameworks, previously unknown (by us) languages and new cultures. So also, we come to indwell from without, empathetically, each other's live bodies, gestures, words, and behaviors, giving us access to each other's intentions, thoughts, emotions, values, and minds. Note how this both gives us access to other persons and their understandings and experiences while at the same time giving them access to us in basically the same way. It places us alongside them ranged about and within a common world. It puts us into community with them, where each of us has a uniquely distinct perspective on matters that concerns us all. Each person has in this respect an access to reality-in-common, to objective reality, which is marked, says Polanyi, by its capacity to manifest itself inexhaustibly in new and surprising ways.

It is this *capacity of other persons to have access as we do to the same realities* that confirms reality's transcendence beyond our own knowledge and capacity for representing it. They, in their capacity for mutual recognition²⁸ with us, are the *conditio* [or *conditiones*] *sine qua non* of knowing reality in its transcendence, of achieving (fallibly) genuine objectivity in significant measure. Recognition of this too, though not necessarily in these words, is a mark of a post-critical perspective.

Return to the Ground, the Radical or 'Root'-Place of Being Oriented. The shift from the critical to the post-critical *grounds* us and our knowledge of the world; it orients, anchors, and roots us in a place within the world, the *ur*-place of our body, that *is* our being-in-the-world—which, as such, is not on any map. This ground is pre-reflective and is only indirectly representable. It is the concrete reference point with which we anchor and sort out abstract reflections and *all* maps, all representations. It enables us to 'find our feet' with them. It is the ground of our sense-making, the ground from which we figure things out. It is the 'home base,' 'ground zero', what is concrete (the most concrete of all) for us,²⁹ the basal 'from' of all from-to relations, the place from which all other places can and do make sense.³⁰ Note how recognition of it this subsidiary ground of our being and knowing jettisons the modern self-captivating picture of the world-less critically reflecting mind.³¹

Recover One's Passions and Deepest Convictions and One's Capacity for Wonder that is the Impetus of Intellectual Inquiry. Lastly (at least on my account), the shift from the critical to the post-critical involves something of a recovery and re-appropriation of the deeper motivations and passions that drew us into intellectual endeavor in the first place, before the baptism of fire into modernity and critical thinking that for each of us called into question our subjectivity with its parochial narrowness and summoned us to the illusory 'liberation' of

coming to have a modern mind. All sorts of dimensions of our subjectivity, varying of course from person to person, have in different respects been beaten down, beaten back, and disabled in ourselves in virtue of having acquired “a modern critical mindset”—out of fear of being “shot down” or from the actual trauma of having been “shot down,” possibly repeatedly, by our critical opponents—which is modern academic politics at its worst. All that originally went into forming and shaping one’s self and sensibility through the particular parochial background from which we have respectively come has in one respect or another been called into question by modernity’s criticisms. To shift to a post-critical perspective puts us in a position to re-discover, recover and re-accredit those pre-critical motivations and passions—not absolutely to be sure, such that we might reject and ignore modernity’s criticisms—but fallibly, tentatively, with careful attention to adapting and refining them as we go forward. This enables a reaffirmation and re-commitment to what Polanyi speaks of as the “firmament of our values and ideals.” Modernity’s criticisms will still have their say, to some extent, but not so to call this firmament into question as such, nor to disable their motivating passions that fuel our methodological faith and love and hope. It is this shift that, for those of us who may have lost it, will lead to a re-enchantment of the world.³²

Fresh Ways to Attack and Solve Traditional Conundrums. The shift from a critical to a post-critical philosophical perspective profoundly shifts the ground on which a number of traditional philosophical conundrums, especially within the confines of critical modernity, have seemed to have no solution. None of these conundrums seem solvable within a critical perspective precisely because the picture that has holds us captive in a critical philosophical perspective constrains us. Within a post-critical perspective, they come to appear in an entirely new light, and new intimations of hidden but relevant aspects of each problem

emerge and possible solutions become articulable, given the conceptual resources that a post-critical philosophical perspective opens up. What conundrums do I have in mind? I have in mind quite a few, notably the following: The subject-object split. The relation of mind to body (and mind to brain). The “hard problem” of consciousness: how awareness and brain connect. Knowledge of other persons. Knowledge (and understanding—even mutual understanding) of persons in other, quite different cultures. What constitutes the emergence of life, and ‘higher’ forms of life? Do animals have a mental life; are they conscious? Can we know and understand their minds and feelings? What about plants? The apparent hierarchy in forms of life, higher and lower: is it only apparent or is it real and irreducible? The manifold relations between humans and other forms of life (the entire spectrum of living and non-living forms). The fact-value distinction. How moral judgment is possible and appropriate, given what we have come to know scientifically about human beings and human society. The problem of universals. The nature of causation and its varieties. Intelligent causal agency in humans and other animals. How we can be said to know reality in its transcendence from us? How we can be said to know anything real (noumena) beyond how things appear to us (phenomena)? The relation between perceptual experience and the concepts we have of what we experience. The relation(s) between first person observation and so-called third person observation (what Husserl called the “natural standpoint”), and judgments about things relative to each case. Relations between the humanities and the sciences. In what respects are the social sciences and psychology continuous with the natural sciences, and in what respects are they not? Et cetera. Et cetera.

Final Comment: There is more to the shift from the critical to the post-critical than I have succeeded in explaining. For those who have not yet fully and whole heartedly ventured to undertake the shift, it is a new beginning, a new threshold, and things will not only look different

but they will *be* different from there forward. I don't presume to have exhausted the topic. As Polanyi, I think, would say: Because it is an aspect of reality, its potential manifestations are inexhaustible.

Postscript: Undertaking Criticism from a Post-Critical Perspective.³³ In this last section I wish to sketch out some guidance, as it were, for those readers who identify with a post-critical philosophical perspective and who wish to learn how philosophical critique and criticism are supposed to be something different from critique and criticism within a critical philosophical perspective. The latter we are all too used to, too habituated to³⁴—so much so that it is hard to imagine something different in academia and hard to practice criticism in a post-critical way consistently. It is all too easy to slip back into a 'hard nosed' critical repost when one is on the defensive. Just being aware of this temptation is a good place to start.

Think again of the prisoners in Plato's cave and how shifting to a post-critical perspective is tantamount to escaping from the cave. Criticism from a critical perspective is like contending as prisoners in the cave over matters of importance among the shadow representations projected on the cave walls. Post-critical criticism engaged with a critical opponent is a matter of keeping at least one foot outside the cave. (Remember Plato's tragic account of the prisoner who escaped the cave but then ventured to return to convince his former fellow prisoners of what life was like outside the cave. Remember the tragic liabilities of such an attempt, as Plato most likely took as the model for this part of the story what had happened to his beloved teacher Socrates.)

I don't pretend to have the last word on this topic,³⁵ nor do I claim to cover all of the important bases, but I do have a strong sense for some of its aspects. If *criticism from a critical perspective* is all about maintaining a dogged skeptical doubt and critical scrutiny of one's

opponent's claims and arguments and assumptions, then *criticism from a post-critical perspective* is going to feature, instead, a methodological faith in the uncertain path that leads to fuller truth and mutual understanding, a confidence in gropingly following the tacit intimations *by both sides* of a more coherent understanding of the matters at issue than are presently explicitly rendered by either side, and a forthright acknowledgement of the broader fiduciary framework that enables and sustains civil communal inquiry on such matters. If one's opponent remains entrenched within the critical perspective, then things will inevitably get complicated, not least from the way that each will tacitly be appealing to a different paradigm of rational inquiry.

When critically engaging an opponent, especially one who is ensconced within a critical frame of reference, first, avoid getting lost in abstractions and in the 'dead ends' of the critical mindset—i.e., avoid returning to the cave, where all you have are explicit representations. Constantly call to mind the tacit dimensions of yourself and the other and the ideas you both are holding forth, including, of course, the lived concrete context within which they make sense.

Second, perhaps the most effective engagement post-critically considered is not to challenge any claim or assertion directly, but indirectly to bring to light the tacit (non-explicit) dimensions of what is being said, the context of what is said, and how it is being said in order for it to make ordinary sense at all. Bringing to light what ironies may be involved may be of help and keep things from getting too serious.

Third, never forget that reality/truth transcends your own grasp and is capable of revealing surprising facets not currently evident or grasped by you. It could be that your opponent is just the one who is best positioned to bring them to light.

Fourth, never deny the other person's access to truth/reality, and be open to learning new aspects of truth/reality from the other person. Indeed, you should believe in the other's capacity to recognize the truth/reality you fervently believe but also to have access to aspects of that reality that you may not fully understand or appreciate. Appeal to the other's capacity to apprehend truth for themselves. Express confidence in the other's power to do so.

Fifth, try to keep aware of one's opponent's lived acquaintance relationship to the matters at issue, and call attention to it as often as might be helpful. Focus not with exactness on what the other specifically and explicitly says, but on what the other is 'driving at' or 'getting at,' or possibly missing. Do your best to keep track of what the other may be capable of 'catching on to' even though he may by no means be there at present or even close.

Sixth, aim at disclosing the matters that lie beyond or between each of your respective positions. Get the other to look beyond current claims, both yours and his. Could there be something more to the matter in question than either of you happen to be claiming? Look again, consider again, and try putting it into different and new words.

Seventh, pay manifest respect to the person whose views you are undertaking to criticize, even though she may not show you that respect. (I do not mean going overboard here and suggest that your remarks be explicitly personal. I mean rather that you should honor and respect her capacity to recognize the transcendent/emergent realities that he may currently be denying or denigrating.) Don't forget the transcendental role that the other can and does play (her access to reality and her capacity for mutual recognition) with respect to the universal intent of your own understanding and insight, and yourself with respect to hers as well.

Eighth, don't limit yourself (or your opponent) by overly focusing on what your opponent explicitly says (including the faults she claims are in the position you are taking), but look

beyond it to what she/he is attempting to get at, even if she thinks it is only what she explicitly says. Try empathetically to articulate what she is trying to say and see if you have understood what that is in a way that will elicit her recognition.

Ninth, you will, of course, have doubt (even have good reason to doubt) concerning your opponent's claims and account. However, always give him the benefit of your doubt, which is a courtesy often lost in exchanges between fully critical perspectives, and call upon the other to do the same for you. If there is any room for uncertainty in what your opponent has said or implied, try giving it the best possible interpretation first. Reduce or minimize every occasion for (and triggers to) defensiveness on his part.

Tenth, when you are attacked *ad hominem*, avoid responding in kind. Rather appeal to the other's unarticulated notions that she seems trying to get at (even if these concern faults in your own position). Or, appeal to matters she has not yet noticed and taken into account. One of the problems with the modern critical mode of criticism is that it easily degenerates into *ad hominem* attacks against anything that smacks of a person's (your) subjectivity/ faith/ unjustified beliefs/ not fully specified ideas or notions. These things can often be very personal and an attack on them is often felt, sometimes intended, as an attack on your person.

Eleventh, to participate in criticism post-critically, there is a constant need to recollect yourself centered within the concrete ground of your tacitly lived bodily presence in the world, subsidiarily attending from which all things make what sense they do (or not). It might help to keep in mind this short poem by William Stafford, for that concrete ground is the "thread you need to follow" to which Stafford refers in the poem.

There's a thread you follow. It goes among
 things that change. But it doesn't change.
 People wonder about what you are pursuing.
 You have to explain about the thread.
 But it is hard for others to see.
 While you hold it you can't get lost.
 Tragedies happen; people get hurt
 or die; and you suffer and get old.
 Nothing you can do can stop time's unfolding.
 You don't ever let go of the thread.”

Appendix: A Partial (Non-Systematic) List of 20th Century Post-Critical Thinkers.

1. Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Toward a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1958) and his *The Tacit Dimension* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1966). An excellent secondary account is Drusilla Scott's *Everyman Revived: The Common Sense of Michael Polanyi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985).
2. Eugene T. Gendlin, *Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning: A Philosophical and Psychological Approach to the Subjective* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1962). See especially his comprehensive website, “The Focusing Institute”

<www.focusing.org/index.html>, his many papers available there on line, his conception of APM (After Post Modernism), Philosophy of the Implicit, and Thinking at the Edge.

3. Nancy Rule Goldberger, Jill Mattuck Tarule, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, and Mary Field Belenky, editors of *Women's Ways of Knowing* (New York: Basic Books 1986) and *Knowledge, Difference, and Power* (New York: Basic Books 1996). See especially Blythe Clinchy's "Connected and Separate Knowing: Toward a Marriage of Two Minds" in the latter.
4. Evelyn Fox Keller, *A Feeling for the Organism: The Life and Work of Barbara McClintock* (New York: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1983).
5. Parker Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known: A Spirituality of Education* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1966). Palmer speaks of the spirituality of knowing and something called "wholesight," which integrates knowing with the heart with knowing with the head (or intellect), i.e., knowing for the sake of appreciation with knowing for the sake of power and control, except subordinating the latter to the former.
6. Stephen Toulmin, *Return to Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992), and his classic *Introduction to Reasoning*, 2nd ed., by Alan Janik, Stephen Toulmin, and Richard D. Rieke (Pearson Education, 1997). See also Chaim Perelman, *The New Rhetoric* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), and the Informal Logic Movement.
7. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University Press of Notre Dame, 1984) and *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: University Press of Notre Dame, 1988).

8. Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 2003). Gadamer is the most significant contributor to the field of interpretation theory (hermeneutics), a renewed understanding of the indispensibility of tradition-based knowing and understanding, and to the possibility of communication between differing traditions of interpretation.
9. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998). Arendt is particularly insightful regarding the loss of commonsense and the sense of a common world within modernity.
10. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), and the initial essay "Thick [Empathetic] Description."
11. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, tr. by Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul,).
12. Suny Studies in Constructive Post-Modern Thought, edited by David Ray Griffin, based at Claremont Graduate University, and Director of the Center for Process Studies there is a great resource.
13. Jurgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, vols. I and II (Boston, MA: Beacon Press), and his many other books.
14. Emmanuel Levinas, *The Levinas Reader*, edited by Sean Hand (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1989). Levinas poses the irrepressible (non-totalizable) Other, to which we and all our thinking are responsible. This makes metaphysics subordinate to ethics according to Levinas.
15. Paul Ricoeur, *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1978). Ricoeur is a major contributor on empathy, metaphor, and hermeneutics.

16. Benjamin DeMott, *SuperGrow: Essays and Reports on Imagination in America* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1969).
17. Peter Elbow, *Embracing Contraries: Explorations in Learning and Teaching* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). See especially essay 12: “Methodological Doubting and Believing: Contraries in Inquiry.”
18. Wayne C. Booth, *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1974).
19. Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Toronto, ON: Anasi, 1991), and *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).
20. Richard Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics and Praxis* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983).
21. Henri Bortoft, *The Wholeness of Nature: Goethe’s Way Toward a Science of Participation in Nature* (Lindisfarne Books, 1986).
22. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003), and *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).
23. Huston Smith, *Why Religion Matters: The Fate of the Human Spirit in an Age of Disbelief* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001); and *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1989).
24. E. F. Schumacher, *A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977).
25. William H. Poteat, *Recovering the Ground: Critical Exercises in Recollection* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994). See also *The Primacy of Persons and the Language of Culture: Essays by William H. Poteat*, edited by James M. Nickell and James W. Stines (Columbia, MO:

- University of Missouri Press, 1993); *Polanyian Meditations: In Search of a Post-Critical Logic* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985); *A Philosophical Daybook: Post-Critical Investigations* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1990); *Recovering the Person: The Philosophical Anthropology of William H. Poteat* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016).
26. The later Wittgenstein and J. L. Austin (as in Stanley Cavell's interpretations). See Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
27. Matthew Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Combines what Lipman calls creative thinking and caring thinking to complement critical thinking as components of responsible judgment; develops a profound understanding of the concept of a community of inquiry; responsible for initiating the worldwide movement known as Philosophy for Children.
28. Bruce Wilshire, *The Moral Collapse of the University: Professionalism, Purity, and Alienation* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1990. See also Wilshire, *Fashionable Nihilism: A Critique of Analytic Philosophy* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002).
29. Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985).
30. Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, *The Roots of Thinking* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1991).
31. Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point: Science, Society, and the Rising Culture* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982) and his film "*Mindwalk*."

32. Thomas Kasulis, *Intimacy and Integrity* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002).
Cross-cultural dialogue between West and East, intercultural philosophy and religious studies.
33. Christopher Alexander, *The Nature of Order: An Essay on the Art of Building and the Nature of the Universe*, 4 vols. (Berkeley, CA: The Center for Environmental Structure, 2001).
34. Jorge N. Ferrer and Jacob H. Sherman, editors, *The Participatory Turn: Spirituality, Mysticism, and Religious Studies* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2009).
35. John MacMurray, *Persons in Relation* (Humanity Books, 1998); *The Self as Agent* (Humanity Press, 1993)
36. Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having* (Marcel Press, 2011). See also Kenneth T. Gallagher, *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel* (Barakaldo Books, 2020).

¹ I wish to acknowledge and express my gratitude for the support, feedback, and helpful suggestions made by Martin Turkis and Stanley Scott in refining this paper as it has developed.

² The topic, what it is to be post-critical, is one with which I have been wrestling for more than 50 years, having completed my dissertation (at Duke University in 1969 under William H. Poteat's supervision) on the topic, "Mastered Irony: The Point of Entry into a Post-Critical Epistemology," and subsequently having written several articles that bear on the subject from different angles of approach: "Toward the Recovery of Common Sense in a Post-Critical Intellectual Ethos," *Tradition and Discovery*, 19:1 (1992-93), 5-15; "Haven't You Heard that Modernity Is Bankrupt? Ruminations on the Teaching Career of William H. Poteat," *Tradition and Discovery* 21:1 (1994-95), 20-32; "Some Aspects of Polanyi's Version of Realism," *Tradition and Discovery*, 26:3 (1999-2000), 51-61; "Construing Polanyi's Tacit Knowing as Knowing by Acquaintance Rather than Knowing by Representation: Some Implications," *Tradition and*

Discovery 29:2 (2002-2003), 26-43 (esp. 29-32); “A Polanyian Approach to Conceiving and Teaching Introduction to Philosophy,” *Tradition and Discovery*, 25:2 (1998-99) 11-18; “Beyond Post-Modernism via Polanyi’s Post-Critical Philosophy,” *The Political Science Reviewer* 37 (2008) 68-95; “P4C [Philosophy for Children], Community of Inquiry, and Methodological Faith,” *Analytic Teaching and Philosophical Praxis* 33:1 (2012), 30-35; and “Being Post-Critical,” in *Recovering the Personal: The Philosophical Anthropology of William H. Poteat*, edited by Dale W. Cannon and Ronald L. Hall (Lexington Books, 2016), 21-46.

³ Poteat stressed this even more than did Polanyi.

⁴ In an appendix to this paper, I will identify some writers who are examples of post-critical thinkers other than Polanyi.

⁵ The first *published* mention by Polanyi of the word “post-critical” occurs in this passage with little explanation in Michael Polanyi, *The Logic of Liberty* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 109. He identifies it in reference to a widespread disillusionment with modern totalitarianism occurring among European intellectuals in the 1940s.

⁶ Michael Polanyi, “The Outlook of Science: Its Sickness and Cure” (unpublished manuscript), cited by Phil Mullins in his article “The ‘Post-Critical’ Symbol and the ‘Post-Critical’ Elements of Polanyi’s Thought,” *Polanyiana* 10:1-2, p. 6. As preface to the quotation, Mullins writes, “On November 30, 1958, just after the publication of *Personal Knowledge*, Polanyi gave a lecture in Austin, Texas, titled ‘The Outlook of Science: Its Sickness and Cure.’ He makes, in this little known lecture, one of his very few direct comments on the subtitle of *Personal Knowledge*.”

⁷ Michael Polanyi, Series I sixth Gifford lecture (unpublished) titled “Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy” (101). Quoted In an email to me, Dale Cannon, from Phil Mullins, 5/2/14.

⁸ Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (University of Chicago Press, 1970).

⁹ Compare this remark to what Polanyi has to say about shifting from one interpretive framework to another, which on the surface seems quite similar: “For to modify our idiom is to modify the frame of reference within which we shall henceforth interpret our experience; it is to modify ourselves. . . . [I]t entails a conversion to new premises not accessible by any strict argument from those previously held. It is a decision, originating in our own personal judgment, to modify the premises of our judgment, and thus to modify our intellectual existence, so as to become more satisfying to ourselves.” (*PK*, 105f) Although Polanyi is not speaking here of the shift from a critical to a post-critical frame of reference, his point seems to apply well to it.

¹⁰ Resort to this analogy in explaining the shift to the post-critical is new for me. I contend it is consistent with and fully in accord with Polanyi but especially with what Poteat has to say about it.

¹¹ Found in Plato’s *Republic*, Book 7: 514a-520a.

¹² My version of the story deliberately leaves out of account some important aspects of Plato’s version. Differently put, I seek to make use of Plato’s story quite apart from Plato’s interpretation and use of the story. Plato uses the distinction between the condition of prisoners in the cave and their condition once they leave the cave as a metaphor to illuminate the philosophical distinction between sensory perception of sensible phenomena and non-sensory intellectual apprehension of the true Forms that constitute reality. I do not make use of this latter distinction, nor does Polanyi. Important as Plato’s philosophical distinction may be in other respects, I wish to use the before and after condition of the prisoners in the cave as a metaphor to

illuminate the distinction between focusing on (even to the extent of being fixated upon) *representations* of reality (a map or maps of reality, whether these be explicit linguistic forms or sense data [= perceptual representations supposedly immanent to the mind] as Empiricism has historically emphasized) and attending to those realities themselves beyond, however they have been represented.

¹³ “A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably.” Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd ed., trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (London: Pearson, 1973), 115.

¹⁴ According to Polanyi, truth does not lie primarily in the accurate correspondence of a representation with what it represents (the “Correspondence Theory of Truth”). Instead, “truth lies in the achievement of a [person’s] contact with reality—a contact destined to reveal itself further by an indefinite range of yet unforeseen consequences” (*PK*, 147).

¹⁵ See Dale Cannon, “Toward the Recovery of Common Sense in a Post-Critical Intellectual Ethos,” *Tradition and Discovery*, 19:1 (1992-93), 5-15. By “commonsense” in this connection I draw upon the important work of Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition* and other of her publications. According to Arendt’s analysis, what I (following Polanyi) identify as the critical philosophical perspective entails the loss of commonsense. The shift to a post-critical philosophical perspective involves its recovery.

¹⁶ See Dale Cannon, “Construing Polanyi’s Tacit Knowing as Knowing by Acquaintance Rather than Knowing by Representation: Some Implications,” *Tradition and Discovery: The Polanyi Society Periodical* 29:2 (2002-2003), 26-43.

¹⁷ William H. Poteat has written of this picture of the abstract posture of critical reflection as a “theater of solitude” or “theater of reflection,” which is Poteat’s phenomenological

characterization of the sense one typically has of oneself in the midst of non-committal, detached, impersonal reflection. See Poteat, *A Philosophical Daybook* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 59f (see also references in index). Poteat sometimes uses the phrase, “theater of reflection” as convertible with “theater of solitude.”

¹⁸ In reference to the emergence of the Critical intellectual revolution, Polanyi writes, “. . . Here lies the break by which the critical mind repudiated one of its two cognitive faculties and tried completely to rely. Belief was so thoroughly discredited that, apart from specially privileged opportunities, such as on the remainder may be still granted to the holding and profession of religious beliefs, modern man lost his capacity to accept any explicit statement as his own belief. All belief was reduced to the status of subjectivity: to that of an imperfection by which knowledge fell short of universality. . . . We must now recognize belief once more as the source of all knowledge. [This is what I call ‘methodological faith,’ which identifies faith not in terms of an explicit content but in terms of a confidence and trust in the process of inquiry.] Tacit assent and intellectual passions, the sharing of an idiom and of a cultural heritage, affiliation to a like-minded community: such are the impulses which shape our vision of the nature of things on which we rely for our mastery of things. No intelligence, however critical or original, can operate outside such a fiduciary framework.”

See also *PK*, Preface, p. xiiiif: “I start by rejecting the ideal of scientific detachment. In the exact sciences, this false ideal is perhaps harmless, for it is in fact disregarded there by scientists. But we shall see that it exercises a destructive influence in biology, psychology and sociology, and falsifies our whole outlook far beyond the domain of science. I want to establish an alternative ideal of knowledge, quite generally. Hence the wide scope of this book and hence also the coining of the new term I have used for my title: Personal Knowledge.”

See also *PK 269*: “It has been taken for granted throughout the critical period of philosophy that the acceptance of unproven beliefs was the broad road to darkness, while truth was approached by the straight and narrow path of doubt. We were warned that a host of unproven beliefs were instilled in us from earliest childhood. That religious dogma, the authority of the ancients, the teaching of the schools, the maxims of the nursery, all were united to a body of tradition which we tended to adopt merely because these beliefs had been previously held by others, who wanted us to embrace them in our turn. We were urged to resist the pressure of this traditional indoctrination by pitting against it the principle of philosophic doubt. Descartes had declared that universal doubt should purge his mind of all opinions held merely on trust and open it to knowledge firmly grounded in reason. In its stricter formulations the principle of doubt forbids us altogether to indulge in any desire to believe and demands that we should keep our minds empty, rather than allow any but irrefutable beliefs to take possession of them. Kant said that in mathematics there was no room for mere opinion, but only for real knowledge, and that short of possessing knowledge we must refrain here from all judgment.”

¹⁹ This theme of the shift to the post-critical directly reflects Polanyi’s shift from what mainstream 20th Century philosophy of science has emphasized as “the context of justification” (attempting to come up with explicit criteria of valid scientific claims) to “the context of discovery” (where the focus is on what’s involved in the scientific quest to discover new aspects of reality).

²⁰ Although Polanyi has much to say about this, I call the reader’s attention to the work of University of Chicago philosopher Eugene Gendlin here, who knew personally and very much favored Polanyi’s work, and Gendlin’s conception of “Thinking at the Edge.” See Eugene Gendlin, *Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning: A Philosophical and Psychological*

Approach to the Subjective (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1997). See also Volume 19:1 (2000-2004) of *The Folio: a Journal for Focusing and Experiential Therapy* which is a thematic issue dedicated to explaining “Thinking at the Edge: A New Philosophical Practice,” a practice specifically designed to create new theory (fundamental conceptualities) in any discipline.

²¹ See endnote 14.

²² Maurice Merleau-Ponty called this a “lateral universality” as distinct from a “vertical universality.” See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, trans. Richard C. McCleary, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964); particularly two articles: “From Mauss to Claude Lévi-Strauss,” 114-125, and “Everywhere and Nowhere,” 126-158.

²³ Emphasis on the from-to structure of our awareness, especially on the “from”-rootage of our awareness with its power to incorporate things outside of our bodies into our lived bodily self, extending ourselves into the world, is something that has not been so much a part of my account of the shift to the post-critical in my earlier publications as I am contending in this paper. It is new neither to Polanyi nor to Poteat, but neither of them highlight it as an important part of the shift to the post-critical as I now do.

²⁴ Marjorie Grene, “Tacit Knowing: Grounds for a Revolution in Philosophy,” *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 8:3 (October 1977), 164-171. “Polanyi’s unique contribution to philosophy is the theory of tacit knowing, the thesis that all knowledge necessarily includes a tacit component on which it relies in order to focus on its goal, whether of theoretical discovery and formulation or practical activity” (164). “The tacit component is not a residuum, but an indispensable foundation. What matters is not *that* there is something unspecifiable, for example, in science, but how unspecifiability works and what it accomplishes.

It is the *function* of the tacit in all knowledge, however exact and “objective”, that the tradition had neglected or denied, and that Polanyi’s epistemology allows us to accept and articulate” (165). “Polanyi’s distinction between subsidiary and focal awareness permitted the enunciation and elaboration of the thesis that all knowledge, however precise and however impersonal in its formulation, is grounded in clues that the knower must already have assimilated and of which he can be at best only subsidiarily aware” (168).

²⁵ See *PK* 95: “. . . just as, owing to the ultimately tacit character of all our knowledge, we remain ever unable to say all that we know, so also in view of the tacit character of meaning, we can never quite know what is implied in what we say.”

²⁶ This theme in the shift to the post-critical again is more implicit in Polanyi than explicit when it comes to identifying what the shift involves. However, one cannot but come to it when unpacking what Polanyi means by “personal” in “personal knowledge.”

²⁷ In recent decades several philosophers in the philosophy of mind (and related disciplines—e.g., cognitive science and neurological philosophy) have begun to speak of the mind as “extended” somewhat in the manner that Polanyi wrote and spoke. For a recent review of five such theories and references to where accounts of them may be found, see Li Jianhui, “Transcranial Theories of Mind: A New Revolution of Cognitive Science,” *International Journal of Philosophy* 7:2 (2019), 66-71. Some of these theories exhibit hints if not actual features of a post-critical perspective. But most of them are not full-fledged manifestations of post-critical thought.

²⁸ The ‘miracle’ of mutual recognition happens when we see that the other sees the same thing that we see, and sees that we do too. This is a phenomenon that critical philosophical perspective is incapable of accommodating. Only a post-critical philosophical perspective is

able to do so. I have noted this feature of the shift to the post-critical from my earliest efforts to articulate what is involved. It is present in Polanyi's thinking, but for the most part only implicitly—e.g., in concepts like “universal intent” and “conviviality” and “a community of explorers.”

²⁹ William H. Poteat has much to say on this subject in his last book, *Recovering the Ground: Critical Exercises in Recollection* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 4 *et passim*.

³⁰ I claim no expertise in phenomenology or Husserl studies, but it seems to me that the shift to the post-critical in this sense correlates profoundly with what Edmond Husserl was attempting to achieve via his “phenomenological reduction,” and his conception of primary evidence. My reading and interpretation of Husserl owes much to Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

³¹ See endnote 9.

³² This important feature of the shift to the post-critical I first sought to articulate in words other than I do so here, in the article, “Haven't You Heard that Modernity Is Bankrupt? Ruminations on the Teaching Career of William H. Poteat,” *Tradition and Discovery* 21:1 (1994-95), 20-32.

³³ Almost 30 years ago I made an initial foray into this topic with my article, “The Recovery of Commonsense in a Post-Critical Intellectual Ethos,” *TAD* 19:1 (1992-1993), 5-15. In it I identified four key features of a post-critical intellectual ethos: (1) Mutual recognition (that is, common sense making) between independent knowers is regarded as paradigmatic of the knowledge that we seek. (2) Persons other than any given knower are recognized as having access to transcendent truth-in-common and the tacit knowledge-by-acquaintance through which they have that access is itself as regarded as knowable in the experience of mutual recognition of the truth in question. (3) Persons other than any given knower are

recognized as having transcendental status in relation to that persons' knowledge of transcendent truth-in-common. (4) There is mutual regard for and trust in each person's capacity to participate for herself in discovering truth-in-common through following up her own intimations of that truth.

³⁴ A very insightful description of academic life under the critical paradigm, undertaken by a philosopher well informed from a cultural anthropological perspective, is that of Bruce Wilshire's *The Moral Collapse of the University: Professionalism, Purity, and Alienation* (SUNY Press of Albany, 1990).

³⁵ In the current issue of *Tradition and Discovery*, 47:2, a short article by Matthew Sandwisch, entitled "The Necessity of Virtue in a Free Society," gives a fine account, it seems to me, of some important features of post-critical criticism and discussion—particularly fairness and tolerance.

³⁶ William Stafford, *The Way It Is: New and Selected Poems* (St. Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, 1998), 42.