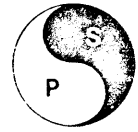


THE POLANYI SOCIETY



NEWS BULLETIN

VOL. II

SPRING

NO. 2

Greetings:

I must apologize for the long delay in getting out the second issue of this year's News Bulletin. The press of events has simply made it impossible for me to edit materials in time for the projected May issue.

The current newsletter includes information from several of the areas of study. I am also including an updated membership list.

I am pleased to announce that Dr. Allen Dyer has consented to serve as our new Coordinator of Medical and Psychiatric Studies. He will add an important new dimension to our work. Dr. Dyer did work on Polanyi under McCoy at P.S.R. He has an M.D. and is also working on his Ph.D. under Poteat at Duke in Polanyi explorations. Dr. Dyer studied in Oxford for a time and knows Polanyi well.

Have a good summer.

Sincerely,


Frederick Kirschenmann

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II. "Implications of Polanyi's Thought Within the Arts" A Bibliographic Essay", by Doug Adams.

The publication of Polanyi's newest book, Meaning (University of Chicago Press, fall 1975) invites major attention to the implications of his thought within the arts. Seven chapters of this work include and extend the thinking on aesthetics evident in his University of Texas and University of Chicago lectures from 1968-1970 and his article "What Is A Painting" that appeared during 1970 in The American Scholar (Autumn, pp. 655-669) and in the British Journal of Aesthetics (July, pp. 225-236). To suggest areas for further attention, this bibliographic essay surveys these works by Polanyi and the explorations by others who are using his thought within the arts.

In "What Is A Painting," Polanyi approvingly noted Maurice Henri Pirenne's use of Polanyi's distinction between subsidiary and focal awareness - a distinction Pirenne employed to clarify the part illusion plays in painting where one's subsidiary awareness of the canvas reduces the imitative or illusionary content which might otherwise fool one's focal attention on the painting. (Cf. M.H. Pirenne, Optics, Painting, and Photography, London: Cambridge University Press, 1970). For Polanyi, "works of art are generally formed through integration of two incompatible elements, one of these being an attempted communication and the other, an artistic structure that contradicts the communication" - the former we perceive focally and the latter subsidiarily. But this very contradiction distinguishes art from becoming either deceptive (indistinguished from nature) or meaningless (disintegrated into brush strokes) and allows art to be a medium that invites "our unorganized memories and embodies them in its own structure evoking deep emotions in us." (p. 669).

Throughout the chapters on art, metaphor, and poetry in Meaning, Polanyi explores the ways in which subsidiary and focal attention are integrated differently in the arts than they are in the sciences - an integrative difference that accounts for differences of meaning in the two fields. Developing this distinction, Polanyi calls the integrative act "self-centered" in science and "self-giving" in the arts (and religion). The contradictions between subsidiary and focal awareness (which are stimulating toward and partially resolved by discovery in science) remain ever unresolved and contradictory in the arts. While these new implications of his thought do not alter Polanyi's earlier perceptions of the similar fiduciary demands in acquiring knowledge through the sciences, the arts, and religion, Meaning does help one see why knowledge in the sciences, arts and religions assumes a different disposition once embodied.

In the development of Meaning, Polanyi was stimulated by Donald Weismann's works which others will find useful as they study further implications of Polanyi's thought within the arts. Weismann (University of Texas, Austin) readily acknowledges his implicit reliance on Polanyi's thought - particularly the subsidiary-focal distinctions which he uses in exploring numerous issues in creating and viewing art (Cf. The Visual Arts as Human Experience, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall, 1970; and Language and Visual Form: The Personal Record of a Dual Creative Process, University of Texas Press, 1968. The latter expands on his essay "In Pursuit of Discovery," Intellect and Hope: Essays In The Thought of Michael Polanyi, Langford and Poteat, ed., Durham, Duke University Press, 1968). One of Weismann's doctoral students, Ann Drake, is pursuing the implications of Polanyi's focal-subsidary shifts in her dissertation, "Function of Radical Story in the Changing of Personal Myths." Her work as a skilled draftsman and writer uses methods of Polanyi and Elizabeth Sewell.

Also pursuing the implications of Meaning is Phil Mullins whose doctoral dissertation (under Charles McCoy at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley) is exploring Polanyi's thought for bearings on aesthetics and literary criticism. With expected completion in the spring of 1976, Mullins' work orders the continuing and changing roles of intentionality and imagination in Polanyi's inquiries into the social dimensions of the conventionality of one's conventional response in science and the conventionality of one's unconventional response in the arts (where one is freed from the response one would make to the work if it were nature instead of a painting or history instead of a play).

Polanyian insights on the subsidiary-focal modes of awareness have been used by Jerry Gill (of Eckerd College, Florida) to explore not only the "question" by Yeats, "How can we know the dancer from the dance?" but also the effective techniques of Ingmar Bergman's films. His paper presented at the Polanyi Conference in Boston is scheduled for publication late this year or early next year in the Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism under the title, "On Knowing the Dancer from the Dance." By noting how we attend from dancer to the dance, Gill demonstrates both how we know the difference between the two and why we have difficulty articulating that difference; for our awareness of the dancer is subsidiary and our awareness of the dance is focal. His schematic diagram and text should be useful for those exploring the shifts back and forth between particulars and wholes in the arts.

Along with conversations and exchange of correspondence with Polanyi reported in the book, Congregational Dancing in Christian Worship (Vallejo, 1972, pp. 61-63), I detailed how dancing before a work of art assists the repeated shifting of attention back and forth from particulars to wholes necessary to sense alternative intentions and integrations of a painting. This process (akin to the via negativa which Polanyi cited in Personal Knowledge as necessary if one is to sense any coherence of which one was previously unaware) underlies van der Leeuw's observation on the simultaneity of mental chaining and unchaining effected by dance - a dynamic also observable in the timing of religious repentance. Shifts in subsidiary awareness destroy the previously dominant focal awareness freeing one for a new focal awareness; but the new chaining has occurred subsidiarily before one is fully aware of it focally.

In a paper before the Polanyi Society in Boston ("Ironies in Jasper Johns' Paintings: Parallels to Wittgenstein and Polanyi") and more recently in a presentation before the Smithsonian fellows entitled, "Johns' Art and the Viewer's Responsibility: Watchman or Spy," I detailed how Polanyi's structure of subsidiary and focal may help one diagnose and correct the inability of the person viewing art to sense intensities and intentions in the art work (parts of which the viewer may consistently consider in a frame of reference alien to the painting with the result that such parts are not allowed to serve in subsidiary awareness from which to attend to the wholes of the work). Unfocusing of the art slide on the screen (or asking the viewer to squint with their eyes) may aid the viewer to see the particulars dissolve into their proper subsidiary role in alternative relationships much as dancing before the work may do for those willing to move.

The role of subsidiary awareness (and its tactile dimensions) in music has been studied by Geoffrey Payzant (Toronto University). Employing a rate changer to lower by a semitone the taped music originally played in D major, Payzant asked those with perfect pitch and tone recognition to name the key in which the piece was played. "A typical response of string players to this presentation was the following: a puzzled expression followed by a reaching out of the left arm and a fiddling with the fingers on an imaginary fingerboard, a clearing of the brow, and some such statement as the following: "I'm hearing it in D-flat but they are playing it in D." "Subsidiary Musical Awareness: Tonality (A Progress Report for Michael Polanyi) is an eleven page manuscript summarizing Payzant's research. Jerry Gill reports that the third tape in Payzant's series of CBS radio reports on his Polanyi related work is particularly appropriate for use in the classroom both because of its length (40-45 minutes) and its discussion of related historic research that will help even the non-music major appreciate the importance of the issues that Polanyi's thought illumines.

Descriptions of other works that should be noted in this essay and requests for further information on any of the books, articles, dissertations, tapes, and unpublished papers mentioned should be directed to the coordinator of Fine Arts Studies of the Polanyi Society: Doug Adams, Smithsonian Fellow, National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, D.C. 20560.

Please note: I am enclosing two copies of this Newsletter to enable each of you to pass one copy along to a colleague who you feel might be interested. I am also enclosing two copies of the flyer that contains membership information in the event that any of you would like to pass them along to other persons who may be interested in joining the Society.

III. Further Biographical Information

A. Education Studies.

*Broudy, H.S., "Tacit Knowing in Aesthetic Education," in Aesthetic Concepts of Education, Ralph A. Smith (ed.), Champaign: University of Ill. Press, 1970.

*_____, "The Life Uses of Schooling as a Field of Research," In N. S.S.E., Part I, 71st Yearbook, 1972.

_____, Enlightened Cherishing: An Essay on Aesthetic Education. Champaign: Univ. of Ill. Press, 1972. (The 1972 Kappa Delta Pi Lecture.) (Broudy draws generously on Polanyi's theory of tacit knowing in this work.)

Wagener, J.W., "Toward a Heuristic Theory of Instruction: Notes on the Thought of Michael Polanyi." Educational Theory, 20: 46-53, Winter, 1970.

Brownhill, R.J., "Political Education in Michael Polanyi's Theory of Education." Educational Theory 23: 303-9. Fall, 1973.

Innis, R.E., "Logic of Consciousness and the Mind-body Problem in Polanyi," Int. Philos Q. 13: 81-98. Mr., 1973.

Manno, B.V., "Michael Polanyi on the Problem of Science and Religion." Zygon 9: 44-56, Mr., 1974.

*Reported in a previous newsletter.

B. General Interest.

Schwartz, Fred (ed), Scientific Thought and Social Reality: Essays by Michael Polanyi. International University Press.

"This present collection of essays has three main themes: a critique of logical positivism; a cognitive theory of epistemology; and a discussion of the scientist's need for autonomy in pursuing knowledge." --from the Introduction by Fred Schwartz.

Greene, Marjorie (ed), Toward A Unity of Knowledge, International University Press. Nine contributors: Stallknecht, Wigner, Polanyi, Weismann, Pantir, Plessner, Chance, Strauss, and Koch. An interdisciplinary collection of essays, each contributing to the title.

IV. Conferences.

A. American Philosophical Society "Tag-A-Long" Meeting.

Harry Prosch reports that the Polanyi Tag-A-Long Meeting at the A.P.A. Meeting in Chicago on April 24th went very well. As you know, the principle speaker at that meeting was H.H. Pattee (SUNY at Buffalo) who addressed the group on the topic, "Dynamic and Linguistic Complimentarity in Biological Behavior." Marjorie Greene and David L. Hull responded to the paper and Prosch served as Chairman. Professor Prosch said that the meeting generated a good deal of discussion and there was interest in future meetings of this sort.

B. Windsor Conference.

From all reports the Windsor Conference at Cumberland Lodge was an excellent event. Michael had invited a representative to attend from our Society but funding fell through at the last minute and no one was able to go. We understand, however, that as a result of the Windsor Conference some fifty people plan to have continuing contact through their own newsletter and will also plan to stay in touch with our Society in the States.

C. American Academy of Religion.

Dick Gelwick has been working hard to encourage the philosophy and theology section of the A.A.R. to approve a proposal for a symposium "towards a post-critical theology." Thomas Torrance has agreed to be a participant in the symposium if it is approved. We will send a notice with details to all members if this materializes.

V. Financial Statement November 1, 1974 - June 1, 1975

Balance, November 1, 1975 \$ 23.10

Income

Membership dues & conference papers 230.00
\$253.10

Expenses

Telephone 21.74
Printing (Stationery) 40.00
Materials & duplicating 38.50
Postage 36.00
Secretarial Services 32.00
168.24

BALANCE, JUNE 1, 1975.....\$84.86