The Trust Relationship
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ABSTRACT Key Words: Polanyi's realism; resonance realism; the metaphysics of reality, knowledge and truth; limitations of the rhetoric of truth; epistemology and ontology; objectivism and relativism; trust.

Polanyi's philosophy requires a synthesis of ontology and epistemology through the resonances that structure personal knowing. Its convivial elements make it political; self-conscious circularity distances it from metaphysical realism; the paradox of self-set standards accomodates dissent. The roles of reality, knowledge and truth in metaphysical realism are better understood in terms of resonance, trust and worthwhileness if we follow Polanyi's lead. This more humane vocabulary saves us from the tyrannies of the truths and realities others would impose upon us. Polanyi points the way towards a position that avoids the worst of both absolutism and relativism.

1. Introduction

Michael Polanyi was primarily a political philosopher whose lifelong opposition to all forms of controlling, totalising tyranny must occupy a central place in any attempt to understand him. The essence of his thought lies, on this reading, in the exploration and elucidation of the relationship between convivial assent and personal dissent, of social obligation and personal freedom and responsibility.

Polanyi's philosophy entails the rejection of objectivity as a false ideal in favour of personal judgement. He avoids reducing knowledge to subjectivity by setting it within a moral and political context governed by the self-set standards of communities of enquiry. Inasmuch as no knowledge can be impersonal, no knowledge is exempt from the need to be ratified by such communities of enquiry. Polanyi's epistemology is therefore profoundly social and political. It sets persons in a social context that provides the authentication, filtration and affirmation required to turn individual opinion into collectively-endorsed knowledge. Many of Polanyi's disciples are uncomfortable with the implications of this position, for many of them retain some kind of attachment – often without realising that they do so – to some of the tenets of a metaphysical realism that believes that something can be known or said about the world as it is when nothing is being known or said about it. This, as I showed in "Resonance Realism" (RR), is an illusion (*Tradition and Discovery* 20 (1993-94) nr.3, 29-38).

What saves Polanyi from subjectivism is not, therefore, his devotion to realism, but his articulation of the epistemic-ontological structure of any coherent socio-political system. Inasmuch as he saw the places of persons in societies and cultures in terms of contingency – that without those societies none of us would have access to anything remotely worthy of the name "knowledge" – he stepped beyond the individualism and scepticism of the philosophical traditions going back to Descartes, and merged epistemology with ontology. For Polanyi, we are what our social systems make us, what they allow us to be, and what they allow us to resonate with as trustworthy and worthwhile. Such things the members of those cultures call "truth." We are unreformed – and unredeemed – metaphysical realists to the extent that we demand more of truth than that by, so to speak, wanting to be able to sidestep our culture and its all-embracing world-view to get a grip on "reality" without any of its filters and accreditations. To want, as I put it in RR, to know the world as it would be known were it not being known.

One difficulty with reconstruing truth and knowledge in terms of cultural accreditation – we, and people like us, recommend that in such-and-such an instance you do, believe or trust this – is that it seems too weak to bear the weight of our very considerable convictions. Once we have decided upon "truth" we want it to be everyone's truth; we want to advocate it with universal intent, as Polanyi said we should. "True for me and my tribe" has to become "true for all tribes." In Polanyi's own words, "our vision must conquer or die" (*PK* 150).

Another difficulty concerns how best to treat the inevitability of dissent. Whatever my culture deems "true" seems to have no status from the perspective of another culture that, or a dissentient who, does not endorse that truth, and it is far from clear why your truths should become mine any more than mine yours. If the principle holds that individual freedom should not be exercised to the detriment of others' freedoms, the same seems to apply to your truths and mine. We may try to persuade one another, but the language of conquest and death sets altogether the wrong tone. Yet tribes do want their truths to be in the ascendant, their readings – however perverse – to hold sway. The universalising and totalising vocabulary of truth becomes inexorably the vocabulary of conflict, tyranny and oppression. Polanyi's heuristic passion seeks "not to conquer, but to enrich the world" (*ibid.*). If we replace the language of universal truth with the accepted and accredited set of beliefs and practices of a culture, the things that culture deems trustworthy, reliable and worthwhile, the collage of human conflict is changed, and the imposition of someone else's collective view – however wise and justified it may seem to them – seems somehow less justifiable. The language of truth, when it presumes to an absolute domain, steals all the space properly occupied by the different precepts that others deem reliable, trustworthy and worthwhile. So the eclipse of the rhetoric of truth in favour of a softer, more human acknowledgement that truth is only the best we can do right now from our very narrow perspective on the world, may one day prompt a similar eclipse of conflict, and make the world a better place. But what of the relativist charge?

Relativism and trust are related by the requirements of Polanyi's intentional circularity. Once we acknowledge the inevitability of circularity, we have already abandoned metaphysical realism, for our systems of thought are not tied to some putative reality by inexorable bonds or derived from it by fail-safe procedures and methods of enquiry. We can deceive ourselves. The most significant personal skill we deploy to avoid such self-deception is trust. Yet we seldom realise it. Trust is central to Polanyi's thought, yet he scarcely mentions it. Science is based more deeply upon trust than upon experiment or theory because it has adopted processes that could not work but for the presence of trust and the constant monitoring of its adequacy and appropriateness. Scientists trust their forebears, their contemporaries, their senses, their judgement, their imagination, their intuition, their sense of a good idea to pursue. That which is trusted constitutes the body of science; that which is distrusted is beyond science. At what is generally supposed to be the other end of the spectrum, our religious beliefs are based upon trust of forebears, contemporaries, cultural transmission, texts, sense, judgement, intuition, and a notion of the worthwhile in much the same way.

The way we treat a religious or a scientific text makes clear our dependence upon trust, and the seamlessness of the religious and scientific enterprises when seen from a perspective that integrates, or rather fails ever to separate, knowing and being. Why should I take a religious or scientific text seriously? Because of its human provenance; because it originates from a community of inquiry worthy of your trust. When is a community trustworthy? When its methods and internal self-regulation convince us that it is not systematically deceiving itself, and when its goals and values, the things it deems worthwhile, we are able to trust and share.

Trust is a primitive: it defines me in my tribe and is defined by me and my tribe. Personal knowledge manifests and is a product of what I and my tribe trust. What we treat as reality is entirely a product of trust. It is perfectly possible that all our trust is misplaced, but it is not possible for it to be eliminated.

In RR, I argued that individuals are able to resonate to the depths of reality – and their societies to identify what is genuinely real – because they are empowered by tacit socially-embodied subsidiaries, and that socially-embodied capacities to engender susceptibility to deep resonances are dependent upon the fervent assent and dissent of attuned persons. I need to learn how to appreciate Beethoven, but learning who I should trust to tell me that it is worth learning to appreciate Beethoven is more fundamental. Conversely, where a culture's capacity to inculcate responsiveness to resonant depth is degenerating, it will be from the inspirational dissent of persons who appreciate the greater depths that are possible if we change our cultural parameters that regeneration will have to come. It is because I owe my culture everything that I have a duty to say when it is wrong; it is because I love my neighbour so deeply that I have a duty to say when she is wrong.

In RR, I attempted to shift the visual metaphors we employ in our philosophy towards other, quasi-auditory metaphors that are better able to accommodate Polanyi's profound, if tacit, reintegration of epistemology and ontology – knowing and being – in post-critical personal knowledge. This essay attempts to move further by replacing the impersonal nexus defined in terms of knowledge, reality and truth with an altogether more personal one articulated in terms of trust, resonance and the worthwhile.

2. The Metaphysics of Reality, Knowledge and Truth

The dominant metaphysical systems of the western world encourage us to base our lives upon something that they refer to as "reality," pursue something that they refer to as "truth," and strive to attain something they refer to as "knowledge." Their primary epistemological goal is to be able to equate knowledge of reality with truth. To express the matter thus is to have shifted our emphasis away from the territory that metaphysical realism recognises as its own. All this "reference" is linguistic and so on the human side of what a metaphysical realist likes to call "the way things are"; and "the human side" is always, for the metaphysical realist, the weaker side.

But this shift in emphasis, far-reaching as it is already, does not go far enough. Recent philosophy has taught us to respect the human side of the epistemological enterprise. Hitherto it has been "reality" that has been definitive and our appreciation of it that has been "defective." We can now rebalance this polarisation. Use of terms such as "reality," "truth" and "knowledge" – with or without the qualifier "what they like to refer to as" – involves a fundamental piece of misdirection: our attention is directed to what we cannot have in such a way as to make us believe that we could, in some putative asymptotic theoretical sense, have it.

A traditional metaphysics wants to say that somehow, independently of trust-criteria, the community has grasped what it refers to as reality, truth and knowledge. This demand for independence is what objectivity amounts to, and Polanyi perceives that it is unattainable, because all we know must be filtered through human minds, and a false ideal, because it threatens to separate epistemology and ontology, destroying the integrity of our being.[1] Traditional realisms express doubts about all this because they worry about the uncertainty and arbitrariness of the kinds of free-floating systems that result: is not every rational community as good as any other? Polanyi steadfastly refutes this point. That the paradox of self-set standards leaves us open to circularity, self-deception and folly he concedes; but, since it is only by deciding to accept some things and

reject others that we have any hope of improving our understanding of the world, the fact that decision entails risk of systematic error is a risk we have no choice but to take. The Azande were not irrational and their system of thought was not incoherent; but both were, at least for Polanyi, profoundly wrong. And to the retort "And how do you know that your own system is not?" he would say, "I make up my mind as best I can in the face of the full force of my responsibility to do and believe as I feel I must." The paradox of self-set standards demands that we trust our own and our community's judgements in deciding what is right and wrong, true and false, rational and irrational. Polanyi places his confidence in the trustworthiness of convivialities of rational human beings.

Realists want "right" to have some impersonal external reference, and criteria of rightness to be ascertainable by reference to that external reality. But any method we employ to ascertain such a "rightness" would have to be based upon trust, and the trust would need to have emerged alongside our understanding of that to which we hoped to refer. So we still end up saying "this is the best we can do right now" and hoping that we are not wrong in some catastrophic way. Super-bugs, nuclear energy, and genetically-modified foods, however popular or unpopular, could save or destroy us, but we are compelled to decide for or against them. However well we believe that we have understood the truth, it always remains the best we can do right now as judged by our lights. To want more is more than to want certainty or reassurance: it is to want to be released from the human condition by separating our being from our knowing.

Those who wish to affirm the inerrancy of sacred religious texts, to exempt them from human error and their interpretation from human preference, ask us to trust absolutely what cannot be trusted absolutely. No religious text is more trustworthy than those who wrote it or the tradition that transmits it; to want more for it is to wish to extract it and the tradition that affirms it from the human condition. But it is worse than that. It exemplifies the violence and tyranny that the name of truth is made to serve.

To forget the social coefficient in knowing that reflects the unity of knowing and being is to forget that truth, knowledge and the view of reality they confer, are all only as trustworthy as the traditions that articulate and affirm them. Yet "The Truth" is commonly supposed to be so far above such relativities as to exercise an authority above and beyond the authority of the communities that affirm it as truth. It is supposed to be "Objective" in the strongest sense of the word. But truth so employed is an instrument of control: it amounts to "stealing another man's space," to the attempt to make my views, or the views of my tribe, society or culture, more authoritative than the full collective weight and power that is mine, my tribe's, my society's or my culture's. It does violence to others because it takes away the space that is theirs and that their notions of truth occupy.

We are not far here from the way Karl Marx defined his concept of "alienation": human beings set up systems that become idols (in this context, systems of what they call "The Truth"); those systems, despite their origins in human self-expression, assume a life of their own; we find ourselves obliged to worship them; we become alienated from our own creations; this alienation belittles and potentially destroys us. In the hands of the bourgeoisie – for Marx – these idols become instruments of repression. As I am arguing for it, this analysis remains true of systems of metaphysical realism that idolise the notions of reality, knowledge and truth we have constructed, and we become subservient to what are essentially our own intellectual children, which then become instruments of oppression. Michel Foucault connects knowledge with power in much the same way. You may, with your influence, crush me; you may, with your violence, kill me; you may, with your lies, deceive me; you may, in your duplicity, fool me; you may, by laying claim to more for your version of

the truth than is your share, bully me; but in all these regards you betray a more fundamental responsibility than that you have to what you refer to as reality, truth or knowledge; you betray your responsibility to preserve and increase the fund of trust upon which the whole edifice of human civilisation stands; and in that respect, you are a traitor to yourself and to us all.

Trust is to the economy of human knowledge rather as money is to the economy of markets: they do nothing in themselves, but both can be devalued if taken for granted to the point where trade becomes impossible because nobody believes any longer in the value of the currency. Those who betray trust are akin to those who counterfeit money: they devalue the coinage; their actions subvert and will eventually destroy the civilisation in which they arise.

Metaphysical realism propagates the view that reality and truth have some power of themselves to persuade us what they are, and in so doing it diminishes our sense of our own vital responsibility to oppose what we deem to be wrong or misguided, dishonest or hypocritical. It therefore makes us feel less responsible than we are, and so plays into the hands of those who would usurp our freedom and our space by laying claim to a larger share of truth and reality than their voices justify.

Polanyi saw that the edifice of human culture hinges directly upon trust, that once trust is lost, or its significance diminished, we are powerless to defend ourselves against the forces that would destroy us, and that in such circumstances it is only the voices in the wilderness – the dissidents – that can call us back from error. Reality, truth and knowledge, as metaphysicians conceive them, have no power to do so, and so, when we are in the hands of metaphysicians, we are at our most vulnerable, for their gods cannot save us and yet they persuade us that we are too weak to save ourselves.

Metaphysical realism does not understand the currency of trust. Neither does relativism. The former places too much faith in a fictitious capacity of human discourse to find itself locked to the real world, and so underestimates the importance of trust in the establishment of secure sustainable societies. The latter places insufficient faith in the self-regulating capacities of trusting societies to reject inferior and adopt superior views. Relativism, especially in its most overtly ironist forms, despairs of the notion that one view could be superior to another, because it rejects – rightly – the metaphysical realist claim to a stronger hold over truth by virtue of a more certain and secure link between its discourse and reality. This we too reject, because no such link exists. But so too do we reject the ironist's smug despair, because we embrace the view that societies which establish and maintain superior trust-structures – convivialities governed by the paradox of self-set standards, for example – achieve superior understanding of what to affirm and what to deny, and so accredit more reliable elements of their discourse as worthy of the epithets "true," "known" and "real." Ironism, insofar as it fails to notice the role of trust in human societies, is miserably condemned to wallow in a sea of relativisms. Neither extreme will do.

Knowing the truth of "this computer keyboard allows me to type this paper" enables me to "get along." Truth is an epithet we use to describe accredited, reliable human practice. "This computer keyboard allows me to type this paper" is "true" because you would be well-advised to rely upon this affirmation – or so like-minded human beings with a similar acculturation suppose – if typing a paper seems to you presently to be ultimately worthwhile. "Jesus Christ rose from the dead" is "true" on this reading because you would be well-advised to rely upon this affirmation – or so like-minded human beings with a similar acculturation suppose – if you wish to decide upon a human being to whom to devote your life, which religion to adhere to, and so

forth.[2] Others will disagree. The majority view may well be wrong. That is just the human condition: nothing can exempt us from the need to make up our own minds, not even the majority view. The fact that some of us want more than this, more certainty than is rightfully ours or rightfully accrues to us within the framework of our cognitive space, is beside the point. We cannot have what we cannot have. Stamping our feet like petulant children because reality, truth and knowledge are more elusive and less attainable than we would like, does not solve the problem. Nonetheless, precisely this need to take responsibility for ourselves, akin to what Sartre described as our being "condemned to freedom," causes us to generate all sorts of subterfuges by means of which either to try to exempt ourselves from the consequent responsibility or to relieve others of it to our own benefit.

The power structures that rely upon appeals to some putative "reality" or "truth" short-circuit – to good effect and bad – the obligation to decide for ourselves. Once something is supposed to be "established fact" or "a property of the real world" or simply "accepted truth," anyone who then denies or opposes it must be a fool, a liar or an anarchist. The instruments of the totalitarianisms against which Polanyi fought are in place. "Reality" becomes someone else's chosen reality; "truth" someone else's preferred view; "facts" things in which others have a vested interest. Almost everything we know relies upon our re-accreditation of realities, truths and facts affirmed by others that we have not verified or cannot verify for ourselves. Unfortunately, our very dependence upon the affirmations of others makes us vulnerable to their lies and vested interests and deceptions. Somewhere we need to learn when and how and whom to trust.

3. Epistemology and Ontology

RR was trying to carry forward Polanyi's epistemology/ontology holism: to establish that all knowing is bound up with being and all [human] being with knowing, and that human knowing and being is inescapably communal, and therefore political. RR was set in the context of Hilary Putnam's and Nelson Goodman's consideration of the cultural imperialism implicit in much realism, a theme subsequently taken up by many others, for example, J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh in their *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used To Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (1995).

There are two central issues here: whether the western philosophical tradition, with its stress upon one particular metaphysical realism, amounts to a violent imposition of one world-view upon all competing world-views, and therefore underpins the very totalitarian political systems that Polanyi spent his life opposing; whether the alternatives to such a system are inescapably relativist. Andy Sanders was kind enough to say of RR that I had transferred the visual metaphor typical of most epistemology into an auditory metaphor. Resonance is as much a metaphor as sight; but it captures something of the ontic holism required if we are to understand Polanyi's radical turn. His emphasis upon passion, commitment, judgement, is an attempt to eliminate the distinction between epistemology and ontology by unifying them in the concept of the personal.

In fact, in the second lecture in *The Tacit Dimension*, "Emergence," Polanyi deals primarily with the ways in which we comprehend other persons, not the natural world, in ways consistent with the notion of resonance. But the same structural correspondences do not carry over into our knowledge of the natural world, and therefore into the reality in which Walt Gulick wants us to believe. The strength of *TD* lies in its psychology; it is weakest where it attempts to carry the same insights and structures over into natural science.

Polanyi, in other words, demonstrates the architectonic structure of human knowing and being, but he does so in a way that fails to bridge the gap between "how human beings get on in the world by seeking the

best understanding they can manage," as one might put it, and some kind of deep ontological harmony between human understanding and whatever it is that we should credit as "reality." It may have been his failure in this respect that led him mistakenly to conceptualise the natural world using the same teleological categories that he properly identified as essential to the understanding of human life and action.

I am enough of a realist to accept, with John Searle, for example in *The Construction of Social Reality* (1995) that, were there no conceptualising entities, there would still be a world; I can assent to his distinction between brute facts and constitutive facts. But his "brute facts," such as that there would be cold white stuff at the top of high mountains whether we were here or not, are vacuous: the point is not whether there is a world, but whether we can trust what we think it is like. I am enough of an anti-realist to say that we have no business claiming to know more than that what we "know" enables a species constituted and situated as we are to "get along right now."

RR also tried to break down the subject-object dichotomy by choosing a metaphor which integrates knower and known inseparably. I specifically wanted to avoid the temptation to make the world solely responsible for how we see it. The opening paragraph of Dale Cannon's section 3 in this issue worries me in this respect. "Truth and reality, for Polanyi, were sacred, impassioning ideals." Assuredly, and the example of Hungarian freedom-fighters is well-chosen, but this just won't do as any kind of criterion, because everybody's truths and realities impassion them; it is just that in this case Cannon and Polanyi share the same ones. Passions inspired by absolute dedication to truth and reality – or our version of them – are as "inspiring" to devotees of their totalitarian manifestations as they are to others with whom we are more sympathetic. The question is not whether our lives are impassioned by truth, reality and ideals, but who we are to trust to tell us which truths, realities and ideals to deem worthwhile. Everyone whose life is based upon metaphysical realism thinks his or her truths, realities and ideals are the "best" and "only" ones that would be embraced by "any rational being." We have to abandon the illusion of final vocabularies, the conviction that any position is definitively the "best" or the "only" one possible. The only thing that can save us from a blind commitment to the "power and authority over us" (Cannon, section 3) supposedly exhibited by some truths and realities, is to refuse to acknowledge that we are ever free from the obligation permanently to readjust our lives to changing resonances in the world.

No reality ever exempts us from the responsibility we have to question it. No truth ever attempts to relieve us of the obligation to doubt it. So I do not agree with Jha that Polanyi's ontology was less effective than his epistemology. I agree that his teleological understanding was mistaken and over-played, but his supreme achievement lay in eliminating the boundary between epistemology and ontology by absorbing both into the convivial, or, rather less technically, the political. It was to articulate the deep structure of this new synthesis that I attempted in RR to say something different not, perhaps, as exegesis of Polanyi, but as a presentation of the position to which his thought leads.

4. Worthwhile Action and the Eclipse of Truth

Matters of fact and truth are matters of assent and dissent. A critic will retort, "No, the facts are the facts"; it is not so. "The facts" are the things we or almost all of us agree upon universally, where the "almost all of us" refers to the qualification "or all those competent to judge." Attempts to climb out of our minds and the human situation to vantage-points capable of affording us a view of the relationship between truth and how we see things are futile. There is no "view from nowhere." Were we not here, our words would neither exist nor refer. You may say, "the things our words refer to would still exist." But would they? Searle wants to say that there is a representation-independent world – and I absolutely agree – but he also wants to populate that world with "facts," the trappings that only come from particular kinds of representation – names like "Mount Everest" and "snow" – and there I disagree, for the representation-independent world can be re-represented (redescribed) in infinitely many ways, almost all of which we could not comprehend, especially if they arise

from species constituted and situated differently.

Because there is no "view from nowhere," we need a better notion – a more honest, explanatory, human notion – than "truth" to guide us. We act in accordance with what we take to be most worthwhile, and what we deem most worthwhile reflects and governs who we are. Who I am governs what I deem worthwhile, and what I deem worthwhile governs who I am. There is no other truth by which I may live; there are no other actions by which you may know who I am.

When I use the language of truth, I invoke greater authority than my own. What a tribe holds to be true is what a tribe lives by, and therefore what it deems worthwhile. When I say that something is "false," I mean that I do not live by it and do not think it worthwhile. I may assign degrees of interest to it, but I mean that these degrees of interest will only affect me peripherally. I respect many of the teachings of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam in this category: as interesting but not things I feel moved to take very seriously. On the other hand, I take the Four Sublime States of Buddhism - loving-kindness; compassion; appreciative joy; equanimity - very seriously as insights into the human condition, and I do try to live by them; I deem them worthwhile; I wish them to reconfigure my being. It is irrelevant to me that they are "Buddhist"; I take them seriously.

From this perspective, it is simply irrelevant – or, worse, mischievous – to ask whether the teachings of the Buddha are "true" in some deeper "metaphysical" sense; as irrelevant as it is to ask whether the teachings of Jesus are "true." Do we as a matter of practice deem them worthwhile? Do we seek to reconfigure our lives as a result of encountering them? Are there those – whether numerous or otherwise – who allow these teachings, narratives and legends to change them? These are the only questions that matter. Everything else is subterfuge and violence, an attempt to invoke truth to make me believe what your tribe believes. Culturally-induced susceptibility to appropriate resonances is the best guide to genuine "intimations of fruitfulness" that we have, not bogus tyrannies of "truth."

Some of us are prepared to acknowledge that we have made a personal choice for or against certain "truths," and others want to pretend that the choice was somehow made for them by an impersonal process that left them no such choice. Where we find some putative reality described in terms that suggest that it "requires" us to assent to it, there violence is done to the human situation and condition. Science and its truths are frequently presented in the latter sense: their devotees deny that they have any choice but to believe them. This is what worries me about Dale Cannon's talk about finding ourselves compelled to assent to an external reality: it quickly becomes a way of denying that we had any choice in the matter.

Resonance realism denies that there are external points of view from which to assess the rightness or wrongness, advantages and disadvantages of a system of thought or a set of actions. That we repeatedly refer to such external authorities as if they dictate our "oughts" is an example of the naturalistic fallacy. Another person's external "ought" is his or her individual or tribal statement of preference for one thing rather than another. Dale Cannon's (section 3) defence of the passion for truth and reality he finds in Polanyi strikes me as a veiled example of the naturalistic fallacy: an attempt to make the nature of the "external" reality overwhelm our responsibility for accrediting it as such (Some theologians write of their understanding of God in a similar vein).

5. The Trust Relationship
Trust is underemployed as a philosophical category. Without trust there can only be my truth, the truth of my personal life and its experiences, and so only subjectivism. I must trust others if my grasp of truth is to be more than a merely subjective whim; I must trust my culture if I am to learn which resonances to trust.

In large measure, I would attribute the decline of Christianity to its failure to command trust now, and

that perhaps to its failure to do so in the past. We are so familiar with its failings in this respect that other religions appear more trustworthy, perhaps in proportion to our ignorance of them. Christianity cannot speak with an authoritative voice even about the direction in which spiritual regeneration may be found, because it has squandered the trust of the populations whose spiritual health it has supposed itself to direct and shape. And once trust is lost, especially in the realm of the spirit, it is almost impossible to recreate it. An important asymmetry arises here. I have no first-hand experience of any of the experiments, and little enough knowledge of the underlying theories, that justify our belief in quarks or even atoms. Yet the community of particle physicists commands my respect and trust in ways that reassure me that I should nevertheless take quarks and atoms seriously. On the other hand, I am not trustful of research into the effects of tobacco sponsored by the tobacco industry, or into food safety and genetic modification sponsored by the food industry. For similar reasons – the vested interests that potentially distort and destroy the integrity of the accreditation we all rely upon – I have the gravest doubts about many of the things that mainstream religions tell me that I have to believe and do in order to be "saved."

Resonance cannot be achieved in the absence of trust; distrust creates dissonance; it twists and distorts everything. When we are mistrustful, even the initial echoes that indicate the presence of a potential for resonance – echoes which pick up on the rhetoric of transforming discourse – are suppressed. This is one reason why Buddhism insists upon the pursuit of trust and equanimity: that when our minds are disturbed by the distortions attendant on mistrust, we cannot resonate to the world appropriately; it is as if the air were disturbed before the ripples of sound begin; we are overwhelmed by noise. An environment in which trust is disturbed or from which it is largely absent is not an environment in which human life can flourish. That is true of the workplace and of the home.

One of the noisiest things in the world is the tyranny of other people's truths. That noise prevents us from seeing clearly that things need not be as they seem or as we are told they are; and it prevents us from being ourselves. I have not, perhaps, done justice to this notion here. The forces that seek to monopolise "reality" by affirming certain claims to be "realist" are the disciples of a view of truth that has robbed too many people of their lives already. Foot-stamping reflects the modernist impersonal objective view of knowledge: that the facts are the facts and that is all there is to it; that the way the world is commands assent; that we are not responsible for what we treat as reality because reality is reality; that we are not responsible for what we treat as truth because truth is truth; that if you do not see things the way my tribe sees things, there must be something wrong with you. Theism can be the ultimate form of a foot-stamping, shoulder-shrugging attempt to have absolute certainty without responsibility: we simply claim that our view is God's view, and so that is that. When someone asks how we know that our view is also God's view, we usually pretend not to understand, or quote the Bible, thus instituting an infinite regress.

Metaphysical realism is foot-stamping totalitarianism in disguise. It is concerned to impose one truth and one reality as the "best" or "only possible" truth and reality on the basis of some putative "method" that exempts it from the fallibility and diversity of the human condition. But today's totalising discourse is tomorrow's totalitarianism. And Michael Polanyi would have none of it.

Endnotes

[1] The contributors to this volume who think that Polanyi has no ontology to speak of are missing the point: Polanyi's epistemology is his ontology because he can conceive of no divide between them.

[2] Readers may like, as an exercise, to construe the truths of statements like "Napoleon lost the battle of Waterloo"; "water is H_2O"; "$2^8 = 256$" and "Bach was a great composer" in similar vein, and then try some examples from the Azande, horoscopes and the daily newspapers.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL/FUND DRIVE

In this issue (p. 4), there is a call for papers for an international Polanyi conference set for June 8-10, 2001 at Loyola University, Chicago. This is the largest single event ever sponsored exclusively by the Polanyi Society. Most previous major conferences have been smaller in scale or have been subsidized by generous institutions such as Kent State University. The Polanyi Society thus needs to raise the funds necessary to cover basic expenses of organizing the conference. The Organizing Committee is investigating several possibilities. One option is described below.

Membership dues for the Polanyi Society are regularly paid in the fall at the beginning of the academic year. The first issue of a new TAD volume normally includes the dues payment notice. This year, in both this issue (26:3) and the next *TAD* (27:1), you are invited to combine your dues payment with a contribution. In order to encourage you to "think generously," you may get a first and second payment notice and/ or an e-mail notice reminding you that it is time to renew. The chart below sets forth some "rungs" on the contribution ladder. We hope you will reach as high as it is possible for you conveniently to stretch. Unlike the Public Broadcasting System and National Public Radio drives in the US, we do not have Polanyi Society coffee mugs, book bags and other memorabilia to distribute to those who are generous. But for those who do stretch (at least the first 50), we can provide a copy of Andy Sanders' very good 1988 (Rodopi) book, *Michael Polanyi's Post-Critical Epistemology: A Reconstruction of Some Aspects of "Tacit Knowing"* (currently being sold by Amazon.com for $47).

Donation Range	Designation	Acknowledgment
$20-50	Associate	-1 year membership -Listed in gift acknowledgments
$51-$100	Friend	-1 year membership -Listed in gift acknowledgments -Copy of *Guide to the Papers of Michael Polanyi* (TAD 23:1[1996-97] or other old issues available).
$101-$500	Benefactor	-1 year membership -Listed in gift acknowledgments -Copy of Sanders' book
>$500	Patron	-3 year membership -Listed in gift acknowledgments -Copy of Sanders' book

The Polanyi Society is presently applying for tax deductible status in the US. If that application is approved and we are allowed to provide a charitable donation letter, we will do so later in the year. Dues and donations can be sent by post, fax or e-mail. Credit cards donations are welcome.

MEMBERSHIP/DONATION FORM is on the inside back cover(p. 95)