

13 April 2023 (Jacobs)

I was flattered to receive an invitation from its editors to contribute to this *Festschrift*. In normal circumstances I would have leaped at the opportunity to write an essay using Phil's writing to deepen our understanding of some aspect of Polanyi's thought. Unfortunately, a string of health issues got in the way of my writing that essay, suggesting as an alternative a modest vignette expressing my gratitude to Phil for his having helped me time and time again to make more sense of Polanyi's ideas than I could ever have done on my own.

The Internet and its *accoutrements* have proliferated what social theorists distinguish as *abstract* social relations as against *face-to-face* (*concrete*) social relations. There is a naïve view of society affirming that social relations always consist in direct contact between people, being relations of the face-to-face sort. This naïve view may be true of small, tribal societies but it is decidedly untrue of most of the social relations of *modern* society, with for example producers and buyers of goods typically being remote from one another, seldom if ever speaking to one another or observing one another's activities. The Internet encourages the formation of new relations of this sort, connecting people who live far apart from one other.

These points are relevant to the intellectual relationship that Phil and I formed with each other. He lives and works in Missouri, and I near Melbourne, Australia, so we are separated from each other by some 9,000 miles. The closest we have ever come to meeting each other directly in person was at a Polanyi Society conference mediated by Zoom. Despite having met once only virtually and having never met concretely, Phil and I formed an *abstract* intellectual partnership, working on research projects and jointly publishing a number of articles. Our relation has depended on the Internet as a repository of information and email as an instrument for communicating with each other. Phil and I along with other Polanyians form a social-cultural order of the type that Polanyi designated as "dynamic" or "spontaneous." These orders Polanyi describes as unplanned, uncommanded, to be distinguished from vertical, top-down bureaucratic orders.

It was in the context of mulling over some of Polanyi's social-political writing (parts of *Personal Knowledge* and in particular his essay "The growth of thought in society") that I first encountered Phil. I submitted a paper to *Tradition & Discovery* on Polanyi's distinction of social orders (organizations or spontaneous formations), and Phil in his capacity as editor of the journal responded with comments concerning my study. I was taken with the clarity and good sense of his comments. I noticed that Phil

had recently published on Polanyi's relations with the English ecumenist churchman J. H. Oldham and Oldham's discussion group "The Moot." My interest piqued, and Phil and I decided to further investigate Polanyi's place in this group, resulting in our paper "T. S. Eliot's Idea of the Clerisy, and Its Discussion by Karl Mannheim and Michael Polanyi in the Context of J. H. Oldham's Moot." Having spent many years on studying the work of Karl Popper, it was now becoming clear to me that Polanyi's thought was of more than passing interest to Popper and that while relations between them began well they eventually deteriorated into acrimony. I proposed to Phil that we look at this more carefully, to which he agreed, and this led to the publication of our companion pieces, "Relations between Karl Popper and Michael Polanyi" and "Michael Polanyi and Karl Popper: The Fraying of a Long-Standing Acquaintance." Our other publications included Hayek as another of Polanyi's significant others, "Friedrich Hayek and Michael Polanyi in Correspondence."

To have worked with Phil on these and other topics of intellectual history has brought me great pleasure. My only regret is that the scholarly relationship between us has come to a close owing to our advancing years and my health issues. I feel sure that anyone who has worked with Phil will agree with me when I say he is an exemplary scholar, an exceptionally articulate writer, and he knows the Polanyi manuscripts and published *oeuvre* inside out. I leave it to others to tell of Phil's major contributions over many years to the life of the community of Polanyi scholars as editor of our journal *Tradition & Discovery* and as president of the Polanyi Society. My relationship with him has been of the abstract kind, an element in the spontaneous order of Polanyian scholarship. Working with Phil on research has been among the best experiences I have had in my time as an academic.