

# Tradition & Discovery

## The Polanyi Society Periodical

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# The Polanyi Society

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# Preface

Many publications reflecting an interest in Polanyi's thought are now coming forth. You will find comments on the new journal *Appraisal* as well as the new issue of *Polanyiana: The Periodical of the Michael Polanyi Liberal Philosophical Association* in "News and Notes." The tentative program is included (p. 5) for the upcoming Polanyi Society meeting in New Orleans; there are two sessions each including two papers which will be available in the Fall.

I am especially pleased to place in this issue of *TAD* Marjorie Grene's 1991 Kent State address which is a careful reconsideration of Polanyi's distinction between the personal and the subjective. I recall hearing the address and recognizing, at its conclusion, that this was an important analytical comment on Polanyi's thought; thanks go both to Professor Grene and the editors of *Polanyiana* (where it originally appeared) for allowing *TAD* to make this essay more broadly available.

Nicely complementing Professor Grene's essay is an article by Paul Nagy, another American philosopher, who originally prepared his paper as a contribution to the Project on the Tradition of Liberal Philosophy in Central Europe which was sponsored by the Michael Polanyi Liberal Philosophical Association. Nagy comments on the place of Polanyi's philosophical thought, its major themes and its roots in the traditions of central Europe.

Last but not least, are reviews and discussions of interesting new publications that make use of Polanyi's thought. Several of the books are by Polanyi Society members. Walter Gulick offers an extended comment on Ron Hall's *Word and Spirit: A Kierkegaardian Critique of the Modern Age*; Hall, true to form, has produced a spirited response. Dale Cannon's new book, *Six Ways of Being Religious: A Framework for Comparative Studies of Religion* is briefly reviewed by Paul Lewis and Robin Hodgkin provides a glimpse of Robert Innis' dense but interesting *Consciousness and the Play of Signs*.

Phil Mullins  
May 1996

*Tradition and Discovery* is indexed selectively in *The Philosopher's Index* and *Religion One: Periodicals*. Book reviews are indexed in *Index to Book Reviews in Religion*.

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## NEWS AND NOTES

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Resources available to those wishing to study Polanyi's thought or uses made of Polanyian perspectives are beginning to multiply. The following list identifies some particularly interesting recent additions.

The March 1996 first edition of the new journal *Appraisal* (ISSN 1358-3336), edited by **R. T. Allen**, has a 1930's picture of Polanyi on the cover and includes the following articles which focus on or make use of Polanyi's thought: **Csaba Pléh**, "The Computer as an Inspiring and a Limiting Factor in the Conceptual Development of Psychology"; **Percy Hammond**, "Polanyi's Distinction Between Pure Science and Technology"; **Endre Nagy**, "Civil Society in Michael Polanyi's Thought." In addition to other reviews and articles, there is also **Julian Ward's** interesting review of **Marjorie Grene's** *A Philosophical Testament* which treats the links between the thought of Polanyi and Grene. *Appraisal* is available at an annual individual subscription rate of £9 per year. Checks should be sent to R. T. Allen, 20 Ulverscroft Road, Loughborough, LE11 3PU, England. Allen can also be reached by fax (01509 215438) and e-mail (101625.3010@compuserve.com).

A new issue of *Polanyiana: The Periodical of the Michael Polanyi Liberal Philosophical Association* centered in Budapest, Hungary, has recently been published. The whole issue is devoted to an article, in both English and Hungarian, by **Béla Hidegkuti** titled "Arthur Koestler and Michael Polanyi: Two Hungarian Minds in Partnership in Britain." The article itself is fascinating and is based upon extensive research in the archival materials on both Koestler and Polanyi. Included are photographs and copies of letters found in the Polanyi Papers at the Regenstein Library of The University of Chicago.

"Postmodern Ethics: Richard Rorty and Michael Polanyi". **John Rothfork**. *Southern Humanities Review* (Winter

1995), vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 15-34. An abstract of this article appeared in the last issue of *TAD*. This article is now available on WWW (and can be printed off ) at the following address: <http://www.cramer.nmt.edu/~rothfork/rorty.html>

A conference on Polanyi to be held in Sheffield, England in March or April of 1998 is in the planning stages. *TAD* will include details and a call for papers when this is available. Interested parties should write to **R. T. Allen** (at the address listed above) for additional preliminary information.

The Polanyi Society's electronic discussion list has made clear that a growing number of scholars are interested in links between the thought of Michael and Karl Polanyi. The Karl Polanyi Institute of Political Economy, located at Concordia University, Montreal, Canada ([518] 848-2480) will be holding its sixth annual conference November 7-10, 1996. The conference is entitled: "Reciprocity, Redistribution and Exchange: Re-Embedding the Economy in Culture and Nature." **James Stodder** will be giving a paper in a session entitled "Substantive Formalizations: Polanyi and the Anthropology of Economics."

**Endre Nagy** received a Fulbright Fellowship to come from Hungary to the United States to work on scholarly projects related to the thought of Polanyi. Nagy spent six weeks at the Regenstein Library at the University of Chicago working in the Polanyi Papers. He will be in Berkeley, California, in residence at Pacific School of Religion until early June; Nagy is working on a Hungarian translation of *Science, Faith and Society* and is having regular conversations about Polanyi and social philosophy with **Charles S. McCoy**.

A new book, *God and the Mind Machine*, by **John Puddefoot** will be published in the fall and will be reviewed in *TAD*.

**James Hall** has recovered remarkably and is now able to participate in the Polanyi Society electronic discussion group. His story is a lesson to remember and on which to meditate. En route to the Kent State Polanyi Centennial in April, 1991, where he was to give a paper, he suffered an unforeshadowed pontine (on the ventral surface of the brain stem) stroke.

Recalling for us that near fatal experience, Hall says: “It was, curiously, the anniversary of my father’s fatal stroke. It was expected that I would die. In fact, I was asked to choose whether I wished a comfortable death rather than live if my condition never improved. At that time, my only voluntary movement was to blink my eyes. I felt mentally unchanged. I chose to live. My wife, my best friend, and an old girlfriend flew to Akron to see me, presumably for the last time. Eleven days after the stroke I was felt stable enough to transport. A former patient had offered to air evac me to Dallas, where an old friend, a neurologist, met us. At Zale-Lipshey Hospital a tracheotomy was done to help me clear secretions. At the same time a stomach tube was surgically implanted for that tube. The trach tube was removed on Christmas eve. After several months in each of two facilities, I was allowed a trial home visit, then soon discharged. Gradually, I recovered enough to use my right hand and forefinger to operate a computer keyboard.”

Hall continues to pursue his interest in relating Polanyi to Jung and to ESP. He welcomes any exchange on these subjects by “snail-mail” or e-mail. Address: James Hall, Box 7877 Inwood Station, Dallas, TX 75209; WBFL81A@PRODIGY.COM. All of those in the Polanyi Society who have known James rejoice in this news and look forward to his contributions to our thought and discussions.

# Preliminary Polanyi Society Meeting Notice

Although all the details are not yet worked out, the tentative schedule below outlines the program for the Fall, 1996 Polanyi Society meeting to be held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion/Society for Biblical Literature in New Orleans. The hotel and/or convention center rooms for meetings as well as the final program will be included in the next issue of *TAD*. As in past years, papers will not be read at meeting sessions but can be ordered (for a small fee) before the meeting.; paper discussion will be initiated by a designated respondent. It is likely that at least some papers will be available via FTP; a notice will be posted on the Polanyi Society discussion list (polanyi@sbu.edu). If you need additional information about plans for meetings, please contact David Rutledge, Department of Religion, Furman University, Greenville, SC 29613-1474 (fax: 803-294-3001, e-mail: rutledge\_david@furman@furman.edu).

## **Friday evening, November 22, 1996 9-11 p.m.**

Richard Gelwick, University of New England  
“Polanyi and Postmodernism”

Ronald Hall, Francis Marion University  
“The Primacy of the Explicit: On Keeping Romanticism at Bay”

## **Saturday morning, November 23, 1996 9:11:30 a.m.**

Robert Martin, Yale Divinity School  
“The Pedagogical Significance of Personal Knowledge  
for Theological Education”

Russell Willoughby, Claremont Graduate School  
“Polanyi and Albert Bandera”

# The Personal And The Subjective<sup>1</sup>

## Marjorie Grene

**ABSTRACT** Key words: personal , subjective, subjectivity, objectivity, Polanyi and philosophy  
*The contrast between the personal and the subjective is a central aspect of Polanyi's argument in **Personal Knowledge**; this essay examines the way this distinction is developed and offers possible reasons Polanyi has been misunderstood on this point. It also discusses some ambiguities in Polanyi's use of "subjective" and "subjectivity" and comments on the general neglect of Polanyi's work by philosophers.*

The distinction named in my title is fundamental to Polanyi's philosophy of science and, more generally, to his theory of knowledge. Yet on the rare occasions when philosophers of science mention his work at all, they seem to misunderstand this basic theme. An honourable exception is John Ziman, who in his little book *Public Knowledge* (Ziman, 1968) acknowledges his debt to *Personal Knowledge*. But Leo Buss in *The Evolution of Individuality* (Buss, 1987) seems to me more typical, when he celebrates the "fact" that Polanyi has shown scientific knowledge to be subjective.<sup>2</sup> Since the contrast between the personal and the subjective forms one of several basic theses carefully woven into the texture of Polanyi's argument in *Personal Knowledge*, it may be worth looking at that text again with this central theme in mind, and also worth reflecting along the way on possible reasons for the misunderstanding of what appears, or appeared, so plain a distinction. In rereading *Personal Knowledge*, however, for the first time, I must confess, in twenty years or more, I have also found some difficulties in interpreting Polanyi's use, not of the concept of the personal, but of the subjective. So in going through the text in search of clear statements of the crucial distinction, I will point out as well, on the contrary, some ambiguities in the use of "subjective" and "subjectivity", and also, as I proceed, suggest reasons for the neglect of this work by the philosophical community in general -- even though some of its themes are by now being independently rediscovered (and sometimes stolen, but that is not my topic here).

First, then, let's look at some of the passages in which the personal and the subjective are distinguished. The chief sources are chapters 6 (Intellectual Passions), 8 (The Logic of Affirmation) and 10 (Commitment), but there are important, and also in part puzzling, statements along the way.

The Objectivity chapter, to begin with, explicitly denies the alleged objectivity of a theory to be "subjective": "A theory on which I rely is . . . objective knowledge in so far as it is not I, but the theory, which is proved right or wrong when I use such knowledge" (*PK*, p. 4). The major claim of the whole work is in fact stated at the close of this chapter (and, indeed, of each chapter, except perhaps Probability, which ends with a forward reference, but a less inclusive one). At the close of Chapter One, Polanyi writes:

... the act of knowing includes an appraisal; and this personal coefficient, which shapes all factual knowledge, bridges in doing so the disjunction between subjectivity and objectivity. It implies the claim that man can transcend his own subjectivity by striving passionately to fulfil his personal obligations to universal standards" (*PK*, p. 17).<sup>3</sup>

Although chapters 2-4 are intended to exhibit increasing degrees of the personal component in knowledge, there is nothing directly on our topic in the Probability chapter (ch. 2). In Order, a propos of the thoughtful station master, Polanyi points out that orderly patterns are not subjective unless they are mistaken (p. 37). This passing remark really raises, indirectly, the whole problem of self-set standards, and it also suggests a sense of subjectivity that will be introduced officially only in Part IV. I shall return to that point later.

Meantime, the chapter concludes:

We see emerging here a substantial alternative to the usual disjunction of objective and subjective statements, as well as to the disjunction between analytic and synthetic statements. By accrediting our capacity to make valid appraisals of universal bearing within the exact natural sciences, we may yet avoid the sterility and confusion imposed by these traditional categories (*PK*, p. 48).

At first sight this statement, like the concluding statement of the Objectivity chapter, seems to make the status of the personal already plain; on the other hand, if personal knowledge is presented as evading the contrast of subjective and objective, the two seem to be fused rather than contrasted. So one can perhaps see how readers like Buss could misunderstand the point. If we are fusing subjective and objective, everything might be said to be subjective in the sense of containing a subjective component.

As a matter of fact, I now see that we should distinguish here two concepts of the subjective that are interwoven in Polanyi's argument. On the one hand, the subjective is recurrently the passive, the merely mine that makes no claims beyond immediacy, almost like Hegel's here and now. Such subjectivity contrasts with the objective in the ordinary meaning, what is out there, independently of me. On the other hand, if we take the personal as fusing subjective and objective, then the subjective becomes an aspect of commitment, hence of the personal. It seems that I, as a subject, responsibly and actively make an assertion and also by the very same act submit myself to something beyond me - something objective -- that compels me to do so. Here also "objective" takes on its only self-consistent meaning: it is the objective of a commitment through aiming at which I claim to come into contact with reality: with what is objective in the sense of being other than my self-centred little self. So subjectivity is either 1) the passive and immediate or 2) that component of commitment, at once active and passive, that marks it out as *mine*.

The Skills chapter makes two contributions. In its account of tradition, it seems to me to show clearly that science is *not* subjective, since it matters where research is carried on: geography is surely independent of subjective whim. On the other hand, the need to rely on authority, the importance of the master-pupil relation in science, on which the geographical point depends, would be taken by many as a "subjective" matter -- if "subjective" is whatever is decidable only by some means other than an algorithm: and of course that's how, especially in this day of AI and information processing, many people take it. A standard view of the history of Western thought tells us that in the Middle Ages every one relied on authority, and that was arbitrary, non-objective and bad, and then along came Copernicus, Galileo and Newton and everything was scientific, objective and good. Or, in reaction to this: do your own thing. Those are the alternatives. Still, to a thoughtful reader, the notion of tradition should convey a hermeneutical thesis, which is social, historical and therefore involving an aspect of contingency, but surely not therefore "subjective." Tradition limits the individual, even while providing to him (her) a home for growth and fulfilment, even for modification and rebellion. It allies itself rather with the positive than the negative concept of freedom.

Second, the conclusion of the chapter again summarizes Polanyi's position as far as he has gone, adumbrating the development to come -- and here the contrast of personal with subjective is straightforward and emphatic: "It is the act of commitment in its full structure," he writes,

that saves personal knowledge from being merely subjective. Intellectual commitment is a responsible decision, in submission to the compelling claims of what in good conscience I conceive to be true. It is an act of hope, striving to fulfil an obligation within a personal situation for which I am not responsible and which therefore determines my calling. This hope and this obligation are expressed in the universal intent of personal knowledge (*PK*, p. 65).

That, of course, is the whole work in a nutshell, and its message could not be more clearly stated.

Part II, The Tacit Component, exhibits our distinction chiefly in the account of Intellectual Passions. However, there is one disturbing statement in the Articulation chapter: Polanyi refers to "our subjective self confidence in claiming to recognise an objective reality" (*PK*, p. 104). This statement perhaps echoes those quoted earlier from the Objectivity and Order chapters: subjectivity and objectivity are here being blended; but this does, again, seem to obscure the contrast between the subjective and the personal. Does an intellectual commitment combine objective with subjective or does it ground objectivity in a new way in a personal claim and so evade subjectivity? It seems to do the first if we think of subjectivity (2), but the second in terms of subjectivity (1) -- and it is in that sense that the subjective is most clearly contrasted with the personal.

On the whole, it seems to me, it is that contrast that is emphasized in the chapter on Intellectual Passions, which surely makes crystal clear the other than subjective nature of the personal. It opens with a retrospective on the account of exploratory activity that Polanyi has found pervasive in the animal kingdom. "Here," he writes, "in the ... structure of such exploring ... we found prefigured that combination of the active shaping of knowledge with its acceptance as a token of reality, which we recognise as a distinctive feature of all personal knowing" (*PK*, p. 132). What we find anticipated here, in turn, is the ecological epistemology, as we might call it, that Polanyi was to develop in terms of his conception of knowledge as "from-to" in structure. As I put it in my introduction to *Knowing and Being*, "all knowing ... is orientation. The organism's placing of itself in its environment, the dinoflagellate in the plankton, the salmon in its stream or the fox in its lair, prefigures the process by which we both shape and are shaped by our world, reaching out from what we have assimilated to what we seek." Trying to find out where one is, one may fail; but the effort is surely not "subjective." An animal in search of food is hungry; but the food is real, whether or not he finds it. Even if there is none, it is a real target of his search.

Yet as the chapter proceeds, with its rich examples from the history of science, an unsympathetic reader may again be given the impression that the activity involved in the epistemic claims of scientists is "subjective", when he (she) reads, for example, that "(t)raditions are transmitted to us from the past, but they are our own interpretations of the past, at which we have arrived within the context of our own immediate problems" (*PK*, p. 160). True, as the argument develops, it should be plain that such interpretations are not arbitrary or whimsical. For one thing (p. 163), they are social, thus interpersonal and not in each case subjectively "mine." And then the section on "Passions, Private and Public" sets out in the most emphatic terms the contrast between appetites and intellectual passions: appetites die (for the moment) with their satisfaction, while intellectual passions "leave behind knowledge, which gratifies a passion similar to that which sustained the craving for discovery. Thus intellectual passions perpetuate themselves by their

fulfilment” (*PK*, p. 173). And of course appetites, satisfied, gratify only the individual; the knowledge that satisfies an intellectual passion is there for any one to share. That is a corollary, I suppose, of the “universal obligation” a seeker after mental excellence believes him (her)self to be fulfilling. Purely subjective desire or satisfaction carries no such component of universal intent.

The next sections of this chapter expand the perspective to mathematics, the arts and religion -- in the last two cases presumably, to tough-minded scientific types, a double foray into the merely subjective! As a matter of fact, I regretfully find by now the theistic theme so carefully woven into the texture of the whole misguided and misleading; I’ll return to that question when I come to the chapter on Commitment. As far as the impression of subjectivity goes, however, at this point Polanyi himself, in speaking of “a personal component, inarticulate and passionate, which declares our standards of values, drives us to fulfil them and judges our performances by those self-set standards,” explicitly stresses “the paradoxical structure” that prevails in all the practices he has been examining (*PK*, p. 195).

The paradox is deepened, moreover, in the section on “Dwelling in and Breaking Out”, both by the incursion into religious mysticism and by the ambiguity, or almost interchangeability, of the concepts of interiorization and indwelling. When am I assimilating something into me and when am I “pouring myself into it”? “Since the impersonality of contemplation is a self-abandonment,” Polanyi writes, “it can be described either as egocentric or as selfless, depending on whether one refers to the contemplator’s visionary act or to the submergence of his person” (*PK*, p. 197). No wonder some readers take him to be a “subjectivist.” Indeed, so far he admits that “(a) personal knowledge accepted by indwelling may appear merely subjective” (*PK*, p. 201). The implication is that this danger will be dealt with later; I shall return to that question in connection with the chapter on Commitment, and also Part IV, where it is presumably overcome.

Even here, however, the theme we are following is not only reiterated, but stabilised, in the threefold distinction that concludes this chapter: between *verification* of other systems, such as mathematics, art styles or religious creeds and *authentication* of experiences that make no claims beyond themselves. As Polanyi puts it:

Our personal participation is in general greater in a validation than in a verification. The emotional coefficient of assertion is intensified as we pass from the sciences to the neighbouring domains of thought. But both *verification* and *validation* are everywhere an acknowledgement of a commitment: they claim the presence of something real and external to the speaker. As distinct from both of these, *subjective* experiences can only be said to be *authentic*, and authenticity does not involve a commitment in the sense in which both verification and validation do (*PK*, p. 202).

Surely nothing could be clearer than this. Admittedly, Popperians and other classic philosophers of science (alas, there are still a few extant) will decry the use of “verification”; but this is neither a verification theory of meaning nor of truth. It is simply a reminder of the importance of verification procedures in ordinary life as well as in the sciences. We are always doing what J.J. Gibson calls “reality checking” in our perceptions and in the context of more intellectualized readings of reality. The intent of “validation” for logic and mathematics is clear, and the concept “authentication” seems to me an excellent innovation to mark out the merely subjective from both the major areas in which personal commitment takes place.

In fact, a propos of the notion of the “subjective” here, it is worth remarking that in Polanyi’s view, contrary

to the chief philosophical tradition, it is only the subjective that provides certainty. Whatever is objective is uncertain, since objectivity can be claimed only within a commitment, a personal act that carries risk, fallibility, in its very nature. *Pace* Part IV and chapter 13, of which more later, a commitment is at best, in Cartesian terms, “morally certain,” never metaphysically so. Again, for a thought style dominated by the subject-object dichotomy, where everything is either just mine and in here, or irrelevant to myself and really out there, this is a paradoxical thesis and likely to be misunderstood.

Since I am wandering through the text in a very informal way, I may also suggest here that perhaps another ground for the misunderstanding of Polanyi’s thought may lie in his insistence, as in the beginning of the passage I have just quoted, on the emotional component of commitment, or, as he puts it there, “the emotional coefficient of assertion” (*PK*, p. 202). It has been, in my view, one of the tragic errors of our tradition to demand a sharp division between reason and passion. One need not, in Humean fashion, make reason the slave of the passions in order to understand, on the contrary, that all reason must be in some sense impassioned if it is to function at all. For those who persist in what Polanyi called critical thinking, however, only reason devoid of emotion is worthy of the name. The passionate is the irrational, the unthinking, the non-cognitive. It is precisely that false and fatal distinction that the doctrine of commitment seeks to overcome.

Before we go on to the two further major sources for the subjective-personal distinction, the chapters on the Logic of Affirmation and on Commitment, let’s look briefly at some passages in the last chapter of Part II, the Conviviality chapter, that add some evidence for our theme, in making more explicit the structure of the personal as distinguished from the merely subjective. In the section on the Transmission of Social Lore, Polanyi writes:

This assimilation of great systems of articulate lore by novices of various grades is made possible only by a *previous act of affiliation*, by which the novice accepts apprenticeship to a community which cultivates this lore, appreciates its values and strives to act by its standards (*PK*, p. 207).

In speaking of the learner, a fainter image of the discoverer, he says:

Such granting of one’s personal allegiance is -- like an act of heuristic conjecture -- a passionate pouring of oneself into untried forms of existence. The continued transmission of articulate systems, which lends public and enduring quality to our intellectual gratifications, depends throughout on these acts of submission (*PK*, p. 208).

This is a passivity inextricably tied to an activity, scarcely resembling those subjective, “secret inner somethings,” to borrow Wittgenstein’s term, that empiricist philosophers were long in search of.

The chief theme of this chapter, of course, is the social character of science -- now a too fashionable topic in sociologically oriented philosophy of science. Indeed, most of the writers in this new tradition stress so exclusively the sociality of science, that they miss its existence as science, that is, as a unique family of practices, whose aim is, not winning games or getting rich or enlarging one’s ego, but coming to understand how something in the real world really works. Polanyian personal knowledge, rooted in society and demanding active submission to a tradition, even if sometimes in partial rebellion against it, is nevertheless knowledge: a claim to be in touch with a reality beyond and independent of the claimant. The account of the administration of science, or more generally of what Polanyi calls

“individual culture,” repeatedly stresses this double character of science as a society whose *raison d’être* is the search for understanding some aspect of nature. Let me just quote here a passage from the concluding section of the chapter:

The reception granted in a free society to the independent growth of science, art and morality, involves a dedication of society to the fostering of a specific tradition of thought, transmitted and cultivated by a particular group of authoritative specialists, perpetuating themselves by co-option. To uphold the independence of thought implemented by such a society is to subscribe to a kind of orthodoxy which, though it specifies no fixed articles of faith, is virtually unassailable within the limits imposed on the process of innovation by the cultural leadership of a free society (*PK*, pp. 244-5).

There is no need, for this audience, I should think, to comment on this expression of *our* personal commitment; commitments by members of other societies will involve other premises. But though all “virtually unassailable,” they are all equally fragile. For traditional thinkers in search of *simon-pure* objectivity, of course, that won’t do -- and in addition, the position is elitist, so bad in every conceivable way.

Yet there it is. To put the thesis bluntly and briefly: conviviality is a necessary condition of personal knowledge. Conviviality, however, transcends the individual and hence the subjective (sense 1). But let me move on to Part Three, the Justification of Personal Knowledge, especially the first and third chapters of this part. The middle chapter, the elegant Critique of Doubt, which I heard Polanyi present in London at a meeting chaired, with inimitable rudeness and no understanding, by Karl Popper, is perhaps especially liable to such a mistaken reception. It is hard to say what distinguishes this argument from a defence of relativism. The Zande’s intent is as universal as ours, so how can we accredit our own use of evidence and discredit theirs? The answer lies only in the larger context of the work, and, as I see it, especially in this part, in the establishment of the fiduciary programme (in chapter 8) and its solidification in the concept of commitment (in chapter 10).

First, then, the Logic of Affirmation.<sup>4</sup> The fallibility of confident utterance is here confirmed, as is the necessary reliance of “precise” terms on a test that cannot be precise in the same sense as the word it serves to test (pp. 250, 252). The section on the Personal Mode of Meaning, moreover, while insisting on the self-contradiction of an alleged total objectivism, reiterates the appearance of subjectivity that the program of personal knowledge may assume for those who fail to grasp its force: “It might seem that we have saved the concept of meaning from destruction by depersonalization, only to expose it to being reduced to the status of dogmatic subjectivity” (*PK*, p. 253). This danger will be mitigated, presumably, in the accounts of the fiduciary programme and of commitment, but of course it can never be radically eliminated, at least as I believe. Later in the chapter, Polanyi points out that in the critical tradition, as he calls it, “all belief was reduced to the status of subjectivity” (*PK*, p. 266). If we now “recognize belief once more as the source of all knowledge,” (*loc. cit.*) we accept by that very act the danger that those still committed to the “critical” thought style will see our claims to knowledge, or to knowledge about our knowledge, as subjective. Indeed, there is always the risk that we ourselves, in some moods, will so see it. “Who is convincing whom here?” Polanyi asks (p. 265), and answers, “I am trying to convince myself.” “This,” he writes,

is our liberation from objectivism: to realize that we can voice our ultimate convictions only from within our convictions -- from within the whole system of acceptances that are logically prior to any particular assertion of our own, prior to the holding of any particular piece of knowledge. If an ultimate logical level is to be attained and made explicit, this must be a declaration of my personal beliefs. I

believe that the function of philosophic reflection consists in bringing to light, and affirming as my own, the beliefs implied in such of my thoughts and practices as I believe to be valid; that I must aim at discovering what I truly believe in and at formulating the convictions which I find myself holding; that I must conquer my self-doubt, so as to retain a firm hold on this programme of self-identification (*PK*, p. 267).

This is a delicate position to maintain. I recall that when I was working with Michael on *Personal Knowledge*, and most deeply committed to my commitment to commitment as a central concept in the philosophy of science, the whole fabric would sometimes just seem to dissolve, like a dream in daylight. If everything is a commitment, from perception to the understanding of a work of art, to worship, what does it mean to use the concept? It's hard to keep the right focus to maintain the fiduciary programme, and one can understand why those unsympathetic to the effort see it as stressing the arbitrary, the irrational -- as a flight from scientific objectivity, not an explanation of it.

It is obvious, too, by the way, why the philosophical establishment in general, not only philosophers of science, wanted nothing to do with a work filled with such pronouncements. Philosophy is supposed to be conceptual analysis pure and simple and to have nothing to do with beliefs of any kind whatsoever, let alone "fundamental" ones.

There are other passages in this chapter that are worth reflecting on, particularly the brief account of mind and the knowledge of mind (pp. 262-264), which is one of Polanyi's best statements of this problem, contradicting as it does his flatly dualistic pronouncement in his lecture to the American Psychological Association some years later.<sup>5</sup> But this question is beyond the range of my present concern. Let us move on to Commitment.

Recognizing at the start of the chapter that the fiduciary programme as so far formulated "threatens to sink into subjectivism" (a clear sign, of course, that that is not its author's intention) (*PK*, p. 299), Polanyi distinguishes explicitly, in section 2 (pp. 300-306), between the subjective, the personal and the universal. Of the first two he states:

we may distinguish between the personal in us, which actively enters into our commitments, and our subjective states, in which we merely endure our feelings.

Here it is the first sense of subjectivity that is referred to; this plainly makes the subjective and the personal quite different; but then they are merged again, as "subjectivity" takes on again its second meaning, or perhaps the inverse of it. "This distinction", Polanyi goes on,

establishes the conception of the *personal*, which is neither subjective nor objective. In so far as the personal submits to requirements acknowledged by itself as independent of itself, it is not subjective; but in so far as it is an action guided by individual passions, it is not objective either. It transcends the disjunction between subjective and objective" (*PK*, p. 300).

Or, as we noticed earlier, we could say as well, it is both subjective and objective at once: as non-subjective it tends to objectivity; as not objective, it belongs to the subject. Thus the two meanings are blended in this single passage.

Some such fusion is indeed demanded if we are to overcome what Plessner called the Cartesian alternative; but to a thoroughgoing objectivist, there then remains no distinction: the person is in a sense subjective, and is not

wholly objective. Therefore it is subjective! It is clear to us, I hope, what Polanyi means here, but one can understand the misunderstanding of others. Yet I don't see, at this juncture, how his formulation could have been bettered. The subjective, as just my passive experience, is other than the personal; but the personal contains an aspect of subjectivity, of mineness, in fusion with objectivity, the thrust toward something other than myself.

And of course the account of the impersonal aspect of the personal, the component of universal intent, in the first section on the Structure of Commitment, further articulates the transsubjective character of the person, in particular, in the argument of this work, the person in search of truth. A desire for truth is my desire, but since it is a desire for something impersonal, it has "an impersonal intention" (p. 308). The chapter on Intellectual Passions has already made this clear. As Polanyi states it here, "*(t)he freedom of the subjective person to do as he pleases is overruled by the freedom of the responsible person to do as he must*" (PK, p. 309). The next section stresses the active aspect of commitment, and the concept of "competence" is introduced in order to eliminate the merely arbitrary:

To accept commitment as the framework within which we may believe something to be true, is to circumscribe the hazards of belief. It is to establish the conception of competence which authorizes a fiduciary choice made and timed, to the best of the acting person's ability, as a deliberate and yet necessary choice. The paradox of self-set standards is eliminated, for in a competent mental act the agent does not do as he pleases, but compels himself forcibly to act as he believes he must (PK, p.315).

The competent, which is expressed in personal performance, is here distinguished from the "illusory and incompetent," which is classed with passive mental states, "as purely subjective" (p. 318).<sup>6</sup> Competent mental acts, commitments, are to be found, Polanyi argues, all the way from perception through the most complex intellectual practices. Even though, necessarily, given the date of his writing, his account of perception is inadequate, this extrapolation of perception to other forms of knowledge is significant.

Finally, the last section stresses the contingent, historical location of commitment: "Our believing is conditioned at its source by our belonging" (p. 322), and it identifies our acceptance of the accident(s) of our existence "as the concrete opportunities for exercising our personal responsibility" (p. 322). "*This acceptance is the sense of my calling.*" (p. 322) Again, and more emphatically than ever, the contrast between the personal and the subjective comes to the fore:

Commitment offers to those who accept it legitimate grounds for the affirmation of personal convictions with universal intent. Standing on these grounds, we claim that our participation is personal, not subjective. . . . Our subjective condition may be taken to include the historical setting in which we have grown up. . . . Our personhood is assured by our simultaneous contact with universal aspirations which place us in a transcendent perspective (PK, p. 324).

Note: "Commitment offers to those who accept it. . ." (PK, p. 324). To those who do, such statements, and the chapter as a whole, present a firm foundation for reflection on knowledge, and more widely, on the nature of the person. I don't know how to persuade those who do not. The paradox of self-set standards is eliminated for those who find it so -- or else it becomes at most an uncomfortable tension; others will still persist in pushing the paradox into self-contradiction and resolving responsibility into information processing or some such mechanical procedure.

Before looking sketchily at Part Four, and particularly at the treatment of subjectivity in those chapters, however, I must say with regret -- and regret for my past credulity here -- that I find the last paragraph of this chapter, in which Polanyi likens the setting of the scientist's commitment to the "Christian scheme of Fall and Redemption," (p. 324) triply unfortunate. First, the theistic theme woven through the text and stressed again at the close of the work, as well as at the close of this definitive chapter, was bound to alienate any philosophers of science who may have read it. Surely, they would say, 'tis not time to talk of God yet. Second, although I still recognize, very loosely, an analogy between a quasi-Augustinian faith and the scientist's faith in his heuristic groping toward a coming discovery, as well as between the concept of grace and the fact that a successful discovery is given, not violently wrested from nature -- despite that recognition, I believe by now (and this is now my commitment) that religion does so much more harm than good in the world that it is differences from it rather than similarities that need stressing in practices we wish to accredit. Third, moreover, and most important: the analogy with the Fall I now see to be utterly misguided. "The historically given and subjective condition of our mind" as Polanyi puts it -- that is, finitude and contingency -- are not to be equated with sin. And the doctrine of original sin, of human beings as suffering from a disease of which an all-powerful and all-good (!) God may see fit to cure them through any conceivable or inconceivable form of suffering -- that doctrine I find to be morally repugnant, as well (in terms most famously stated by Hume) as incoherent. If one wants an analogy for the scientist on the verge of discovery, I much prefer Jacob's statement that the situation resembles that of French soldiers (like himself) in North Africa during the War: one felt instinctively, he says, that *somehow* one would get back to Paris! (Jacob, 1987) In my present agnostic if not atheistic frame of mind, that's more like it.

Purged of its Christian over- or undertones, however, the Commitment chapter with the argument that builds up to it still seems to provide an appropriate foundation for a philosophy of science, a theory of knowledge, and a perspective on the nature of responsible personhood. As I have already noted, it is a precarious foothold rather than a firm foundation, but in our situation I believe that is the best we can do. Polanyi believed, however, that in the last part of his argument he had provided a more sweeping ontological location for the act of commitment. It is not germane to the topic of this essay to consider this question; I need only say in passing that while these chapters raise some important points against reduction in biology, the effort to locate *homo sapiens* as the apex of evolution is hopelessly mistaken. The ontological aspect of tacit knowing, proposed in *The Tacit Dimension*, being more limited in its import, is much more convincing. Commitment, however, has, I should think, to retain its precarious ontological position as the stance of a given embodied person, cast ephemerally into the flow of history, and pre- and posthistory, self-obliged to obey a calling that takes him (her) beyond the confines of subjective preference.

Be that as it may, it is the distinction of the personal from the subjective that concerns me here, and I must look, in conclusion, at the meanings of "subjective" that we have met along the way and that are complexified in the last part of Polanyi's argument. On the one hand, he maintains to the end -- or again at the end -- the distinction between the subjective as the merely passive and the personal as active: active in submission to a demand that takes me beyond myself, but active nevertheless (p 403). And here we meet again the fusion of subjective and objective as of active and passive in a single nexus. At the same time, Polanyi now introduces a third concept of subjectivity, that is, correct use within an incorrect system: this is "subjectivity" allied, perhaps, to the sense of mistaken self-confidence that we met in passing in the Articulation chapter.

To begin with, in working through the application of "rules of rightness" to a series of levels of organisation in the living world, Polanyi introduces subjectivity as distinct from error (pp. 361-362). Thus a rat drinking saccharin solution is undergoing a subjective experience while a fish taking the angler's bait is committing a reasonable error.

This seems to fit the concept of the subjective that we have met in most of the passages cited so far: it is what belongs to my “inner” life, with no implications of universality and so with little interest for more than my momentary satisfaction. But matters are complicated by the “classes of appraisal” introduced in the same section and restated in reference to human knowledge. In the latter context, Polanyi lists

- (1) *Correct* inferences reached within a *true system*.
- (2) Erroneous conclusions arrived at within a true system (like an error committed by a competent scientist).
- (3) Conclusions arrived at by the correct use of a fallacious system. This is an incompetent mode of reasoning, the results of which possess subjective validity.
- (4) *Incoherence* and *obsessiveness* as observed in the ideation of the insane, especially in schizophrenia.

Now it is important to notice that under (3) Polanyi refers us in a footnote back to the Zande, whose reasoning now turn out, therefore, to have only subjective validity. This appears to provide us with a new sense, and a new reference, for subjectivity: it is whatever is out of accord with the canons of our modern, liberal, science-sponsoring and science-grounded society. Indeed, in terms of the final chapter, on the Rise of Man, it is that particular society toward which, since the origin of life, the whole creation can said to have moved. Allegedly, the personal is saved from its precarious status by an ontology that places our commitment uniquely within a universe somehow meant to culminate in this very society, with these very fundamental beliefs. Then, from within our commitment to commitment, we can class the objectivist’s arguments as subjective, since his system is fallacious and so his reasoning has only subjective validity. We can understand why he sees our commitment as merely subjective, and why he cannot understand the more-than-subjectivity of our position. And we need worry no more about Zande or supporters of apartheid or Arab or Christian or Jewish fundamentalists or anybody we happen to disagree with. That sounds fine on the face of it, perhaps. But where has historical contingency, where has fallibility gone? At the very close of the work Polanyi describes our intellectual heritage as “everything in which we may be totally mistaken.” (*PK*, p. 404) That is a saying I cherish; but, despite that remark on the penultimate page of the book, the ontological dogmatism and the hopelessly anthropocentric evolutionism of the final chapter, as well as its closing Christian apologetic, must be discouraging, in my view, to supporters of the model of commitment for epistemology and the philosophy of science. Polanyi’s late work on tacit knowledge, being cosmologically less ambitious, may help to correct this imbalance. That is not my theme here, however, I have just been trying to search through *Personal Knowledge* for clues both to the distinction between the subjective and the personal and to the sources of the misunderstanding by others of that distinction. That distinction itself, sometimes involving two concepts of the subjective, is more complex than I had thought. If in addition one must take seriously the ontological tenor of Part IV, with its third concept of subjectivity, my whole reading may prove to be mistaken and the responses of other readers would also have to be reread in that light. Commitment is precarious.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Editor's Note: This essay was originally delivered as the keynote address on April 12, 1991 at the Kent State Univeristy Polanyi Centinnial Conference. Subsequently, it appeared in *Polanyiana: The Periodical of the Michael Polanyi Liberal Philosophical Association* 2:4/3:1 (1992): pp. 43-55 and is reprinted with permission.

<sup>2</sup>Israel Scheffler is one of the most conspicuous in totally misreading Polanyi's argument in this way (Scheffler, 1967).

<sup>3</sup>There is one slip in this chapter. In claiming greater objectivity for the Copernican theory, Polanyi says: "We do imply that its excellence is, not a matter of personal taste on our part, but an inherent quality deserving universal acceptance by rational creatures" (*PK*, p. 4). "Personal" here is a misnomer; matters of taste in this context, one would think, are indeed subjective and not personal. I don't believe the central term "personal" is misapplied in this way again.

<sup>4</sup>This title, I fear, is a misnomer. It is a question of structure, not "logic." I was put right about this usage when I gave a talk at Queen's Belfast in my first year there, under the title, if I remember rightly, "The Logic of Biology." There was a time when the term "logic" could refer rather vaguely to any relatively formal account of any structure -- not even then to the structure itself. One of the problems in *Personal Knowledge* is that it sounds amateurish to professional philosophers; I'm sorry I didn't know enough to correct this easily corrigible error.

<sup>5</sup>Editor's Note: This is "Logic and Psychology," *The American Psychologist*, 23 (January 1968) pp. 27-43.

<sup>6</sup>In a note here, Polanyi anticipates the further subdivision of subjectivity (or of incompetence) which we will have to look at in skimming briefly through Part IV.

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# Philosophy in a Different Voice: Michael Polanyi on Liberty and Liberalism<sup>1</sup>

Paul Nagy

**ABSTRACT** Key words: liberty, liberalism, philosophy and society, Polanyi, tradition, virtue ethics  
*Polanyi belongs to a tradition which is neither modernist nor postmodernist, but which affirms speculative philosophy as an alternative to both and as an important form of public discourse. With his origins in the philosophical culture of central Europe, he may well emerge as a bridge between continental and Anglo-American analytic philosophy. He was a moral philosopher in the Aristotelian tradition who anticipated the turn in recent years away from the modern ethics of rules to the classical ethics of virtue. Within this context he espoused a new kind of liberalism and a different understanding of liberty.*

While Michael Polanyi spent the better part of his career immersed in philosophical issues, he seems to have reflected very little and not to have said very much at all about the philosophical enterprise itself. This raises a number of intriguing questions. Apart from his virtuosity in constructing complex and subtle ideas and highly technical arguments, just what sort of philosopher was he? What was his understanding of philosophy and its relation to other disciplines? How can we characterize his thought overall, beyond the specific reforms he proposed in epistemology, in metaphysics, and in the philosophy of the physical and social sciences?

The introduction to a collection of essays on Polanyi's thought<sup>1</sup> offers some guidance in these matters. The editors of this volume call *Personal Knowledge* an "exasperating book" and ponder the reasons why such prominent critics as May Brodbeck and Michael Oakeshott had problems with it. Brodbeck dismissed Polanyi's venture into philosophy with harsh words. Saying that "cobblers should stick to their lasts," she called the book a "tender-minded assault on the life of reason." And Oakeshott declared it to be "disordered, repetitive, digressive and often obscure."<sup>2</sup>

The editors, Langford and Poteat, propose an explanation by calling attention to Polanyi's effective use of a mix of stylistic devices and strategies including dialectic, aphorisms, and homilies. They characterize these devices as the elements of "an integral rhetoric,"<sup>3</sup> and of a rhetorical style which, when used in conjunction with empirical psychology, the sociology of knowledge, and political philosophy, becomes a form of confession in the tradition of St. Augustine. They call the book "a reflexive exercise in discovering one's own beliefs."<sup>4</sup>

Langford and Poteat offer a clue here as to where we might place Polanyi in the philosophical culture of the twentieth century. They seem to suggest that we look at the rhetorical tradition in Western philosophy, from the Greek Sophists of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E., to Nietzsche, Heidegger and Rorty in our own time, to find answers. This tradition, as Robert Neville notes, elevates "persuasiveness of argument" to the highest level of intellectual excellence, but it rejects the claim of philosophers that the purpose of the intellect is to know the truth:

According to the rhetorical tradition there is no truth that measures our assertions, only a body of arguments that shape the world of discourse within which assertions take place. Philosophy's deception, according to the rhetoricians, is its suggestion that there is a truth to which it is loyal when in fact any philosophy is only a cluster of arguments expressing the interest of the philosopher.<sup>5</sup>

This tradition is currently represented, of course, by the end-of-philosophy movement within postmodernism which sees itself as the alternative to modernist philosophy and its preoccupation with the issues of foundationalism and epistemology.

But Polanyi's profound respect for and his commitment to the truth would seem to rule him out as a postmodernist thinker and to place him somewhere entirely outside its orbit. And yet he has something of immense importance to say about epistemology and about the foundations of philosophy, especially to that group of postmodernists for whom moral truth is only a matter of ideological rhetoric, but who nevertheless find themselves sliding uncomfortably into moral decay and intellectual anarchy.<sup>6</sup> From this standpoint Polanyi belongs to a tradition which is neither modernist nor postmodernist, neither critical nor rhetorical, but a tradition so aptly described by Neville as the high road around modernism. While there may be disagreement on specific issues, the members of this tradition share the conviction that it is possible to engage in speculative philosophy and that Nietzsche and Heidegger, deconstructionists and postmodernists, do not have the final word. The travelers Polanyi would meet on this road are, among others, Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, John Dewey, and Alfred North Whitehead.<sup>7</sup>

But this doesn't answer the puzzle of why his work has been so poorly received and in some instances even ignored by professional philosophers. Harry Prosch believes that a partial answer may be found in the way in which Polanyi embraces both the theoretical and the practical, the "intellectual" and the "active" dimensions of philosophical problems. He gave public witness to the belief that philosophers must be critics not only of the "intellectual shibboleths" but also of the "action shibboleths of our time." Academic philosophy has a tendency to be too esoteric and to take too myopic a view of what it should be doing. Prosch recalls that

one of these philosophers, G. V. Warnock, once contemptuously expressed to me [that] Polanyi was not a philosopher at all. He was only a *philosophe*. The general format within which Polanyi expressed his views was anathema to by far the greater part of English and American philosophers of his time. They were unable to take him seriously.<sup>8</sup>

By calling him a *philosophe*, Warnock and others seem to want to consign him to the rhetorical tradition in its latest postmodernist version. But from Prosch's perspective, Polanyi was something more; he was a physician/philosopher. He diagnosed what was wrong with the human condition in both thought and action, and prescribed a course of treatment. Shifting his metaphor, Prosch in another context describes Polanyi's program of treatment as the exorcism of "the twin devils of the ideal of knowledge as detached objectivity and the ideal of action as moral perfectionism."<sup>9</sup>

It strikes me that in his career as a physician/philosopher (or *philosophe*), Polanyi presents an interesting instance of the public intellectual performing in the role of a social, cultural, and religious critic. He gives us a glimpse of what philosophy can be when it becomes an intellectual calling which is pursued in the public arena. He is an example of what Dewey had in mind when he said that "philosophy recovers itself when it ceases to be a device for dealing with

the problems of philosophers and becomes a method...for dealing with the problems of men.”<sup>10</sup> In contrast with most professional philosophers who are highly competent but narrowly focused specialists, Polanyi may be characterized as a public intellectual and generalist as well as a competent specialist in science. And, as a public intellectual, he took seriously the possibility that his work as a scientist carried with it a greater calling to serve the common good.

A more obvious reason why academic philosophers refuse to take his work seriously might be that he lacked formal philosophical credentials. But a more important reason for their misgivings is in his influence in other disciplines despite these deficiencies in philosophy, and because of his success as a social critic and a public intellectual. The seriousness with which his work continues to be taken in the social and behavioral sciences, in the arts, in education, and in religious thought seems inversely related to its neglect by academic philosophers.

I have a two-fold aim in this paper. The first is to examine some of the features of his philosophy which would support my characterization of it in terms of social and cultural criticism, and hence my characterization of Polanyi himself as a public intellectual. In this connection, I believe that he was ardently committed to philosophy as an important form of public discourse. My second purpose is to argue that the concept of liberty is one of the essential, organizing principles in his work and crucial to an understanding of his philosophy as a whole.

The task of sorting out these threads in Polanyi’s thought, of sorting out his contributions to philosophy in the twentieth century and to its future direction, and, finally, of placing him in an appropriate and meaningful context in relation to other major thinkers of our time, demands our attention. There is some evidence that this task is about to begin. In a seminal paper on “The New European Philosophy,”<sup>11</sup> Barry Smith argues that there presently exists, in addition to the traditions of analytic and continental philosophy, a distinctive philosophical culture in central and eastern Europe.

The culture of analytic philosophy is dominated by an understanding that its function is the narrowly focused examination of language problems. The clarification and purification of these problems precedes (or even replaces) the ways in which traditional philosophers conduct their examination of the large questions of philosophy. Analytic philosophers view their work as a necessary preliminary stage in which language must first be purged of its impurities before traditional philosophers and public intellectuals may address the issues of tradition and society. Consequently, it tends to be somewhat esoteric and removed from general public discourse.

The traditions of continental philosophy, on the other hand, are more of an open enterprise and more in the public arena. Smith sees the philosophical traditions of central and eastern Europe as an alternative to these two cultures. As a third culture, they hold the potential of mediating the differences between the first two. He predicts that “the centre of gravity of European philosophy is set to move east,”<sup>12</sup> and that a consequence of this shift will be the development of new interdisciplinary alliances on the continent

between philosophy and other disciplines, including mathematical logic, linguistics, psychology....Also the establishment of a new or extended canon of “Continental philosophy,” a new list of exemplars...(intellectual “masters”)...embracing figures beyond the usual confines of Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Habermas, Gadamer, etc. to include Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, Slovenes-- new philosophical heroes who can be seen as part of a continuing tradition of philosophy stretching from Bolzano and Brentano to the present day....Thinkers worthy of being mentioned in this

connection are Aurel Kolnai, Michael Polanyi, Roman Jakobson, Max Scheler, Stanislaw Lesniewski, Takeusz Kotarbinski, and Josef Bochenski.<sup>13</sup>

Smith envisions the possibility that this philosophical culture of central Europe will also have a transforming influence on Anglo-American analytic philosophy.

The latter has hitherto been seen in Continental Europe as a rather narrow affair, allied of its very nature to positivistic, reductionistic and materialistic tendencies and somehow excessively oriented around formal logic and natural science at the expense of concerns with...politics, law and culture. If...Brentano and Twardowski, Reinach and Polanyi are included as part of a single tradition along with Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein and Carnap, then this tradition....is no longer exclusively oriented around language or logic....Analytic philosophy in this wider sense is distinguished not by positivism or reductionism but rather by its concern with a certain sort of clarity, the clarity of argument.<sup>14</sup>

With the prospect that these new alliances and re-alignments as envisioned by Smith will indeed occur, there arises a need to examine Polanyi as a prominent figure in the philosophical culture of central Europe because of the special way in which he presents a bridge to the continental and the analytic cultures. But more to the point that Smith makes in the above text, he brings to the continental and analytic cultures a distinct and compelling sense of the “clarity of argument” and its primacy in a free society. This, as I hope to show in the next section, is evident in the principles of fairness and tolerance which he so carefully laid out.

## I

Polanyi called for a general epistemological reform as a prescription for the ills which have afflicted Western civilization in the twentieth century. He argued effectively that the totalitarianisms of both left and right have been excessively passionate moral responses to the nihilism inherent in modern critical philosophy, and he proposed a highly innovative theory of knowledge as the point of departure in this epistemological reform.

But how did Polanyi in fact understand philosophy as distinct from other forms of inquiry? He offers no explicit answer to this question, but we may find evidence in his theories of tacit knowing and personal knowledge. In every act of personal judgment, there is an unaccountable element which eludes the grasp of reason. We come to know something “by comprehending the coherence of [a set of] largely unspecifiable particulars.”<sup>15</sup> These particulars reside in our subsidiary or tacit awareness, and by means of indwelling the particulars, we come “to know more than we can tell.”

Polanyi professes that his obligation as a scientist and as a philosopher (his “personal calling” as it were) to search for and serve the truth is grounded in the unspecifiable particulars of his own subsidiary awareness.

I must admit that I can fulfil my obligation to serve the truth only to the extent of my natural abilities as developed by my education. *No one can transcend his formative milieu very far, and beyond*

this area he must rely on it uncritically. I consider that *this matrix of my thought determines my personal calling*. It both offers me my opportunity for seeking the truth, and limits my responsibility for arriving at my own conclusions<sup>16</sup> [my emphasis].

William James had a similar insight when he noted that “temperament” largely determines men in their philosophies, and that we should look in this direction for the initial evidence we seek about the nature of an individual’s philosophy.<sup>17</sup> James also said that to understand the latter we must first grasp the “centre of vision, by an act of the imagination. . . .”<sup>18</sup> Neither James nor Polanyi are engaging in psychological reductionism here, for they are not seeking to explain away philosophy but to grasp it more fully by means of these unspecifiable particulars.

What, then, is the “formative milieu” or the “matrix” of Polanyi’s thought? Paul Ignotus presents us with an account rich in insight in his essay on “The Hungary of Michael Polanyi.”<sup>19</sup> He argues that liberalism was the ruling idea in Hungary during the period 1867 to 1918. It was a liberalism born out of a defiance of Hapsburg absolutism. In the milieu of Polanyi’s youth, one could find a commitment to “parliamentarism, religious tolerance, a general contempt for prohibitions and restrictions, the will to industrialize...and to rely on education rather than authority.”<sup>20</sup>

But, on the other hand, while it appeared to cherish these radical ideals, the Hungary of the *Ausgleich* was in fact a conservative country which gave only lip service to liberalism. Despite this contradiction, Ignotus finds it to be “a country of fascinating progress,” for “it created cities and factories, model universities, leading engineers, doctors, psycho-analysts, poets and composers.”<sup>21</sup>

These antinomies appear to have left a permanent mark on Polanyi’s philosophical temperament. Throughout his life he was a radical in the search for truth, but he was the most moderate of radicals. He had the reputation of a man with the courage, as Ignotus puts it, to dissent from the dissenters. His commitment to the search for truth “led him to the re-discovery of basic tenets which no liberal movement or liberal profession can disregard without destroying its own foundations.” Ignotus concludes:

I cannot help feeling that the intellectual environment of his youth has profoundly influenced his development. From it he inherited the limitless liberality of his mind, the simultaneity of personal and technical interests, and the ability to co-ordinate them in behaviour as well as in philosophy. What made him differ most from those around him was his reverence. He thinks that the intellectual youth of Hungary and of some other countries, when ‘revising’ its dogmas of revolutionary origin, is meeting him on the grounds of re-discovered ethical traditions. Whether or not this applies in every respect to the young men of our time, it does apply to Michael Polanyi himself. The inherent radicalism and the scientific sensibility of his intellect have made him up to date, and the grain of conservatism in it, his attachment to the perennial, enables him to be ahead of his time.<sup>22</sup>

Polanyi published his first philosophical treatise, *Science, Faith and Society*, in 1946. In it, he sketched out the general themes and ideas which he subsequently developed in other works. The qualities of his philosophical temperament, as characterized by Ignotus, are evident in this seminal work. His examination of the question of the nature of science led him to the conclusion that

to accord validity to science--or to any other of the great domains of the mind--is to express a faith

which can be upheld within a community. We realize here the connexion between Science, Faith and Society adumbrated in these essays.<sup>23</sup>

There exists what Polanyi called the republic of science made up of a community of inquirers who share a common belief in the existence of a reality whose hidden truths are capable of being discovered. Intrinsic to this belief is a love of the truth. But more than this, it is through professing an obligation to a particular set of scientific principles and ideals which reside in a particular tradition of science that an individual becomes a member of this republic and possesses the freedom to conduct experimental investigations. And so it is with all other modes of inquiry beyond the scientific: freedom is acquired through membership in a community, a membership which entails an obligation to a particular set of values and traditions. "Just as an individual cannot be obliged in general, so also he cannot be free in general."<sup>24</sup>

It is in the context of this argument that we find not only his concept of freedom in its inchoate form, but we also find a compelling account of the intrinsic connection between freedom and tradition in a free society. This account is significant in the way in which it reveals something fundamental to Polanyi's philosophical temperament as it was shaped by the milieu which Ignotus describes. Polanyi tells us that the premises which must guide individual conscience in a free society are to be found in the art of free discourse. Free discourse is possible only when it exists within a tradition of civic liberties. This art and this tradition are nourished and protected by the institutions of democracy.

He identifies two fundamental principles underlying free, open discourse in a democratic society: fairness and tolerance. The former is defined as objectivity, by which he means the separation of facts from opinions and opinions from emotions in our arguments, and the presentation of all three in this descending order. Fairness reduces our position to a minimum and leaves us vulnerable to our adversary, but this is what it necessarily requires of us. The other principle, tolerance, is "the capacity to listen to an unfair and hostile statement by an opponent in order to discover his sound points as well as the reason for his errors."<sup>25</sup>

The principles of fairness and tolerance stand on a metaphysical principle which is the cornerstone of a free, democratic society: a belief in the existence of truth, a love of truth, an obligation to seek it, and a belief in the possibility of actually achieving it. These beliefs and this obligation are not bloodless abstractions; they are principles embodied in the concrete practice of the art of free public discourse. This art "is a communal art, practised according to a tradition which passes from generation to generation."<sup>26</sup>

Belief in the existence of truth is fundamental not only to Polanyi's understanding of a free society, but to his understanding of philosophy as well. As a calling to a particular way of life, philosophy is fundamentally discursive in the Socratic sense because of the discursive nature of human knowing itself.

## II

Polanyi had no interest in ethical theory and never wrote a formal treatise on ethics. He came to the conclusion that the ethical theories developed in modern critical philosophy were responsible for the moral perfectionism which was one of the causes<sup>27</sup> of the excessive moral fanaticisms and moral inversions<sup>28</sup> of our time. Whether it be Hobbes's principle of self-preservation, Locke's social contract, Kant's categorical imperative, or Mill's greatest happiness principle, the modern quest for moral perfection which is to be achieved through a supreme and universally applicable

moral principle, has proved futile. We see the results in the nihilism to which fascism and communism responded with a devastatingly violent moral passion.

Yet while he dismissed this futile quest for moral perfection, Polanyi was pre-eminently a moral philosopher. As a scientist, philosopher, and public intellectual, he realized that the moral dimension is a pervasive and inescapable fact of our human experience. In this regard, he anticipated the recent revolution in moral philosophy<sup>29</sup> which abandons the pursuit of an abstract ideal of moral perfection in an ethics of principle in favor of a concrete ethics of virtue and its implications for the development of moral character. The major difference between the two is that the latter demands of us a continuous moral growth without the expectation of reaching moral perfection, while the former requires only a minimal adherence to a supreme and universally applicable principle in order to achieve perfection.<sup>30</sup>

The ethics of virtue has its historical roots in Aristotle, in his idea that as moral agents we are obliged to pursue excellence by developing the qualities of our moral character. In doing this, we are more likely to acquire happiness, or what he calls *eudaimonia*, as a by-product. *Eudaimonia* is not the happiness which we normally associate with the gratification of desire. Rather, it is the condition of living in harmony with oneself, with one's *daimon* or ideal personhood.<sup>31</sup>

Polanyi's moral philosophy stands within this Aristotelian tradition of eudaimonistic ethics. In rejecting the perfectionism of modern critical theory, he reminds us that *moral excellence* in the Aristotelian sense and *moral perfection* in the modern sense are not at all the same thing. Moral perfection is a commitment to reaching an ideal specifically expressed in a particular principle such as the greatest happiness principle or the categorical imperative.

Moral excellence, on the other hand, involves a commitment to a developmental way of life which embraces several dimensions of growth, not only the ethical. In the eudaimonism of Aristotle, one's ideal self (one's moral character) is a complex and richly woven tapestry. It entails pursuits found in several facets of life, in the arts and in science, in religion, philosophy, politics, etc. A commitment to moral perfection is a commitment to a chimera, but a commitment to moral excellence is a commitment to a concrete goal or set of goals made possible by our empathy or dwelling in the unspecifiable particulars of our subsidiary awareness (i.e., our *daimon*, the sum of our better potentialities) for the purpose of focusing on a specifiably reachable goal.

This implicit eudaimonism in Polanyi's moral philosophy helps us better to understand the central importance of liberty and its primacy in human life. Polanyi shared with Aristotle the belief that ethics and politics are inseparable, that the former is a branch of the latter, and that both are involved in the promotion of *eudaimonia*. The purpose of ethics is to guide the individual in the direction of the good life while the purpose of politics is to move the *polis* toward the good society. In other words, ethics is the study of how to live well as an individual, and politics is the study of how to live well as a *polis* or, as John Dewey would put it, how to create the great community. Just as Aristotle's ethics are social and his politics ethical, so it is for Polanyi. But unlike Aristotle, Polanyi sees quite clearly that the linchpin between the two is liberty. The good life is within the reach of the individual only if he or she is free to aspire to it, and this aspiration is possible only within a society which has a tradition of civic liberty.

There are two mistaken ways of understanding freedom, and both are distractions from its true meaning. One is an understanding of freedom as the absence of external restraint; Polanyi calls this an "individualistic, self-assertive conception." The other, its opposite, is a conception of freedom as the "liberation from personal ends by submission

to impersonal obligations.”<sup>32</sup> Both conceptions lack a moral content. Freedom does not reside in the atomic individual who has a license to do as he pleases with an indifference to any standard which would impose boundaries on his behavior. One can be free only if one is faithful to the moral truths inscribed in one’s heart. And these truths are inscribed by the traditional commitments of a free society to such spiritual ideals as truth, justice and beauty.

The essence of liberty does not lie in a discrete, unencumbered individual who is free to do as he pleases so long as he refrains from limiting or encroaching on the freedom of others. This would result in a moral minimalism which would bring us to the brink of moral anarchy, chaos, and eventually to nihilism. Such an understanding of freedom rests upon a sharp distinction between private and public morality, and it diminishes the prospect of a genuine human community. “Private individualism,” Polanyi writes, “is no important pillar of public liberty. A free society is not an Open Society, but one fully dedicated to a distinctive set of beliefs.”<sup>33</sup> A genuinely free society cannot be “open” on matters of truth and falsehood. It cannot be neutral with respect to justice and injustice, to honesty and fraud, to compassion and cruelty, to knowledge and ignorance, or to self-discipline and slovenliness. These are not matters for the private individual to decide in the solitude of his own heart, independently of the commonly held beliefs of society.

There must be boundaries for freedom to exist, and these boundaries must be defined by political authority and moral consensus. But just as political authority cannot be equated with a formal set of laws or a legal system, so also the essential meaning of freedom cannot be confined to a formal definition. “Only within a free society can free institutions preserve freedom.” A tradition of freedom is the *sine qua non* of actual freedom.

When this tradition is assimilated into the interior landscape of individual citizens, it renders them free. It “dwells within the peoples of free countries.” It doesn’t exist

in the explicit content of...constitutional rules, but in the *tacit practice* of interpreting these rules. It is on the *unspecifiable art* of conducting free activities that the preservation of freedom must rely....All formulations of liberal principles must derive their meaning from a prior knowledge, *diffused inarticulately* among the citizens of free countries.<sup>34</sup> [my emphasis]

The survival of free institutions cannot be guaranteed by the existence of a code of law alone. It can only be assured by the continuous practice of interpreting this code and by the art of living a free life in light of this interpretation. And much of this lies within the tacit dimension of our lives.

Traditional practices<sup>33</sup> by which freedom is defined and limited, far from being an adversary and a threat to liberty, are a vital source of its renewal and growth. They make possible the process of continuous social and moral improvement in a free society. These practices stand in opposition to the idea that we are capable of reaching moral perfection. There is an “ever-not-quite,” as William James would have said, to all our moral struggles, and this allows us to abandon such an absurd quest.<sup>35</sup> Our moral allegiance must be to what Polanyi calls “a manifestly imperfect, if not *immoral* society; and we...find, paradoxically, that our duty lies in the service of ideals which we nevertheless know we cannot possibly achieve.”<sup>36</sup>

So we have an obligation, in a free society, to learn what the limits of our freedom are. For in learning these

limits, we become capable of transcending them and of moving “in the direction of continually richer and fuller meanings” and thus expanding “limitlessly the firmament of values under which we dwell.”<sup>37</sup>

In the final analysis, it was one of Polanyi’s rich insights that the limitations of an imperfect world make possible the limitless expansion of the horizons of human life. We find the genius of his philosophy not only in his reformulation of the problems of modern epistemology by reinstating the fiduciary character in human knowledge to its rightful place. His genius and originality as a thinker reveals itself in the way in which he connected the complexities and subtleties of personal knowledge with a wide range of the moral, social and political problems which we in the twentieth century have faced.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>This essay was originally prepared as part of a project supported by the Central European University and directed by the Michael Polanyi Liberal Philosophical Association in Budapest; it will also appear in *Polanyiana*. TAD appreciates the cooperation of MPLA and *Polanyiana*.

<sup>1</sup>*Intellect and Hope: Essays in the Thought of Michael Polanyi*, eds. Thomas A. Langford and William H. Poteat [Durham: Duke University Press, 1968]

<sup>2</sup>Langford and Poteat, p. 4-5.

<sup>3</sup>Langford and Poteat, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup>Langford and Poteat, p. 14. In support of this claim, Langford and Poteat cite a text from *Personal Knowledge*: “The principal purpose of this book is to achieve a frame of mind in which I may hold firmly to what I believe to be true, even though I know that it might conceivably be false.”

<sup>5</sup>*The Highroad Around Modernism* [Albany: SUNY Press, 1992], p. 17.

<sup>6</sup>See for example John Rothfork, “Postmodern Ethics: Richard Rorty and Michael Polanyi,” *Southern Humanities Review*, Vol. 29 [1995], pp. 15-48.

<sup>7</sup>To explore Polanyi’s affinities with pragmatism in “Some Traces of Pragmatism and Humanism in Michael Polanyi’s *Personal Knowledge*,” *Hungarian Studies*, Vol. 9. No. 1-2 (Budapest 1993), 139-150.

<sup>8</sup>Harry Prosch, *Michael Polanyi: A Critical Exposition* [Albany: SUNY Press, 1986], p. 274.

<sup>9</sup>Prosch, p. 272.

<sup>10</sup>*John Dewey on Experience, Nature, and Freedom*, ed. Richard Berstein [New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1960], pp. 66-67.

<sup>11</sup>Barry Smith ed., *Philosophy and Political Change in Eastern Europe* [LaSalle, Ill.: The Hegeler Institute & Monist

Library of Philosophy, 1993].

<sup>12</sup>Smith, p. 167.

<sup>13</sup>Smith, p. 168.

<sup>14</sup>Smith, p. 169.

<sup>15</sup>Michael Polanyi, “Knowing and Being,” *Knowing and Being: Essays by Michael Polanyi*, ed. Marjorie Grene [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969], p. 135.

<sup>16</sup>“Knowing and Being,” p. 133.

<sup>17</sup>William James, *Pragmatism* (New York: Meridan Books, 1955), p. 35.

<sup>18</sup>*The Letters of William James*, ed. Henry James, 2 vols. (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1920) Vol. 2, p355.

<sup>19</sup>Paul Ignotus, “The Hungary of Michael Polanyi,” *The Logic of Personal Knowledge* [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961].

<sup>20</sup>Ignotus, p. 4.

<sup>21</sup>Ignotus, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup>Ignotus, p. 12.

<sup>23</sup>*Science, Faith and Society* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964], p. 73.

<sup>24</sup>*SFS*, p. 65.

<sup>25</sup>*SFS*, p. 68.

<sup>26</sup>*SFS*, p. 71.

<sup>27</sup>*Meaning* [Chicago, 1975], p. 213.

<sup>28</sup>Polanyi defines moral inversion as the channeling of moral passions into acts of violence, brutality, and cruelty in the name of sublime moral ideals.

<sup>29</sup>I am referring to such watershed works as Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices* [1978] and Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* [1984].

<sup>30</sup>David Norton gives us a clear explanation of this distinction in *Democracy and Moral Development* [Berkeley:

University of California Press, 1991]. Rules ethics is minimalist in that it regards “many of the choice-making situations of ordinary life as nonmoral.” It is also minimalist “by virtue of its understanding of rules as applicable uniformly to everyone under the requirements of ‘universalizability’ and ‘impartiality.’ If what is right for anyone must be right for everyone in relevantly similar circumstances, then what is right must be such as can be recognized and acted upon by persons who possess very little in the way of developed moral character” [p. xi].

<sup>31</sup>Norton, p. 3.

<sup>32</sup>*Meaning*, p. 201.

<sup>33</sup>*The Logic of Liberty* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951], p. vi. The reference here is to Karl Popper’s “Open Society.” It is commonly assumed that in a free society there can be no attempt to control thought, but that all ideas must compete in the open marketplace. “The free society was therefore sometimes described as the ‘open’ society--notably by Sir Karl Popper--as against the ‘closed’ one. . . . However . . . our free societies were by no means so open . . . . Many traditions put severe restrictions upon men’s freedoms (*Meaning*, p. 183). Polanyi summarizes his view thus: “. . . a free society rests upon a traditional framework of a certain sort” (*Meaning*, p. 184). It would therefore be a serious mistake to equate a Popperian “open society” an Polanyi’s notion of a “free society”: “A wholly open society would be a wholly vacuous one--one which could never actually exist, since it could never have any reason for existing” (*Meaning*, p. 184).

<sup>34</sup>“On Liberalism and Liberty,” *Encounter*, 4 [March 1955], p. 31.

<sup>35</sup>Polanyi anticipates Alasdair MacIntyre in his understanding of practice. MacIntyre describes three stages in the development of virtue: a practice, the narrative order of a single human life, and a moral tradition. He defines a practice as “any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to...that form of activity.” *After Virtue* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984], p. 187.

<sup>36</sup>*The Thought and Character of William James*. ed. Ralph Barton Perry (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1936) Vol. 2, p. 700.

<sup>34</sup>*Meaning*, p. 214.

<sup>35</sup>*Meaning*, p. 216.

# Ron Hall's Polanyian Kierkegaardian Critique of the Modern Age

Walter Gulick

Ronald L. Hall, *Word and Spirit: A Kierkegaardian Critique of the Modern Age*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993. Pp. xiii + 218. ISBN0-253-32752-0.

Suppose Michael Polanyi were an existentialist—specifically, a Christian existentialist. What form might his thought have taken in this case? On one interpretation, Ronald Hall's provocative *Word and Spirit* can be read as providing an answer to this question.

To be sure, the subtitle of Hall's work accurately portrays its content: the book delivers a Kierkegaardian critique of the modern age. The thought of Kierkegaard is in the forefront of Hall's discussion, although the final product is much more than simply an exegesis of Kierkegaard. This is because a Polanyian perspective—or more accurately, a Polanyian/Potatian perspective—informs the view Hall argues for. While, as I shall indicate, I do not think Hall's fusion of Kierkegaard and Polanyi/Potat is seamless, his achievement in the book is considerable. His thought is challenging and stimulating. For those interested in extending the existential and Christian dimensions of Polanyi's thought, Hall raises some intriguing possibilities.

One basic Kierkegaardian claim Hall sets forth is that the modern age (including post-modernism as the final demonic stage of the modern age—see pp. 168 and 173) is thoroughly infused with aesthetic notions which celebrate human freedom at the cost of responsibility to others and to the world. Hall spends several key chapters describing Don Giovanni and Faust as prototypes of modern aestheticism. In each case, misuse of language is what creates an aesthetic refuge from the world and provides an ersatz satisfaction. The aesthete transfigures life into art in order to avoid boring repetition, confining commitment, or narrowing of possibility. As the pseudonymous and aesthetically inclined author A of *Either/Or* states, "Pleasure disappoints, possibility never" (vol. I, Swenson trans., p. 40).

By immersing himself in sensual satisfactions, Don Giovanni creates a world where moral and other cultural constraints can be ignored, where words are at most a means to a new sensuous satisfaction. Mozart's opera captures perfectly his lightness of being, a lightness mirrored in the play of Mozart's notes. Don Giovanni's way of living is an example of an at times charming faithlessness, of lack of integrity in speech. His use of language can be seen as an aesthetic precursor of the advertiser, public relations hack, or unscrupulous politician.

Faust's aim is to engage the world, yet not in such a way as to trap him in a banal or confining existence. In order to escape the intellectual isolation of his study, he sought a life of activity, claiming that truly in the beginning was the deed, not the word (p. 134). In ironical contrast to the faithful God of Genesis or John, through whose words creation unfolds, Faust's deeds lead to continual destruction. "Faust's energizing motif is *development*; its guiding principle simply this: the given actuality must be perpetually destroyed, otherwise it will confine the human spirit.

Modernity has come to call this process of perpetual destruction *progress!*" (p. 141). The voices, the words, of *subjects* are lost in a world where progress is king.

In *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard holds Don Giovanni and Faust up as examples of vacuous and demonic ways of living respectively. Wherever life's meaning is spelled out in terms of a single plane of existence, be it the intellectual system of Hegel, the sensuous immediacy of Don Giovanni, or the unprincipled activism of Faust, its richness is attenuated and responsible living is undermined. Authentic living requires responsible choice that takes into account multiple levels of being. Hall is not interested in tracking Kierkegaard's writings in pursuit of the various ethical and religious ways Kierkegaard shows such choices may take. The primary text he interprets is *Either/Or*; he does not even mention such texts as *Concluding Unscientific Discourse*, *Fear and Trembling*, *The Present Age*, *Repetition*, *Stages on Life's Way*, *Purity of Heart*, or the various tracts on Christianity written in an edifying mode. Hall focuses on contrasting the inadequacy of several forms of aestheticism with one master mode of authenticity centered in faithful speech, speech with an integrity first made possible in the Christian notion of spirit. (Hall correlates spirit with selfhood, but unfortunately this key term is used in a variety of senses.)

Hall acknowledges that the claim made in *Either/Or* that Christianity ushered spirit into the world sounds pretentious and exaggerated. He makes what I think is a less than convincing analysis in defense of the claim. Following Poteat (who followed Thorlief Boman's *Hebrew Thought Compared to Greek*), Hall contrasts the dynamic Hebrew notion of *dabhar*, the creative work, with the static Greek notion of *logos*, the principle of insight and order. *Dabhar* is both word and deed; the term encapsulates the intertwining of thought and action in Hebrew existence. Christianity appropriated *dabhar* as expressive of spirit and linked it to speech-acts, thus fully fleshing out a spiritual mode of engaging the world (p. 59). In contrast to *dabhar* as an auditory (processive) phenomenon, *logos* is primarily a visual (momentary) phenomenon. *Logos* is a gathering of things that can be seen at a glance, and the static implications of the visual are said to infect all Greek thought. Thus Hall interprets Platonic reality as the eternal, immutable and objective arrangement and order of the cosmos" (p. 22).

I find Hall's (and perhaps Kierkegaard's) analysis of Socrates and Plato problematic. Hall portrays Socrates as critiquing the static *logos*-centered world-picture of Greek thought but as unable to formulate any positive principles. Why? "The reason is that Socrates was truly ignorant" (p. 125). How then does one account for the principles Socrates adduces in the *Apology* to explain his actions? What is one to make of the principled way Socrates convinces Crito that he ought not escape prison? Hall's understanding of Socratic irony seems too limited. Similarly, the Plato who recognizes the eros-driven unfolding of insight in experience and reflection (see the *Symposium* and Plato's *Seventh Letter*) and who calls reality ("the sum of things") "all that is unchangeable and all that is in change" (*Sophist* 249D) is not some static thinker trapped in contemplation of the eternal as the only reality.

Although I would argue against the adequacy of Hall's interpretation of Hebrew and Greek thought, and I think Kierkegaard's analysis (or better, the analysis of author A of *Either/Or*) of Christianity as introducing dynamic spirit into the world is highly problematic (after all, early Christian theology rebelled against the spiritualism of Montanism and gnosticism and drew upon the static world view of Platonism rather than the dynamic thought of Plato), nevertheless these problems of historical analysis do not themselves undermine the cogency of Hall's positive theoretical claims. *Word and Spirit* not only indicts the aestheticism of the modern world but pleads for a superior alternative to this aestheticism. Hall works out this positive alternative in terms of speech-act theory indebted to Arendt, Wittgenstein and Austin. Speech is the only medium in which self awareness, the sensuous world, and historical

continuity can all be gathered into fruitful interaction. It has the capacity to encompass past actualities, present alternatives, and future possibilities in a way which makes possible authentic choice. Through a speech-act a subject involved in historical currents can apply principles to situations so as to act responsibly.

Hall puts his positive claim in these terms: “Christianity broke the pagan static synthesis of spirit and the sensuous completely apart by introducing a picture of that relation in which the spirit and the sensuous were at once radically sundered and radically bonded in a dynamic synthesis” (p. 17). In reflecting upon alternatives, a subject transcends (is sundered from) this world; in faithful allegiance to God via imitation of Christ (a bond), a subject is plunged immanently into action in this world, the center of which is one’s neighbor. “The perfect medium for the expression of the sundered/bonded self/world relation is found in the reflexively integral speech-acts” (p. 201).

Hall turns to Michael Polanyi’s epistemology to provide a model of the sundered/bonded relation of spirit to the sensuous. Polanyi’s distinction between subsidiary and focal awareness, grounded in the from/to structure of consciousness, is said to be analogous to the sundered/bonded relation. The from/to dialectic guides Hall’s “attempt to make sense of the Christian conception of spirit as sundered *from* and bonded *to* the sensuous world” (p. 94).

I have trouble following Hall’s argument at this point. Surely the from/to structure can illuminate the sundered/bonded relationship, but that is because all human consciousness is organized according to subsidiary/focal or from/to structures. Pagan consciousness, the various forms of aestheticism—all can be so interpreted. So Polanyi’s thought does little to illuminate what is distinctive about the Christian notion of spirit. Indeed, just as from/to structures seem characteristic of all consciousness, so too does a sundered/bonded relationship. For instance, in his planning to reclaim land from the sea, Faust’s thought would be sundered from the details of a dredging operation--the sand, the sea, dikes--and bonded to a vision of the newly created land.

Kierkegaard is clearer than Hall in articulating what is distinctive about Christian spirituality. For Kierkegaard the key Christian category is faith. Hall tends to equate faith with the act of bonding, but that would not illuminate what is distinctive about Christian faith. For Kierkegaard faith is not just being bonded to something or accepting some idea, for then the pagan, Don Giovanni, and Faust would all have faith. No, faith is a state of consciousness that emerges only through great personal struggle. Johannes de Silentio in *Fear and Trembling* (Lorrie trans., p. 57) speaks about faith as follows: “Infinite resignation is the last stage prior to faith, so that one who has not made this movement has not faith; for only in the infinite resignation do I become clear to myself with respect to my eternal validity, and only then can there be any question of grasping existence by virtue of faith.” In resignation one gives up the temporal world, but then in faith, one gains it back. In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* faith is presented not as something supportive of reason, but as something paradoxical, that is, counter to reason, something grasped with passion (in *Philosophical Fragments*, the paradox of the Eternal entering history). Elsewhere Kierkegaard claims that true faith must be preceded by a conviction of sinfulness that forces one to turn away from self reliance to reliance on God. Faith may be a form of covenantal bonding, as Hall interprets it, but in Kierkegaard it is arrived at only after some form of emotional shipwreck. When these necessary existential movements are added to Hall’s account, then some significance can be seen in the sundered/bonded formula: in agony one is sundered from this world but through faith in the faithful God one is again bonded to it.

I do not mean to imply that Polanyi’s thought is irrelevant to Kierkegaard’s world. Hall helpfully points out that Polanyi’s notion of science as a form of personal knowledge--in contrast to positivism, historicism, or instrumen-

talism--would be consistent with Kierkegaard's emphasis on the passionate individual seeking the truth (see *Word and Spirit*, pp. 166-167 and 193-194, and *PK*, pp. 343-346). The scientist, of course, is a member of a community of investigators who check each other's results; the Kierkegaardian man of faith is preeminently an individual, and what others believe is of no relevance to one's passionate act of faith. But Polanyi describes the act of relying on another's superior knowledge in terms which illuminate the Christian's faith-act of imitating Christ. "By applying his thoughts or deeds as our standards for judging the rightness of our own thoughts and deeds, we surrender our person for the sake of becoming more satisfying to ourselves in the light of these standards. This act is irreversible and also a-critical..." (*PK*, p. 378), a good description of the faith-act (although ignoring its passionate genealogy).

Wouldn't it be more accurate to describe what is distinctive about Christianity in terms of a faith-act rather than in terms of a speech-act? Here is Hall's claim: "For Kierkegaard, spirit is realized concretely and existentially when someone takes up a religious modality of existence (religiousness B). For a person to take up this modality of existence is just for him to take up a reflexively integral relation to his words, which is the same as *speaking faithfully*. That is, the mark and test of the realization of a self is the extent to which a speaker *owns his words, owns up to them, is present in them, and present in them before some other*" (p. 74). To interpret Christian spirituality as a unique form of faithful speech before others (as Hall states on p. 75) is problematic both as an interpretation of Kierkegaard and of Christianity's uniqueness. Religiousness B sounds in Hall's terms more like a Buberian I-Thou relation than a Kierkegaardian passionate embrace of the paradoxical by a suffering individual. Moreover, while there is every reason to praise faithful speech-acts revelatory of a speaker's feelings, it is certainly presumptuous to think that such self disclosure is uniquely Christian.

About the nature of his own spirituality Kierkegaard states that "I can lay no claim to an immediate relationship with God, that I cannot and dare not say that it is He who immediately inserts his thoughts in me, but that my relationship to God is a reflection-relationship, in inwardness in reflection, as in general the distinguishing trait of my individuality is reflection, so that even in prayer my *forte* is thanksgiving" (*The Point of View for My Work as an Author*, Harper TB, pp. 68-69). Kierkegaard's spirituality rests on the reflective interpretation of an individual, not on a speech-act before others. Better put, the only other to whom Kierkegaard discloses himself is God, and through God the whole enigmatic world. The victory of faith is to believe, often against immediate evidence, that ultimately through God all things work for the good.

The grounds upon which one might take the leap of faith to God are not rational grounds. Just before his death Kierkegaard wrote, "A man of understanding can never become a Christian; the most he can achieve, through the power of imagination, is to play with the Christian problems" (*Papirer*, XI, entry of September 23, 1855). In general agreement, Polanyi states that God is "not a being whose existence can be established in some logical, scientific, or rational way before we engage in our worship of him. God is a commitment involved in our rites and myths" (*Meaning*, p. 156). Polanyi's analysis also supports Kierkegaard's view that Christian spirituality reflectively uses the notion of God to bring the ambiguous complexity of the world into focus. "Through our integrative, imaginative efforts we see [God] as the focal point that fuses into meaning all the incompatibles involved in the practice of religion" (*Ibid.*).

Next, however, Polanyi seems to challenge Kierkegaard's (and Hall's) postulation of a great gap between the aesthetic and the religious modes of being. He states that "as in art—only in a more whole and complete way—God also becomes the integration of all the incompatibles in our lives" (*Ibid.*). Is belief in God for Polanyi merely a poetic creation of the imagination, a way to harmonize the challenges of daily life in a soothing (escapist) vision of the whole?

This is what Hall charges Polanyi with in Hall's review of *Meaning* (see *Zygon* 17:1 [March, 1982], 16-18). In contrast, Hall sides with Kierkegaard by understanding Christianity as primarily an existential affair involving the whole self in daily actions.

In defense of Polanyi, I would first point out that Polanyi differs from Kierkegaard in his assessment of aesthetic experience. For Kierkegaard to live aesthetically is to avoid commitment and retain possibility. One thus hides as a person. But for Polanyi the visionary art of the late 19th and 20th centuries has created new worlds in the imagination which both undermine old worlds and yet allow individuals to enrich their lives with new insights. "It is only the artist who detaches himself as an artist from himself as a private individual and embodies this artistic person in his work. Scientists cannot do this. But therefore all art is intensely personal *and* strictly detached; and it must, as we said, claim universal validity for the personal self-set standards which it obeys" (*Meaning*, p. 102). Because art involves a personal dimension of experience transfigured into a form that claims universal validity, Polanyi does not see the artistic creator or the admiring public as escaping from this world. Through acknowledgment of standards in art possibility is narrowed and commitment enjoined—just the opposite of what Kierkegaard's aesthete aims for.

Second, I would refer again to the way Polanyi's remarks about God and religion are generally consistent with what Kierkegaard states. A close reading of Polanyi indicates that he believes religious meaning enables a person to cope with all the conflicting demands of everyday life; the religious believer need not give way to some partial (idolatrous) solution to life's dilemmas such as Marxism, building self esteem, giving way to materialistic impulses—or hiding in aestheticism. "In Pauline Christianity. . . faith and hope have an object. We dwell in the hope that we may, by the grace of God, be able somewhere, somehow, to do that which we must, but which we can at this moment see no way to do—or else trust, if we should never receive that grace, that it is best that we do not do it. Dwelling in this religious frame of mind, we have not lost the tension, but it neither worries us nor do we become complacent. . . . Rather, we are humbled before God in the recognition of our utter dependence upon him for the ultimate victory through Christ" (*Meaning*, p. 157). Hall might correctly note that a dominant theme in this passage is hope, not present existential engagement, but surely there are also resources for responsible action here and now in Polanyi's view. It is too extreme to label Polanyi's notion of religious meaning as simply a form of aestheticism in Kierkegaard's sense.

In *Word and Spirit*, Ronald Hall develops a notion of Christian spirituality which utilizes Kierkegaardian formulation, is centered in speech-acts, and engages current issues thoughtfully. The book illuminates the existential dimension of living in a manner which can usefully extend the conceptions of a variety of thinkers, including those working in Polyanian terms.

# An Apology for the "Second Edition": A Reply to Gulick's Review Essay

Ronald L. Hall

I certainly owe Walter Gulick an apology. Those darn publishers! How dare they issue a second edition of my book, making substantial changes in it, and without even telling me! I only wish that Gulick had seen the first edition. I think many of the criticisms that he makes would disappear. I will restrict myself to just a few examples of what I am talking about.

Gulick says that I tend to equate faith with the act of bonding. He then goes on to correct this reading of faith saying that it needs to be dialectically supplemented with the idea that such a bonding can occur “only after some form of emotional shipwreck.” If I were true to Kierkegaard, he implies, I would have said something like this: “in agony one is *sundered* from this world but through faith in the faithful God one is again *bonded* to it” In the first edition of my book, this is exactly what I did say, over and over, from beginning to end. In the first edition I consistently said that faith was a double movement, not simply a matter of bonding. As I put it, faith is a *sundered/bonded* relation--in fact this was my point! Note on page 3 of *Word and Spirit* (Vol. I): “Because faith establishes simultaneously two relations...it requires a *double movement*...to exist in faith is to exist within a radical covenantal bonding to God *and* to exist within a dialectical *sundered/bonded* relation to the world.”

The publishers also radically changed a major point of my first edition. I originally went to great lengths to say that both Don Giovanni and Faust were defined by the fact that their existence was exclusively defined in terms of their being musically *sundered* from the world, and that the pagan was defined as existing in a pre-*sundered* relation to the cosmos that could not be thought of as a bonded relation, since the bonded relation is dialectically connected to *sundering*. According to the edition that Gulick read, the pagan, DG and Faust all exist in a bonded relation to something.

I will just mention in summary fashion several other similar changes in the second edition of my book. (1) In the edition that Gulick read, it seems that I represent the aesthete as celebrating human freedom. In fact, in my earlier rendering, it is just human freedom that the aesthete dreads, just that condition he flees. (2) In the first edition, I stressed the idea that Kierkegaardian faith has been misread as being a condition of the isolated individual. As I argue, seeing that faithful speech-act is the primary mode of faithful existence for SK, is just to see that faith is, as Kierkegaard himself defines it, a relation--and not simply a private relation with God. Gulick didn't get this, since he continues to (mis)read Kierkegaard as advocating a strictly private notion of faith. (3) Similar to this last point, Gulick continues to read Kierkegaard as advocating the notion that faith is found only in worldless individualism. In the first edition, I try to show that there are grounds for thinking that for SK faith is essentially a worldly matter, a condition found only in the presence of others. (4) And Gulick continues to play the old saw according to which Kierkegaardian faith is essentially an irrational leap. And again, in the first edition, I went to great lengths to counter this reading of SK. (5) Finally, just a point in passing: Gulick argues that Socrates stood for positive principles--as much as Plato-- and was not simply, as SK reads him, one who hovered in “The Clouds” of infinite ironic ignorance. The evidence he gives is from the

*Apology.* In this apology I simply remind Gulick that it was Plato who wrote that dialogue. Like Jesus, Socrates never wrote anything. What either actually stood for is, I suspect, up for discussion.

Let me turn from these issues to what may be of more interest to the readers of this journal: Michael Polanyi. Gulick makes two points.

First, Gulick claims that if the sundered/bonded relation of spirit is, as I suggest, formally analogous to the Polanyian from-to relation, then Christianity cannot be thought to be innovative, as being the first to bring spirit into the world. This is so, Gulick argues, since all consciousness, pre-Christian included, is from-to in its structure, and therefore sundered/bonded in structure. I can only speculate that Gulick thinks this because the second edition of my book must have left out a main theme of the first, namely, the importance of world-pictures, a concept that Gulick does not mention. My claim in the first edition is that it was a new world-picture that Christianity introduced that allowed the from-to/sundered/bonded self-world relation to be vested with its rights, and hence for spirit to come forth in all of its existential reality and power. The self has always been a from-to relation, but not always a relation that was able to relate itself to itself. Spirit has always existed in the world but not always actualized as spirit. Christianity provided for the first time a world-picture that would allow the sundered/bonded self-world relation its full existential ratification.

But even on Polanyi's own terms, need consciousness (meaning?) always be of the sundered/bonded sort, even if always from-to? In *PK*, p. 58, Polanyi distinguished two kinds of meaning. He even goes so far as to say that the more clear cut notion of meaning of the two is the sort of meaning involved when a word means something. Here we must look from the word to its meaning, look through it as it were, negative the sensuous, to put it in SK's terminology. This meaning he calls denotive, or representational; it is what I call semantic meaning proper. This is the sort of meaning that most formally parallels the sundered/bonded relation established in reflexively integral speech. The other kind of meaning, what Polanyi says is the more problematic of the two, is what he calls existential. In this kind of meaning, what is meant is not what is pointed to, but is intrinsic to the pattern that embodies it. It still, however, has a from-to structure. This second kind of meaning (syntax?) is what I call aesthetic meaning. Moreover, Polanyi is correct, as I see it, to associate this kind of meaning with the abstract arts and mathematics. He says, "Instead of denoting something [paintings, music, mathematics, the abstract arts in general]...emphatically present their own striking sensuous presence" (*PK*, 195-196). The innovation of Christianity was to provide the world-picture necessary to vest semantic meaning and speech with its rights. This properly semantic sense of the from-to relation is a helpful model for making sense of how spirit as spirit negatives the sensuous, of how the self as spirit is both sundered from and bonded to the sensuous world in felicitous speech of how the word becomes flesh.

Secondly, there is the matter of the great gap between the aesthetic and the existential. For my position on this see my article in *Zygon* that Gulick cites. For now, let me just mention a confusion that Gulick suffers toward the end of his review. He confuses the work of the artist with an aesthetic mode of existence. An artist need not be an aesthete, and essentially could not be in her actual practice as an artist. And the same goes for the scientist. I thought this was Polanyi's point. The scientist rightly strives for theories that have intrinsic worth, theories that stand on their own, and the artist strives to create works that also have such independent value. This striving is deeply personal, but the products of this striving come to have a detached life of their own. When life is modeled on the "work" of the artist--in the sense of the finished product that is essentially detached from the particular agent of its creation--rather than on the "work" of the artist--in the sense of the deeply personal creative process--then we have reached the aesthetic modality. In the existential modality, it is action that is the aim, and action can never, without an essential distortion,

be detached from the subjectivity of some concrete particular agent who enacts it in the presence of another.

For the aesthete, the truth is either independent of the subject (the psychological aesthete), or does not exist (the pneumatic aesthete); for the existentialist, the truth is subjectivity. In this sense, Polanyi is an existentialist; but, sad to say, an existentialist who later in life absorbed more than he realized of the aestheticism of the culture he sought so valiantly to criticize.

## Notes on Contributors

**Paul Nagy** is Chair and Professor of Philosophy and Professor of American Studies at the Indianapolis Campus of Indiana University. In addition to Polanyi, his teaching and research interests focus on ethics and classical pragmatism.

**Marjorie Grene** is a philosopher whose interest in Polanyi's thought goes back almost fifty years, according to Polanyi's own testimony in the "Acknowledgments" section of *Personal Knowledge*. Polanyi recognized the importance of Grene's contribution to his magnum opus. If you read the correspondence in the Polanyi Archives at the University of Chicago, it is easy to see that Grene's influence upon Polanyi's developing philosophical ideas was very significant, perhaps more than any other living philosopher. Grene taught at more than a dozen European and American colleges and universities; she is the author of many articles and books and is especially interested in philosophy and biology. Most *TAD* readers probably know Grene as the editor of Polanyi's *Knowing and Being* and as the author of *The Knower and the Known* (1966), a book that makes good use of Polanyi's epistemology to discuss the problems and the transformation of the epoch of philosophical thought beginning in the seventeenth century.

**Walter Gulick** is concluding several semesters as interim Academic Vice Chancellor at Montana State University, Billings, where he has been a faculty member for many years. Gulick was a Fulbright Scholar at the Technical University of Budapest in the Spring term of 1993 where he helped produce an early English issue of *Polanyiana*. Several of Gulick's essays have appeared in *TAD* and he also serves as the Book Review editor.

**Ron Hall** is a philosopher who teaches at Francis Marion University in Florence, South Carolina. In addition to his recent book *Word and Spirit: A Kierkegaardian Critique of The Modern Age*, Hall has published a number of articles which make use of Polanyian ideas. Hall has frequently been a presenter or respondent (and will again this Fall) at the Polanyi Society meeting held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion/Society for Biblical Literature; he was instrumental in setting up the 1994 session honoring William Poterat.

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# Reviews

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Robert E. Innis, *Consciousness and the Play of Signs*.  
Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1994. pp.178.

On the cover of this attractively titled book is an abstract drawing of straight lines and five overlapping circles. It is, one surmises, a sort of Venn diagram referring to the half dozen closely related philosophers discussed inside. The book is fairly dense and may be slightly teutonic for Polanyian tastes. However, the author makes important connections and explores conceptual overlaps, concentrating on Peirce, Buhler, Dewey and Cassirer; with Michael Polanyi as a sort of intermittent anchor-man. They all represent various shades of what might be called “constructivism” or non-reductive realism and in all of them sensory and aesthetic experiences are accepted as being important and prior to any theorizing. Whenever Polanyi makes an entry, there is, for me at least, a sense of relief, of dawning clarity. This may be due partly to personal partisanship but there is also a deeper reason. Polanyi was not only remarkably clear in almost all his expositions but he also maintained that clarity over an extremely wide range of phenomena: from very small to very large; and he made clarity possible in many dynamic, shifting situations.

The book starts with two chapters on C.S. Peirce and on his approach to the theory of signs. His starting point is perception and how this leads on to motor skills and then to language skills.

The home from which we always set out in our reasonings is “the parish of perception” ... situated within a linguistic-predicational matrix ... [and yet] “it is we that are in it, rather than it in any of us” (pp. 14 and 17).

Which is a pleasant way of putting it: no Cartesian ego

enclosed in the skull but journeys of exploration from the parish of perception. We travel first and do the serious thinking afterwards. Or, as Kirkegaard put it, “we live forwards and understand backwards” (quoted p. 17).

Our journey would have been easier if Polanyi had been “foregrounded” (the author likes this word) at the beginning. He is not ignored; but just insufficiently used as a route-map. In Chapter 3, “The Tagit Logic of Consciousness,” most of the material is excellent. However, when Innis comes to Polanyi’s ideas on art, “indication” and metaphor, the argument becomes slightly confused. This is partly the result of his reliance on that “Perception and Metaphor” chapter in the Polanyi-Prosch book, *Meaning*: not one of Polanyi’s most exemplary expositions.

The chapter on Dewey, “Action, Meaning, Quality,” was extremely interesting; with many close links between Dewey and Polanyi being explored. There is scope for further harnessing and harmonizing of these two whose feet are so firmly planted in practical action, doing and knowing.

Chapter VI is a closely argued and difficult exposition of Ernst Cassirer’s ideas. The focus is mainly on his classic, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. It was this book which was such a crucial stimulus for Susanne Langer. I had hoped that her ideas would be more fully discussed; for she, more than almost anyone, seemed to command the conceptual range and insight which could have carried forward Polanyi’s ideas on heuristics and Cassirer’s understanding of the dynamism and ‘pregnance’ of symbolis. Inniscertainly recognizes the importance of Langer and in a laudatory note (p. 145) praises her great trilogy, *Mind an Essay in Human Feeling*.

On Susanne Langer, as on several others, Innis

is at his best when suggesting where the exciting and productive overlaps might be found. It is a fine book for starting you on a journey of discovery; not so successful at making you feel that you've got an adequate mental map with which to replace the Venn diagram you started with.

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Dale Cannon, *Six Ways of Being Religious: A Framework for Comparative Studies of Religion*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1996. Pp. xiv + 402. ISBN: 0-534-25332-6.

Cannon seeks to provide a way of fostering an inter-religious understanding that is responsive to the complexity of religious life and practice. To that end, he sets up a framework which distinguishes between six ways of being religious: sacred right, right action, devotion, shamanic mediation, mystical quest and reasoned inquiry. These six ways, he contends, can be found in all the major world religious traditions, although not necessarily in each subtradition. Part I of the book provides the more abstract, theoretical introduction to the framework. In this part of the book, Cannon also locates himself in debates over the nature of religious studies and provides his own phenomenology of religion. Parts II and III of the book represent increasingly refined applications of the framework to Buddhism and Christianity. Of special interest to members of the Polanyi Society will be his appropriation of tacit knowing as an explanation for how symbol systems work (pp. 34-35).

The book is effectively structured and clearly written, although it comes across as a mix of genres. At times, it reads like an introductory textbook in the world's religions and contains the usual and useful tools found in a textbook, such as study questions, chapter summaries, glossaries and indices. At other times, the book reads like a constructive proposal intended for one's colleagues. This mix of styles correlates with the book's strengths and

weaknesses. Its greatest strength lies in the potential Cannon's proposal has for "complexifying" the study of religious life, i.e., of providing a more finely textured account of similarities and differences both between sub-groups within a larger religious tradition and between traditions (see, for example, pp. 147 ff. and pp. 369 ff.). Parts II and III of the book able illustrate the payoff on this point. The book's greatest weakness lies in the fact that Cannon does not always satisfactorily answer all the questions critics will want to raise about his constructive proposal. For example, while Cannon clearly wants to move beyond Enlightenment philosophy, it is fair to ask if he does not find himself still bound to problematic concepts (like empathetic objectivity which he describes on pp. 17-21) or the notion that for something to be shared in common it must be neutral for all participants. One wonders if more attention to Polanyi's account of personal knowledge might be useful here.

Cannon rightly notes that this book is not intended for use in a first course in comparative religion. It should work well, however, with upper level students in a methods course. Still, even if the text itself is not suitable for introductory courses, the theoretical framework Cannon sets out provides an interesting structure around which such a course might be fruitfully constructed. In that case, the book would provide useful background information for the professor.

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### Electronic Discussion Group

The Polanyi Society supports an electronic discussion group exploring implications of the thought of Michael Polanyi. For those with access to the INTERNET, send a message to "owner-polanyi@sbu.edu" to join the list or to request further information. Communications about the electronic discussion group may also be directed to John V. Apczynski, Department of Theology, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, NY 14778-0012 PHONE: (716) 375-2298 FAX: (716) 375-2389.

## Polanyi Society Membership

*Tradition and Discovery* is distributed to members of the Polanyi Society. This periodical supercedes a newsletter and earlier mini-journal published (with some gaps) by the Polanyi Society since the mid seventies. The Polanyi Society has members in thirteen different countries though most live in North America and the United Kingdom. The Society includes those formerly affiliated with the Polanyi group centered in the United Kingdom which published *Convivium: The United Kingdom Review of Post-critical Thought*. There are normally two or three issues of *TAD* each year.

The regular annual membership rate for the Polanyi Society is \$20; the student rate is \$12. The membership cycle follows the academic year; subscriptions are due September 1 to Phil Mullins, Humanities, Missouri Western State College, St. Joseph, MO 64507,. Please make checks payable to the Polanyi Society. Dues can be paid by credit card by providing the following information: subscriber's name as it appears on the card, the card name, and the card number and expiration date. Changes of address and inquiries should be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to Mullins (e-mail: mullins@griffon.mwsc.edu ; fax: USA 816-271-5987).

New members must provide the following subscription information: complete mailing address, telephone (work and home), institutional relationship, and e-mail address and/or fax number (if available). Institutional members should identify a department to contact for billing.

The Polanyi Society attempts to maintain a data base identifying persons interested in or working with Polanyi's philosophical writing. New members can contribute to this effort by writing a short description of their particular interests in Polanyi's work and any publications and /or theses/dissertations related to Polanyi's thought. Please provide complete bibliographic information. Those renewing membership are invited to include information on recent work.

## Submissions for Publication

Articles, meeting notices and notes likely to be of interest to persons interested in the thought of Michael Polanyi are welcomed. Review suggestions and book reviews should be sent to Walter Gulick (see addresses listed below). Manuscripts, notices and notes should be sent to Phil Mullins. Manuscripts should be doublespaced type with notes at the end; writers are encouraged to employ simple citations within the text when possible. Use MLA or APA style. Abbreviate frequently cited book titles, particularly books by Polanyi (e.g., *Personal Knowledge* becomes *PK*). Shorter articles (10-15 pages) are preferred, although longer manuscripts (20-24 pages) will be considered.

Manuscripts should include the author's name on a separate page since submissions normally will be sent out for blind review. In addition to the typescript of a manuscript to be reviewed, authors are expected to provide an electronic copy (on either a 5.25" or 3.5" disk) of accepted articles; it is helpful if original submissions are accompanied by a disk. ASCII text as well as most popular IBM word processors are acceptable; MAC text can usually be translated to ASCII. Be sure that disks include all relevant information which may help converting files to Word Perfect or ASCII. Persons with questions or problems associated with producing an electronic copy of manuscripts should phone or write Phil Mullins (816-271-4386). Insofar as possible, *TAD* is willing to work with authors who have special problems producing electronic materials.

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