

Tradition & Discovery

The Polanyi Society Periodical

Volume XXVI

Number 2

1999--2000

Preface.....	2
News and Notes.....	3
Information on Electronic Discussion Group.....	3
1999 Polanyi Society Annual Meeting Report.....	4
2000 Polanyi Society Annual Meeting Call for Papers.....	5
Alasdair MacIntyre's Tradition-Constituted Enquiry in Polanyian Perspective.....	6
John Flett	
The Role Of Tacit Knowledge In Religion.....	21
Walter Van Herck	
Notes on Contributors.....	31
Submissions for Publication.....	31
Reviews.....	32
Georg Hans Neuweg, <i>Könnerschaft und implizites Wissen. Zur lehr-lerntheoretischen Bedeutung der Erkenntnis- und Wissenstheorie Michael Polanyis</i> Reviewed by Klaus R. Allerbeck	
 Jeffrey Wattles, <i>The Golden Rule</i> Reviewed by Paul Lewis	
Information on WWW Polanyi Resources.....	33
Membership Information.....	34

The Polanyi Society

Preface

General Coordinator/Board President

Walter Gulick
Montana State University--Billings
Billings, MT 5910
(406)657-2904/wgulick@msu-b.edu

General Editor-*Tradition & Discovery*

Phil Mullins
Missouri Western State College
St. Joseph, MO 64507
(816)271-4386/FAX (816)271-5987/
mullins@mWSC.edu

Book Review Editor

Walter Gulick
Montana State University--Billings
Billings, MT 5910
(406)657-2904/wgulick@msu-b.edu

Board Treasurer

Richard Gelwick
RFD #5 Box 2440/Cundyss Harbor
Brunswick, ME 04011
(207)725-7975/rprogel@juno.com

Annual Meeting Chair/Board Secretary

Martin X. Moleski, S.J.
Canisius College
Buffalo, NY 14208
(716)888-2383/FAX (716)886-6506
moleski@canisius.edu

UK Coordinator

John Puddefoot
Benson House, Willowbrook
Eton/Windsor, Berks SL4 6HL
pudepie@dircon.co.uk

Board of Directors

David Rutledge
Department of Religion
Furman University
Greenville, SC 29613
David.Rutledge@furman.edu

Board of Directors

John Apczynski
Box 12
Saint Bonaventure University
St. Bonaventure, NY 14778
apczynski@sbu.edu

This issue has a report on the November 1999 Boston meeting of the Polanyi Society (p. 4) as well as a call for papers for the meeting upcoming in the Fall of 2000 (p. 5). Please submit paper proposals by the April 15, 2000 deadline listed in the notice. Papers will be put on the Polanyi Society web site late next fall for anyone interested to download. The upcoming meeting will be in Nashville, Tennessee. As has been the case for many years, the Polanyi Society gathering is classified as an "additional meeting" of a "cooperating society" that is granted meeting space in conjunction with the large annual meeting (approximately 7000 people) of the American Academy of Religion and the Society for Biblical Literature. Polanyi Society sessions will likely be late in the evening of Friday, November 17, 2000, and on the morning of Saturday, November 18, 2000. To participate in the Polanyi Society annual meeting does not require that you register for or attend the AAR/SBL meetings. However, these days the AAR/SBL contracts with convention bureaus for housing; often it is difficult to secure a hotel reservation near the Polanyi Society meetings without preregistering for the AAR/SBL meetings. If you wait until late in the cycle to secure housing, you may find that the AAR/SBL has consumed all that is available. Some folk who wished to attend recent Polanyi Society meetings have run into problems so please make your plans early.

The major articles in this issue feature two newcomers to *TAD*, John Flett from New Zealand, and Walter Van Herck from Holland. Flett's essay offers some interesting comparisons between the ideas of Alasdair MacIntyre and Polanyi. Some material in the Polanyi archival material at the University of Chicago indicates that MacIntyre was acquainted with some of Polanyi's ideas in the sixties. Walter Van Herck's essay was originally a paper delivered at the World Congress of Philosophy in Boston in 1998. He explores the nature of practical religious knowledge linking Kant, Polanyi and Eckhart.

The Polanyi Society web site (<http://www.mWSC.edu/~polanyi/>) has been recently reorganized to make it more readable. Suggestions are invited.

Phil Mullins

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*.

NEWS AND NOTES

Appraisal: A Journal of Constructive and Post-Critical Philosophy and Interdisciplinary Studies is now available in an electronic version as a pdf file. The electronic *Appraisal* can be sent world-wide as an e-mail attachment for 3 pounds per volume (4 issues, 2 years) or 15 pounds for 5 volumes. There will also be a floppy version (also .pdf) available by post: 5 pounds for UK, 8 pounds for the rest of Europe, or 10 pounds for anywhere else in the world. If you are interested in an electronic or printed version of *Appraisal*, please contact Richard Allen, Editor/*Appraisal*, 20 Ulverscroft Rd, Loughborough/Leics. LE11 3PU, England (e-mail: appraisal@rtallen.clara.co.uk web site: <http://www.rtallen.clara.co.uk/appraisal>). The next issue of *Appraisal* (March, 2000) will feature Irving Babbitt.

The most recent English edition of *Polanyiana* (Volume 8, Number 1–2) has been posted on the *Polanyiana* web site: <http://www.kfki.hu/chemonet/polanyi/> The following address will take you directly to the Table of Contents: <http://www.kfki.hu/chemonet/polanyi/9912/contents.html> The following are major articles included in the issue: Walter B. Gulick, “The Meaningful And The Real In Polanyian Perspective”; Andy F. Sanders, “Dogmatism, Fallibilism And Truth: A

Polanyian Puzzle”; Dale Cannon, “Polanyi’s ‘Invitation To Dogmatism’? A Response To Andy Sanders’ ‘Polanyian Puzzle’” S.R. Jha, “The Tacit-Explicit Connection: Polanyian Integrative Philosophy And A Neo-Polanyian Medical Epistemology”; Norman Sheppard, “Michael Polanyi And The Philosophy Of Science – The Viewpoint Of A Practising Scientist” (earlier in *Appraisal*). In addition to these major articles, there is Eva Gábor’s short memoriam notice for William T. Scott, a note of appreciation from Ann Herbert Scott, and the “Obituary for William T. Scott” written by Phil Mullins and Marty Moleski, SJ that was originally in TAD 25:3. For those interested in the Polanyi biography that Scott worked on for many years (and Moleski is now completing), there is the “Tentative Chapter and Section Readings” outline which Scott put together in January of 1992. This issue of *Polanyiana* also launches a new comment section of the journal. Judit Szapor earlier wrote an interesting *Polanyiana* article (vol. 6. no. 2 [Winter 1997]) focusing on Michael Polanyi’s sister that was titled “Laura Polanyi (1882-1959): Narratives of a Life” (also on the web site). In the current issue of *Polanyiana*, there are letters commenting on Szapor’s historical account from two Polanyi family members, Mrs Barbara Striker and Dr Thomas Polanyi, as well as a response from Szapor.

Electronic Discussion List

The Polanyi Society supports an electronic discussion group exploring implications of the thought of Michael Polanyi. Anyone interested can subscribe; send a query to owner-polanyi@lists.sbu.edu 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 E-MAIL: apczynsk@sbu.edu PHONE: (716) 375-2298 FAX: (716) 375-2389.

Upcoming Conference: “The Nature of Nature: An Interdisciplinary Conference on the Role of Naturalism in Science.” April 12 – 15, 2000. Baylor University, Waco, TX. Conference Registration: The Michael Polanyi Center, Baylor University, P.O. Box 97130, Waco, TX 76798-7130; Attn.: Conference Registration. Tel.: 254-710-4175; Email: Bruce_Gordon@baylor.edu Website for conference: <http://www.baylor.edu/~polanyi/natconf.htm>

Annual Business Meeting of the Polanyi Society

November 20, 1999

Boston, Massachusetts

In recognition of Richard Gelwick's many years of generous and distinguished service to the Polanyi Society, Walt Gulick presented him a special plaque expressing the gratitude and affection of the Polanyi Society.

1. Richard Gelwick distributed order forms for the Mars Hill Audio on Michael Polanyi's life and work.
2. We discussed the possibility of coordinating a 2001 Polanyi Conference with the newly established Polanyi Center at Baylor University. No date or topic has been set for the conference. A.J. Conyers noted that Baylor has made a strong commitment to the new Center; the Center has organized some faculty colloquia at Baylor. Marty Moleski suggested that conference organization should remain in the hands of the Polanyi Society, although we might well want to have the conference at Baylor if the available dates and costs are satisfactory.
3. Marty Moleski gave a summary of work to date on Bill Scott's biography of Michael Polanyi. The manuscript has been reduced from 293,000 words to 168,000. The book has been substantially reorganized. When all of the footnotes have been corrected, it will be sent to publishing houses for their consideration.
4. Our discussion for next year's conference seemed to affirm the value of having two sessions (Friday night and Saturday morning). Suggested topics:
 - A. Polanyi's system of values. It might be interesting to compare his axiology with that of McIntyre, Searle, Turner or Wittgenstein.
 - B. Polanyi's political philosophy. Does he provide a rational foundation for values in contrast to Rawls? Did Polanyi integrate the traditions of a free society and provide a comprehensive political theory?
 - C. Investigate the themes that might interest the founders of the Baylor Polanyi Center: design, teleology, complexity, logic of achievement and emergence, etc.

Call for Papers: Polanyi Society Annual Meeting in Fall of 2000

The Polanyi Society will host two sessions prior to the Nov. 18-21, 2000 annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature in Nashville, Tennessee. It is likely that the first session will be from 9 to 11 p.m. on Nov. 17, 2000 and the second session will be 9-11:30 a.m. on Nov. 18, 2000. Meeting times are assigned rather than chosen by cooperating groups such as the Polanyi Society.

We are interested in nominations for a presentation by an invited speaker for either the Friday night or Saturday morning session.

Topics suggested at our 1999 meeting in Boston included the following:

- A. Polanyi's system of values. It might be interesting to compare Polanyi's axiology with that of McIntyre, Searle, Turner or Wittgenstein
- B. Polanyi's political philosophy. Does he provide a rational foundation for values in contrast to Rawls? Does Polanyi successfully integrate the traditions of a free society and provide a comprehensive political theory?
- C. Polanyi's understanding of evolution: design, teleology, complexity, the logic of achievement and emergence.

These topics are just springboards for further reflection; we would be happy to consider other topics as well. The final decision about how to organize our next meeting depends very much on your interests. Please send comments and proposals to:

Martin X. Moleski, SJ
Department of Religious Studies
Canisius College
Buffalo, New York 14208

Tel: (716) 888-2383
FAX: (716) 886-6506
moleski@canisius.edu

Deadline for proposals: April 15, 2000

Alasdair MacIntyre's Tradition-Constituted Enquiry in Polanyian Perspective

John Flett

Everywhere it is the inarticulate which has the last word, unspoken and yet decisive.

Michael Polanyi (*PK*, 71)

ABSTRACT Key Words: tradition-constituted inquiry, rationality, Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Polanyi, tacit knowing

Why should inhabitants of a postmodern world commit to a contingent tradition? This essay reviews Alasdair MacIntyre's proposals for tradition constituted-enquiry and compares his account with Polanyi's ideas focusing on tacit knowing.

Introduction

Begin by considering the paradigm shift encountered by contemporary society: from an objectivist Enlightenment rationalism to a postmodern anti-foundationalism. One apparent consequence is the erosion of society's epistemological "faith." Remove the security of objective neutrality and reason seems destined to float on the shifting currents of subjectivity and parochialism. Perspectivism and relativism prevail in modern debate. If we acknowledge the contingency implicit in every act of knowing, must we conclude knowledge is ungrounded, or alternately, grounded only in the self? Can we retain confidence and individual responsibility with respect to rationality without affirming an impersonal, universal and disinterested reason?

For Alasdair MacIntyre, society's current framing of the question constitutes a mere continuation of the Enlightenment program. Modern debate remains limited by the objective/subjective dichotomy.¹ This MacIntyre rejects, offering what he regards as a radically different alternative that acknowledges contingency while retaining the possibility of surety in knowing. As true reasoning requires both intellectual and moral virtues, the unification of moral conviction and rational justification is at the center of MacIntyre's scheme.

Yet this strength is also the source of MacIntyre's weakness. It prompts the question: why should an inquirer commit to a particular contingent tradition in the first place?² MacIntyre apparently has difficulty finding an answer (at least he does not specifically attempt an answer). His particular focus remains on the importance of the rational tradition over against other modes of enquiry. He argues to establish the necessary conditions for authentic moral reasoning, rather than to formulate an epistemology per se. But MacIntyre's project is in several ways nicely complemented by Polanyi's epistemology of tacit knowledge. Here commitment, belief, and faith are viewed as the inescapable ground of all knowing thus making existential commitment prerequisite to proficient or "skilful" knowing. The following discussion begins with a broad outline of MacIntyre's schema and then turns to Polanyi for an examination of the tacit; I conclude by suggesting where MacIntyre's and Polanyi's accounts dovetail.

MacIntyre's Diagnosis

MacIntyre's consideration of rationality is stimulated by his observation of contemporary moral discourse, which he deems typified by division and conflict.³ This fragmentation is attributed to Enlightenment methodology.⁴ According to MacIntyre, the Enlightenment aspired to ground public debate in objectified standards of rational justification, in "... principles undeniable by any rational person and therefore independent of all ...social and cultural particularities..."(WJ, 6). Such objective standards establish a neutral or impartial base by which every moral theory or pattern of behavior is judged. While the ideal was notable, its application proved impracticable. "Morality" quickly developed into a distinct and autonomous category of thought and practice, prompting the abstraction of moral thought. Key moral themes, such as justice, were detached from their immediate social anchorage; this was a process that isolated key themes from the source of their character (TV, 26). So MacIntyre states: "to abstract ...ethics from its place...is already to distort"(TV, 191). Or alternately, from *First Principles, Final Ends, and Contemporary Philosophical Issues*:

Abstract...conceptions of truth and reality from [their] teleological framework, and you will thereby deprive them of the only context by reference to which they can be made fully intelligible and rationally defensible.... In consequence, conceptions of truth and rationality became, as it were, free-floating.⁵

Abstraction affords a facade of consensus to moral debate by concealing important informing presuppositions and background beliefs. Hence the Enlightenment ideal, far from furnishing universality to moral judgements, saturated modern society with an amalgam of social and cultural fragments inherited from disparate traditions. From this derives modern culture's "...inability to unite conviction and rational justification"(WJ, 6).

Genuine rational debate is impossible in this generalized context. MacIntyre concludes: we inhabit a culture unable to "arrive at agreed rationally justifiable conclusions...." The corresponding frustration causes disputed questions to be treated "...not as a matter for rational enquiry, but rather for the assertion and counter-assertion of alternative and incompatible sets of premises"(WJ, 6). Emotivism is now the de facto solution to moral debate.⁶

However, MacIntyre's agenda is not to establish the validity of traditions over against Enlightenment foundationalism per se. Moral and intellectual lives exist in a paradoxical relationship: "only insofar as we have already arrived at certain conclusions are we able to become the sort of person able to engage in such enquiry so as to reach sound conclusions"(TV, 63; 82-83). Failure to learn, on the other hand, "...is always rooted in defect in respect of the virtues"(TV, 68). Thus MacIntyre's goal is the generation of authentic character: to form people who by nature have a moral disposition, reason from that internal conviction, and have proper confidence in the results. Only such a person is equipped "to move towards a knowledge of the truth...about *the human good*"(TV, 61).

Tradition-Constituted Enquiry

In contrast to Enlightenment methodology, MacIntyre proposes: "There is no standing ground, no place for enquiry, no way to engage in the practices of advancing, evaluating, accepting and rejecting reasoned argument apart from that which is provided by some particular tradition or other."⁷ Those outside a tradition

lack sufficient rational, and indeed moral, resources for enquiry. MacIntyre rejects detached objectivity. Tradition is *the* form of rational enquiry, and progress only occurs via participation in the internal dialectic, or “conflict,” of a tradition. MacIntyre encapsulates his epistemological scheme, which he designates “tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive enquiry,”⁸ so:

... we need to recover ... a conception of rational enquiry embodied in a tradition, a conception according to which the standards of rational justification themselves emerge from and are part of a history in which they are vindicated by the way in which they transcend the limitations of and provide remedies for the defects of their predecessors within the history of that same tradition (*WJ*, 7).

Central to MacIntyre’s argument is his critique of the Enlightenment notion of “facts.” Supposedly independent of all particularities, facts can stand in judgement over competing theories. MacIntyre opposes this popular conception: “There exists no preconceptual or even pretheoretical data, and this entails that no set of examples of action, no matter how comprehensive, can provide a neutral court of appeal.” He observes that disagreements between theories include disagreement over what is and is not to be considered “a fact.” This implies that the framework used to interpret a specific “fact” lends that fact particular relevance and authority. MacIntyre continues: “...each theory of practical reasoning is...a theory as to how examples are to be described, and how we describe a particular example will depend, therefore, upon which theory we have adopted.” Thus any appeal to a neutral realm of facts able to judge impartially between competing theories is to be considered spurious.

Rational enquiry, as understood by MacIntyre, is antithetical to detached neutrality. Seminal to a tradition’s rational formation is its particular social and cultural context. A vital and organic relationship MacIntyre terms, “socially embodied traditions of rational enquiry.”¹⁰ The history of a particular community frames modes of enquiry and furnishes terms and concepts used in its intellectual scheme. So, “philosophical theories give organised expression to concepts and theories already embodied in form of practice and types of community” (*WJ*, 390). Local life shapes a tradition’s peculiar teleology -- its questions, purposes, aims, and conceptual horizons -- and provides emphases and boundaries. The rational tradition itself organizes, structures, and interprets the raw data so as to give rational justification and philosophical solution to the community. For example, Aristotle’s philosophical schema presupposes, and attempts to make sense of, citizenship in the Greek *polis* (*WJ*, 133; 389). Detached from its practical life, a tradition’s rationality becomes distorted and ceases to be intelligible.

Building on this structure, MacIntyre draws two conclusions. First, when examining specific philosophical themes, such as justice, we cannot understand that theme by isolating it from its tradition. A tradition is an overall system of thought, which imposes constraints upon specific themes, and provides standards to which the protagonist is able to appeal for rational justification. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. To judge the adequacy of a specific part, for example, a system’s conception of justice, will depend on the adequacy and subsequent vindication of the whole system.

MacIntyre also concludes that each rational tradition draws upon local resources, and is formulated according to a conceptual scheme alien to that informing a competing tradition. Procedures of enquiry will mirror these distinct concepts and beliefs. For MacIntyre, acknowledging this possible incommensurability is a necessary first step towards consensus. By accurately characterizing the contrasting differences of rival

traditions, a better explanation for the diversity of standpoints is available, transforming the problem and rendering it amenable to solution.

Tradition and Progress

Not every culture with a history qualifies as, or produces, a rational tradition. Rationality is achieved by progressing through three defined stages, according to MacIntyre. All enquiries begin embedded in certain givens: a particular community with established beliefs and practices, and which places unquestioned authority in received texts and institutions (e.g., bards, kings, and prophets). The second stage commences when these authoritative texts or utterances are subjected to systematic questioning, stimulating novel and alternate interpretations. When questioning results in new or evolved formulations that transcend previously identified inadequacies, a community has reached the third stage. This final progression remains part of an ongoing dynamic sustained by what MacIntyre terms a “problematic”: an apparent set of unresolved issues and difficulties that have emerged during earlier formulations. Reference to this problematic provides a measure against which a tradition can evaluate its relative progress (WJ, 167; 361). Thus a tradition’s rational development takes the form of “an argument extended through time.”¹¹

Truth is pivotal to this internal momentum. Yet, MacIntyre qualifies truth, defining it according to opposing tensions. First, truth is contingent and particular; it has a relative aspect. MacIntyre suggests all truth claims are founded in historical and cultural givens; knowledge of truth is only achieved by participation in a tradition. Definitions of what constitutes “truth” are particular to a tradition. Truths, or “first principles,” that define a rational tradition are contingent beliefs lent axiomatic authority. Such principles have become seminal by surviving the process of dialectical questioning, vindicating themselves as superior to their historical predecessors (WJ, 360). Such truth claims may subsequently be regarded as necessary and evident, though characteristically this occurs only for individuals apprenticed to that particular tradition.

When a rational tradition claims truth for a local set of judgements, it is akin to claiming that at no point in the future will the theoretical structure shaped by those judgments develop a discrepancy or inadequacy.¹² It will remain equal to all possible developments in rational enquiry, be that meeting higher standards, or continued sufficiency with regard to superior questions. Rational justification of this type is a sustained process, being both historical and dialectical, and applies to the theory structure in its entirety (WJ, 359).

The second tension in MacIntyre's discussion of truth deals with universality and correspondence; truth has a realist aspect. MacIntyre believes it is possible to know “timeless” truth (WJ, 363), and even maintains that a conception of final truth, “a relationship of the mind to its objects which would be wholly adequate in respect to the capacities of that mind,” is prerequisite to rationality (WJ, 360). Here truth relates to something external to a tradition and has the potential to translate across incommensurable traditions.¹³ MacIntyre conceives truth as both substantive and nonrelative, and this allows a protagonist to make consistent and universal claims from the standpoint of a tradition.¹⁴

Care must be taken with this objective element, however, lest we misinterpret MacIntyre. Continuing his Enlightenment polemic, MacIntyre rejects a simplistic notion of correspondence, whereby facts impose themselves on our minds and we issue judgements in response. Correspondence, for MacIntyre, occurs when

the mind is adequate to its objects:

Those realities which mind encounters reveal themselves as they are, the presented, the manifested, the unhidden. So the most primitive conception of truth is of the manifestness of the objects which present themselves to mind; and it is when mind fails to re-present that manifestness that the falsity, the inadequacy of mind to its objects, appears (*WJ*, 357).

To claim truth is to claim correspondence to reality. And while the possibility remains that future standards may expose the falsity, or lack of correspondence, of current claims, the protagonist is justified in accepting and acting on solutions as true representations of reality.¹⁵ Truth remains part of “a temporal reference of reasoning,” (*TV*, 64) for which the final goal is unveiling hidden reality. So conceived, truth remains robust and realist.

Once the basic principles of rationality are established, we must ask how these stimulate development. Achtemeier, summarizing MacIntyre, sees “...a twofold process, encompassing both deductive and inductive rationality.”¹⁶ A tradition transcends conventional understanding by means of creative intuition and insight. This is a speculative and non-formalized process leading to the formulation of a new hypothesis. As with truth claims, adherents test the new theory by measuring it against the highest standards and subjecting it to the best questions available to the tradition. If by this process it proves more adequate than the earlier formulations, it becomes accounted knowledge and supplants the rival position. The second stage of deductive rationality retrospectively theorizes the new belief structure, and develops a body of subsidiary knowledge. It expands what is implicit in the theory and establishes practical applications.

Traditions in Conflict

Aside from this natural internal dynamic, tradition-constituted enquiry progresses via two avenues: epistemological crisis, and conflict between rival traditions. Every tradition will at some stage realize, by its own standards of rational justification, that it has ceased to make progress. Conventional intellectual resources no longer supply rational solutions to its problematic; trusted methods of enquiry have become sterile, and its truth claims can not be sustained. This “dissolution of historically founded certitudes” signifies that the tradition has entered an “epistemological crisis” (*WJ*, 360ff).

This presents a key juncture in the development of a tradition. Sterile traditions cannot side step the issue by reference back to earlier positions. They are forced either to develop, or to wither. An efficacious solution demands the development of new concepts and theoretical structures.

Authentic innovation is defined by three requirements. First, the new conceptual framework must systematically solve the previously intractable problems. Second, it must articulate the causes of the tradition’s sterility. Third, it must be in continuity with the defining beliefs of the preceding tradition. Rational justification for these new structures rests in their ability to provide the necessary stimulation according to the tradition’s original standards. A particular tradition is considered successful when it surmounts an epistemological crisis in a way its rivals cannot. Failure to resolve this crisis leads to the rejection of a tradition’s truth claims and ultimately to its defeat.

A second type of progress occurs when deciding between rival traditions. Again MacIntyre rejects any possibility of a neutral position able to narrate “the subject matter about which they give rival accounts or the standards by which their claims are to be evaluated”(WJ, 166). All rational debate is particular. Certain values in one tradition may have no counterpart whatsoever in their rival, and traditions that contrast in one aspect may share beliefs, images, and texts in another. Recognition of background is thus a necessary precondition to meaningful dialogue.

Once this basis is established, the potential exists for protagonists of one tradition to overhear conversations held in another. This demands of the protagonist a “rare gift of empathy” as they must: “...understand the theses, arguments, and concepts of their rival in such a way that they are able to view themselves from such an alien standpoint and to re-characterize their own beliefs in an appropriate manner from the alien perspective”(WJ, 167) MacIntyre dubs this learning an alien tradition, learning a “second first language”(WJ, 394ff).

Genuine dialogue occurs on two levels. First, each tradition, using its own terms, questions, and standards, characterizes the position of its rival. This identifies contrasting belief structures and makes explicit the fundamental incongruity of the rival. It also clarifies any possibility for shared meaning. Here a tradition may recognize where its rival is able to instruct it on subordinate questions. If such a consideration exists and the adherents of one tradition chose to ignore it, they cheapen their own standards and exclude relevant reasons for future believing or disbelieving; they stunt their own tradition.

A second, more fundamental level of dialogue transpires when protagonists are compelled to recognize in a rival tradition a cogent approach to their own previously intractable problematic (TV, 5; 146). Measured by their own standards, the standpoint of the rival tradition is better able to transcend the limitations confronting their tradition. Such translation differs from an epistemological crisis in that it fails to meet the third requirement: juxtaposition rather than continuity has given coherence to their problematic . A break has occurred in the tradition.

This process by which one tradition has the intellectual resources to overcome the problematic of its rival, MacIntyre sees as a process of achieving rational superiority. Rational superiority depends on a tradition explaining both its own success and why the rival tradition failed to meet the same kind of challenge. When a protagonist concedes their rival’s rational superiority, they implicitly realize the overthrow of their own axiomatic truth claims. So MacIntyre asserts, “rationality... requires this acknowledgement of defeat in respect of truth...”(TV, 5; 146). Actual acknowledgement may not always occur. Nevertheless, the defeated tradition has lost its warrant to claim truth, and so its integrity as a tradition-constituted form of enquiry.

Evaluating MacIntyre

How should one evaluate MacIntyre's constructive philosophical project? His attempt to unite the moral and intellectual life is a fundamentally important endeavor. Yet MacIntyre's thought remains quite ambiguous; nowhere, for example, does MacIntyre fully characterize his notion of “a rational tradition.” This is deliberate: MacIntyre prefers to let “narrative histories of the traditions” define his terms.¹⁷ However, this substantive use of narrative appears to have failed. On the one hand, MacIntyre’s examples and their interpretation are contentious, and, on the other, such a non-systematic methodological approach undermines

unitary formulations. So while we take his intent seriously, questions remain.

Polanyi, like MacIntyre, sharply criticizes the ideal of scientific objectivism and, more generally, dispassionate knowledge (PK, 3ff) and the method of doubt (PK, 269ff). For Polanyi, objectivist detachment is an impossible ideal that has, in modernity, undercut important moral ideals and practices. Although MacIntyre's and Polanyi's criticisms are akin, there is a notable difference between their approaches. While MacIntyre's justification comes via a broad survey of historical examples, Polanyi's case is made within the supposed bastion of objective knowledge, the scientific community, as an account of scientific discovery (the paradigm case of all knowing for Polanyi). MacIntyre highlights tradition, Polanyi highlights the person who dwells in a community with a tradition. MacIntyre's perspective is broad, Polanyi's is focused. In many ways, Polanyi concentrates on elements MacIntyre neglects.

A Fiduciary Framework

It is clear Polanyi holds an antifoundationalist position akin to MacIntyre's:

We must now recognize belief once more as the source of all knowledge. Tacit assent and intellectual passions, the sharing of an idiom and of a cultural heritage, affiliation to a like-minded community: such are the impulses which shape our vision of the nature of things on which we rely for our mastery of things. No intelligence, however critical or original, can operate outside such a fiduciary framework (PK, 266).

And elsewhere:

This has been the matrix of all my intellectual efforts. Within it I was to find my problem and seek the terms for its solution. All my amendments to these original terms will remain embedded in the system of my previous beliefs. Worse still, I cannot precisely say what these beliefs are (PK, 252).

Polanyi's primary concern is to illumine the nature and structure of knowing, which he elucidates by examining the forces engaged in it, the tacit dimension of knowledge. For a human being, tacitly held suppositions and tacitly operating skills culminate in an articulate framework within which we foster and satisfy intellectual passions;¹⁸ we accept and struggle responsibly to meet self- set standards formulated in cultural communities that nurture a particular articulate framework. Polanyi's account thus focuses upon the legitimacy of personal belief and its foundation in tacit powers and the fiduciary framework, but this account bears a family resemblance to MacIntyre's discussions of "rational tradition."

Apprenticed To A Craft

The effectiveness of MacIntyre's tradition-constituted enquiry centers on the way in which moral and intellectual virtues are inseparable and on the ability of inquirers to transform themselves into the kind of persons for whom tensions exist in dialectical unity. In *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, MacIntyre outlines the nature of the transformation required (TV, 61-66). Participation in a rational tradition is equated with apprenticeship to a craft, leading MacIntyre alternately to term his schema, "craft-constituted enquiry."¹⁸ Apprenticeship installs an "achieved" capacity; it identifies defects and limitations, and produces in the

apprentice the virtues necessary to attain sound theoretical and practical conclusions. It is a question of requisite “skill” integral to the mature “practice” of a craft.

Likewise for Polanyi, every articulate framework operates by the exercise of skill. For example, choosing which questions to follow, how to interpret data, and how to formulate results all require skill. Accordingly, Polanyi introduces the axiom: skilful performance depends on the observance of a set of rules not consciously known to the person following them. An articulate system or, using MacIntyre’s terminology “a tradition,” is equated to an art (craft), which can neither be specified in detail nor transmitted by prescription. While it may be possible to prescribe an art’s rules, these lack the power to determine the art’s practice. They remain maxims, which guide an art only to the extent the learner can integrate them into the practical knowledge of the art.¹⁹ The formal criteria of a rational tradition can in this same instance function as maxims, but cannot replace the practical expertise integral to the realization of that tradition. For example, according to Polanyi, a scientist’s methodical procedures “... are but the maxims of an art which he applies in his own original way to the problem of his own choice” (*PK*, 311).

One can only transmit or learn an unspecifiable art, or tradition, by imitating another, by placing uncritical trust in a master. MacIntyre is in strong agreement with this Polanyian point.²⁰ The process of apprenticeship enables the learner to unconsciously develop “hidden” skills, and rely on tacit judgements. And to the extent we cannot precisely formalize the final articulate system, we progress according to this unconscious knowledge. We accept the verdict of our personal appraisal, which relies on our own skill as adherents of a tradition, and/or we submit to a master’s authority. Thus Polanyi’s conclusion is very similar to MacIntyre’s central claim that practical wisdom is more truly embodied in action than expressed by rules of action.

Indwelling

Skillful knowing, according to Polanyi, is a performance that subordinates a set of particulars, as clues or tools, to the shaping of a practical or theoretical achievement (*PK*, vii). A tool is an object by which we make contact with things external to ourselves, for example, a probe used to examine the inside of a cavity, or the presuppositions of an interpretative framework. Using a probe tells us something about the internal dimensions and contents of the hole. Throughout the course of the action, we are alert, and “attend,” to both the stick and the cavity but in different ways. The probe is not the object of our attention, but an instrument of it. Polanyi designates the difference: a *subsidiary awareness*, my palm on the probe, and a *focal awareness*, the contents and shape of the cavity (*PK*, 55-57).

While we are using a tool, it becomes part of the operating person. It is assimilated as an extension of the self -- an existential “indwelling.” This is, for Polanyi, “... the general principle by which our beliefs are anchored in ourselves” (*PK*, 59).

When we accept a certain set of presuppositions and use them as our interpretative framework, we may be said to indwell them... Their uncritical acceptance... consists in a process of assimilation by which we identify ourselves with them. They are not asserted and cannot be asserted, for assertion can be made only within a framework with which we have identified ourselves... they are themselves our ultimate framework... (*PK*, 60).

By indwelling the subsidiary particulars, the knower develops a coherent focal awareness of a whole, or a gestalt. Yet without the comprehension or meaning provided by the whole, the particulars lose their significance; the tool has no function. Thus, while the subsidiary and focal elements are distinct, their relationship is concomitant. In summary, “the art of knowing is seen to involve an intentional change of being: the pouring of ourselves into the subsidiary awareness of particulars, which in the performance of skills are instrumental to a skilful achievement (*PK*, 64).

Such an involved existential schema has commitment embedded in it. A tool, for Polanyi, is one example of, “...merging of a thing in a whole (or gestalt) in which it is assigned a subsidiary function and a meaning in respect to something that has our focal attention” (*PK*, 61). Other examples include signs, and symbols, and, in the process of knowing, we *rely* on them to signify something. This reliance is an act of personal commitment. We are only able to assimilate or indwell these signifiers to the extent we believe they are a true representation of the signified. This is an effort of knowing, “...guided by a sense of obligation towards the truth: by an effort to submit to reality” (*PK*, 63). Our claim to speak of hidden reality, something existing independent of our knowing it, serves as an external anchor and justification of our commitment. And commitment is the only framework in which assent and judgement can be responsible. Thus discovery and declared truth have an inherently personal character.

Interesting parallels can be drawn between Polanyi's ideas about indwelling and MacIntyre's concepts of “mind” and “embodiment.” In contrast to the Cartesian conception, mind is activity: it engages the natural and social worlds by touching, pointing, breaking down, and developing, prompting identification, classifying, naming, etc. This multilayered process informs the mind, stimulating images and concepts, which are adequate or inadequate representations of particular objects (*WJ*, 357). Judgments issued in response serve as indicators of the truth or falsity of the mind. Embodiment occurs when the minds of those engaged in a craft make themselves adequate to the existence and properties of objects that exist independently of those minds (*TV*, 68). For “...in becoming adequate to its objects... the embodied mind actualises its potentialities and becomes what its objects and its own activity conjointly have been able to make it” (*TV*, 68). This description is suggestive of Polanyi's account of indwelling, however, MacIntyre reverses the language: “universals” now mean presuppositional theories or “first principles,” and “particulars” their practical application in the moral life. So:

To progress in...moral enquiry... is to progress in understanding *all* the various aspects of that life, rules, precepts, virtues, passions, actions as parts of a single whole. Central to that progress is...being able in particular situations to bring to bear the relevant universals and to act so that the universal is embodied in the particular.²¹

Thus for both Polanyi and MacIntyre existential commitment is prerequisite to responsible knowledge and moral action.

Intellectual Passion

Polanyi's perspective diverges somewhat from MacIntyre's emphasis upon the rational insofar as Polanyi stresses the importance of passion, beauty and conviviality. The rational for Polanyi is bound up with

the passionate, the beautiful and solidarity with social companions. Polanyi suggests that the ubiquitous tacit coefficient of human knowledge is rooted in organismic striving to overcome obstacles. Although all living forms strive to overcome obstacles and develop tacit powers, in the articulate human being, intellectual passions are a vehicle for our sophisticated struggle to understand and respond to our world. Intellectual passions are complex and active forces through which we assent to, and understand rational traditions. Passions play a selective function for human knowers by affirming the interest and value in certain positions. They also play a heuristic function by linking selected values with a vision of reality (*PK*, 159). Heuristic passions enable the knower to make an intuitive leap from problem to discovery. Such a leap is a creative and original act that irrevocably changes preexisting interpretative frameworks (*PK*, 143).

Polanyi holds that the validation of a creative leap to a new discovery comes via an appreciation of the new framework's beauty. Intellectual beauty reveals nature; beauty is a "token of hidden reality" (*PK*, 189):

The personal participation of the knower in the knowledge he believes himself to possess takes place within a flow of passion. We recognize intellectual beauty as a guide to discovery and as a mark of truth (*PK*, 300).

Beauty is an inarticulate coefficient that guides heuristic passion, and which compels us to accept entire systems as well as individual elements as true (*PK*, 172, 145ff.). In this sense, recognition of beauty offers an indirect tribute to the values implicit in an articulate system: we are able to acknowledge beauty because it exemplifies a tradition's original *telos*.

Intellectual passions are given particular definition by the cultural framework with which they are associated: "Our formal upbringing evokes in us an elaborate set of emotional responses, operating within an articulate cultural framework. By the strength of these affections we assimilate this framework and uphold it as our culture. . ." (*PK*, 70). Acquired by our particular upbringing, these memories and convictions are held with universal intent; they are part of a network of tacit elements on which the sharing of cultural life depends (*PK*, 203).

But also the sustenance of intellectual passions depends upon the support of the broader cultural context:

Articulate systems which foster and satisfy intellectual passion can survive only with the support of a society which respects the values affirmed by these passions, and a society has a cultural life only to the extent to which it acknowledges and fulfils the obligation to lend its support to the cultivation of these passions.... The tacit coefficients by which these articulate systems are understood and accredited, ... are also coefficients of a cultural life shared by a community (*PK*, 203).

The acquisition and sustenance of passions comes through acts of affiliation to a cultural context and this begins first as a child according to the accidents of birth. Later in life comes affiliation with a specific specialized articulate framework which extends and refines intellectual passions. A particular human being's ability to submit to the guiding passions thus implies his/her on-going participation in the cultural and specialized communities of interpretation that cultivate and accept the validity of such passions.

Conclusions

In a number of ways, the ideas of Alasdair MacIntyre and Michael Polanyi dovetail. Yet both break new ground, developing similar themes in different ways. Polanyi's notion of the tacit provides a good complement to MacIntyre's rationalism. His views help answer the question MacIntyre's account prompts: why should the inquirer commit to a particular contingent tradition? MacIntyre's value is his rich, positive description of historically situated rationality or "tradition." His difficulty is demonstrating how this appreciation commits us, perforce, to a particular contingent tradition. Polanyi, however, because he provides an account of the tacit emphasizing the structure of indwelling and the skillful, committed, and passionate nature of knowledge, makes it clearer that belief and faith are the inescapable grounds of all knowing. Polanyi's discussions of the ubiquitous tacit coefficients central to human endeavor help clarify the ways in which human response reflects our deep rootedness in life in a social community.

Some basic elements of the discussion in MacIntyre and Polanyi are strikingly similar. Both affirm that truth claims call for universal assertion; both believe "the possibility of error is a necessary element of any belief bearing on reality, and to withhold belief on the grounds of such a hazard is to break off all contact with reality."²² Both accept self-set standards.²³ Both speak of contact with external reality, and the possibility of superior knowledge.²⁴ Both employ conceptual structures which transcend the objective/subjective disjunction.²⁵

Although their philosophical outlooks seem to have much in common, there is a certain amount of play within this shared framework. Central to both schemes is the concept of apprenticeship. MacIntyre uses this concept to identify how growth in moral virtue is requisite to the proper apprehension and application of universals, such as justice. Polanyi takes a broader or more systematic approach to apprenticeship. He introduces the notion of skills and draws an important distinction between the articulate and inarticulate. Polanyi emphasizes that skills are not transmitted by prescription. He affirms that effective communication occurs only in the context of apprenticeship via submission to authority. These Polanyian ideas illumine MacIntyre's account: the operation of unspecifiable skills make clearer the seminal significance of tradition, a repository of skills. Polanyi shows why, if a generation fails to maintain a body of skills, that the embodiment of moral virtues becomes impossible. The practical means by which MacIntyre's universals are translated to the particular are lost.

According to Polanyi, tools are instruments through which we make contact with and interpret reality. The presuppositions of articulate frameworks are tools. MacIntyre's analytical scheme does not focus on conceptual tools but merges these elements in the concept of "mind." Primarily a reaction to a Cartesian understanding, MacIntyre's "mind" is a broad concept emphasizing activity. Mind thus encompasses every aspect of the knowing process, but consequently lacks specification and definition. By identifying the particularity of mental components as "tools," Polanyi's explanation of "indwelling" becomes clear and natural. MacIntyre's parallel move to focus on "embodiment" is more convoluted and less convincing. MacIntyre establishes the importance of embodiment, but is less effective than Polanyi in showing its inevitability.

"Intellectual passion" is an element in Polanyi's account that is missing in MacIntyre's perspective.

Passion is a part of all knowing and propels inquiry. Passion provides the impetus behind the intuitive leap from problem to discovery. The passion informing discovery is linked to beauty, for Polanyi. Discovery or novelty in a sense comes to us through passion and an appreciation for beauty. Intellectual passions are also, for Polanyi, tied to apprenticeship in a particular articulate tradition which must be supported by wider culture that, in turn, supports ideals. MacIntyre, like Polanyi, highlights creativity and intuition in discovery, though for him this comes from within a tradition. Creative intuition is the vehicle through which rational tradition transcends its old formulations and overcomes an epistemological crisis; heuristic passions are also of importance. But MacIntyre's account seems to take much more interest in -- and has more difficulty distinguishing between -- rational traditions and other, often competing, cultural jurisdictions.⁷⁵ The relationship between a specific rational tradition and the mediating cultural institutions is often unclear. MacIntyre's interest in the issue of "rational superiority" has an objectivist ring. Polanyi's emphasis upon intellectual passion, beauty and the social moorings and convivial roots of inquiry are a helpful complement to MacIntyre's quest for "rational superiority."

Endnotes

¹ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 59-60 (hereafter *TV*): "...[they] agree in framing what they take to be both exclusive and exhaustive alternatives: Either reason is thus impersonal, universal and disinterested, or it is the unwitting representative of particular interests, masking their drive to power by its false pretensions to neutrality and disinterestedness."

² See especially: Julia Annas, "MacIntyre on Traditions," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 18 (1989), 394ff; Matthew Freytag, "MacIntyre's Conservatism and Its Cure: The Formal Structure of Traditions," *Philosophy in the Contemporary World*, 1 (1994), 4ff; Thomas Nagel, "Agreeing in Principle," *Times Literary Supplement*, July 8-14, 1988, 747; and, Jerome B. Schneewind, "MacIntyre and the Indispensability of Tradition," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 51 (1991), 167ff.

³ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 1-2 (hereafter *WJ*).

⁴ To survey MacIntyre's agenda, refer to: *After Virtue*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 1-22 (hereafter *AV*), *WJ*, 1-11 and *TV*, 2-28.

⁵ Quoted in Edward T. Oakes, "The Achievement of Alasdair MacIntyre," *First Things*, no.65, Aug./Sep. 1996, 25.

⁶ "It is easy to understand why *protest* becomes a distinctive moral feature of the modern age and why *indignation* is a predominant modern emotion.... Protest is now almost entirely that negative phenomenon which characteristically occurs as a reaction to the alleged invasion of someone's *rights* in the name of someone else's *utility*. The self-assertive shrillness of protest arises because... the protestors can never lose an argument either. Hence the *utterance* of protest is characteristically addressed to those who already *share* the protestor's premises.... Protestors rarely have anyone else to talk to but themselves. This is not to say that protest cannot be effective; it is to say that it cannot be rationally effective." Quoted in "The

Achievement of Alasdair MacIntyre,” 26.

⁷ *WJ*, 350. See also *WJ*, 144: “Progress in rationality is achieved only from a point of view.”

⁸ See especially: *WJ*, *The Rationality of Traditions*, 349-70.

⁹ *WJ*, 333; see also *TV*, 172-3.

¹⁰ Alasdair MacIntyre, “Précis of Whose Justice? Which Rationality?,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 51 (1991), 151.

¹¹ *WJ*, 12. Also *WJ*, 8: “[to] justify is to narrate how the argument has gone so far.”

¹² See Achtemeier, P. Mark. “The Truth of Tradition: Critical Realism in the Thought of Alasdair MacIntyre and T. F. Torrance,” *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 47 (1994), 362-366.

¹³ *TV*, 121-22: “...in judging of truth and falsity there is always some ineliminable reference beyond the scheme within which those judgements are made and beyond the criteria which provide the warrants for assertibility within that scheme. Truth cannot be identified with, or collapsed into warranted assertibility.”

¹⁴ “Précis of Whose Justice? Which Rationality?,” 152. See also “Reply to Dahl, Baier and Schneewind,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 51 (1991), 176-7.

¹⁵ Alasdair MacIntyre, “Reply to Dahl, Baier and Schneewind,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 51 (1991), 179; See also: *TV*, 88-9.

¹⁶ “The Truth of Tradition: . . .,” 368

¹⁷ “Précis of Whose Justice? Which Rationality?,” 151

¹⁸ *TV*, 81. Also *TV*, 63: “The *telos* of moral enquiry, which is excellence in the achievements not only of adequate theoretical understanding of the specifically human good, but also of the practical embodiment of that understanding in the life of the particular enquirer, most of all requires therefore not just a craft by a virtue-guided craft.”

¹⁹ See *PK*, 49-65. Polanyi gives example of this, including: swimming, riding a bike, and playing a piano.

²⁰ *TV*, 63: “we shall have to learn from that teacher and initially accept on the basis of his or authority within the community of a craft precisely what intellectual and moral habits it is which we must cultivate and acquire if we are to become effective self-moved participants in such enquiry.” Also, *TV*, 84: “faith in authority has to precede rational understanding.”

²¹ *TV*, 139; see also *TV*, 80: “To live a practically well-ordered life is to embody the universal concepts which we comprehend and justify in those enquiries in the particularities of our individual lives.”

²² *PK*, 315. See also *TV*, 88-9

²³ *PK*, 64-65; *WJ*, 361

²⁴ *PK*, 374-379; *TV*, 365

²⁵ *PK*, 300; *TV*, 59-60

²⁶ This ambiguity in MacIntyre's thought is compounded by reference to a welter of contending statements. MacIntyre distinguishes between: "...the different characteristics ascribed on the one hand to traditions of enquiry, ... and on the other hand to those larger social and cultural traditions which in which traditions of enquiry are embedded..." (After MacIntyre, 292.). He further notes the relationship of an intellectual tradition to its social and cultural context can differ; that competing traditions can vary and overlap within the same community ("Précis of Whose Justice? Which Rationality?," 151.); and, that the beliefs of a tradition may inform only a limited part of the whole community (*WJ*, 356.) And finally, those particular histories upon which rational tradition is based can, "flourish in environment not only different from but hostile to those in which a tradition was originally at home." (*WJ*, 392.) With regard to the individual MacIntyre notes in *TV*, 143: "The individual human being is a unity in whom the directedness of the different aspects of his spiritual and social existence have to be ordered hierarchically into a unified mode of life.... Hence arise a variety of tensions, and the practical problems of the integrity of the self are the counterpart to the practical problems of competing jurisdictions. The virtues which conjointly inform the actions of an integrated self are also the virtues of a well-integrated political community."

Bibliography

Achtemeier, P. Mark. "The Truth of Tradition: Critical Realism in the Thought of Alasdair MacIntyre and T. F. Torrance," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 47 (1994), 355-74.

Almond, Brenda. "Alasdair MacIntyre: The Virtue of Tradition," *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 7 (1990), 99-103.

Annas, Julia. "MacIntyre on Traditions," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 18 (1989), 388-404.

Freytag, Matthew. "MacIntyre's Conservatism and Its Cure: The Formal Structure of Traditions," *Philosophy in the Contemporary World*, 1 (1994), 1-10.

Horton, John and Mendus, Susan (eds.) *After MacIntyre: Critical Perspectives on the Work of Alasdair MacIntyre* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994).

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981, Second Edition, 1984).

_____. *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).

- _____. *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990)
- _____. "Précis of Whose Justice? Which Rationality?," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 51 (1991), 149-52.
- _____. "Reply to Dahl, Baier and Schneewind," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 51 (1991), 169-78.
- Markham, Ian. "Faith and Reason: Reflections on MacIntyre's 'Tradition-Constituted Enquiry'," *Religious Studies*, 27 (1991), 259-62.
- Nagel, Thomas. "Agreeing in Principle," [Review of *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*] *Times Literary Supplement*, July 8-14, 1988, 747-8. Reprinted as "MacIntyre versus the Enlightenment," in his *Other Minds: Critical Essays: 1969-94* (Oxford University Press, 1995) pp. 203-9.
- Oakes, Edward T. "The Achievement of Alasdair MacIntyre," *First Things*, 65 (Aug./Sep. 1996), 22-26.
- Polanyi, Michael. *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962)
- Polinska, Wioleta. "Alasdair MacIntyre on Traditions and Rationality," *Koinonia: Princeton Theological Seminary Graduate Forum*, 6 (1994), 228-262.
- Porter, Jean. "Openness and Constraint: Moral Reflection as Tradition-Guided Inquiry in Alasdair MacIntyre's Recent Works," *Journal of Religion*, 73 (1993), 514-36.
- Schneewind, Jerome B. "MacIntyre and the Indispensability of Tradition," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 51 (1991), 165-8.
- Stackhouse, Max L. "Alasdair MacIntyre: An Overview and Evaluation," *Religious Studies Review*, 18 (1992), 203-8.

The Role Of Tacit Knowledge In Religion

Walter Van Herck

ABSTRACT: Key Words: practical knowledge, tacit knowledge, religious tacit knowledge

This essay explores the notion of practical religious knowledge in three steps. I examine a short passage in Kant's Critique of Pure Reason (A 132-3 / B 171-2) on judgment, a passage that points out that we (necessarily) know more than we can say or state. I then introduce Michael Polanyi's account of tacit knowledge to suggest what "religious tacit knowledge" is. Finally, I analyze a text from Master Eckhart's Counsels on Discernment (Reden der Unterweisung) to show the relevance of this notion of practical (or tacit) knowledge in religious contexts.

Introduction

Clarity concerning what kind of knowledge a religious person possesses is of the utmost importance. For one thing, J. Whittaker remarks that the believer must have some knowledge that enables him to make the distinction between literal and non-literal descriptions of God.¹ In the believer's perception, "God is a rock," but *not really* a rock. God however really *is* love. Whittaker suggests that the knowledge the making of this distinction requires cannot be of a metaphysical or experiential brand. According to him, a more basic form of knowledge is at work here which he terms "practical" knowledge.

Without going into his discussion of the metaphysical and experiential view, I would like to elaborate on the notion of practical religious knowledge in three steps. Firstly, I want to consider a short passage in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (A 132-3 / B 171-2) on judgment. This passage points out that we (necessarily) know more than we can say or state. Secondly, Michael Polanyi's account of tacit knowledge will be introduced to see what "religious tacit knowledge" could mean. Thirdly, analysis of a text from Master Eckhart's *Counsels on Discernment (Reden der Unterweisung)* will aim to show the relevance of this notion of practical (or tacit) knowledge in religious contexts.

1. Kant on Judgment in *Critique of Pure Reason*

With the expression "practical knowledge," no reduction of all forms of knowledge to the world of the tactile is intended. It does, however, commit us to the view that knowledge can never be purely notional. There is in the acquisition of knowledge an element which Gilbert Ryle has termed "knowing how." Calculating can be a merely mental operation (as in mental arithmetic), but that doesn't take away the fact that one has to know how to calculate. It is in this sense of "art" that the word "practical" has to be understood.

Western philosophy seems to be marked, from its early beginning, by a certain intellectualism. Intellectualism is the conviction that wants to install a strong distinction between knowledge and abilities, between theory and practice. The theoretical knowledge-act is characterised as a purely mental event, as a kind

of contemplation, while any form of practice or ability is seen as an application of previously acquired theoretical knowledge. The distinction values theory over practice because, in this view, practice depends on theory and not the other way round.

In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant dedicates a text to judgment entitled “Of the transcendental faculty of judgment in general” (*Von der Transzendentale Urteilkraft überhaupt* A 132-3 / B 171-2). The passage is to such a degree interesting that I quote extensively:

If understanding in general be defined as the faculty of laws or rules, the faculty of judgment may be termed the faculty of *subsumption* under these rules; that is, of distinguishing whether this or that does or does not stand under a given rule (*casus datae legis*). General logic contains no directions or precepts for the faculty of judgment, nor can it contain any such. For as *it makes abstraction of all content of cognition*, no duty is left for it, except that of exposing analytically the mere form of cognition in conceptions, judgments, and conclusions, and of thereby establishing formal rules for all exercise of the understanding. Now if this logic wished to give some general direction how we should subsume under these rules, that is, how we should distinguish whether this or that did or did not stand under them, this again could not be done otherwise than by means of a rule. But this rule, precisely because it is a rule, requires for itself direction from the faculty of judgment. Thus, it is evident that the understanding is capable of being instructed by rules, but that the judgment is a peculiar talent, which does not, and cannot require tuition, but only exercise.²

Kant says that the understanding offers the rules along which cognitive operations proceed, but the understanding doesn't tell us how and on what these rules have to be applied; that is the task of judgment. So judgment sees itself confronted with two kinds of data: on the one hand, the rules of the understanding, and, on the other hand, concrete facts. It then decides which facts fall under which rules. Now Kant conceives judgment as a peculiar talent (he also talks about mother wit) that one simply has to have, and that can be improved only by training on the basis of concrete examples. Kant had a very good reason for conceiving judgment as a talent. For, if judgment were a rule governed faculty, we would end up in an infinite regress. We would have rules for the application of rules, etcetera. That Kant calls the absence of the faculty of judgment in a person “stupidity” (*“Der Mangel an Urteilkraft ist eigentlich das, was man Dummheit nennt,...”*), and not “ignorance,” underlines the importance of this faculty. When it is completely missing, even training on the basis of examples is of no avail, because these examples too have to be judged. The acquisition of knowledge therefore depends according to Kant on the practical ability to apply rules. One must know how to be “reasonable.”

In this perspective, theory and practice can be said to be interdependent. However cerebral a scientific discipline may be, there is always the need for judgment, a need which can only be satisfied by training. It is moreover impossible to formulate the activity of judgment completely explicitly.

2. Michael Polanyi's Notion of Tacit Knowledge

The work of Michael Polanyi³ can be seen as an attempt to elucidate the mysterious workings of judgment.⁴ In *The Tacit Dimension*, Polanyi takes as a starting point the fact that we know more than we can tell. For example, we recognize the face of an acquaintance out of thousands, if not millions. But nobody can

tell how he or she does this. Another illustration comes from the importance that schools and universities attach to seminars and laboratory experiences. Students learn to identify and recognize the “physiognomy” of minerals, plants, animals, diseases, grammatical constructions, and, why not, philosophical problems. No lesson or course is ever completely and purely theoretical in the sense that in any educational event the student picks up more than what is said. In a lesson, more things happen than the stating of definitions, historical processes, or arguments. If that were not the case, then it would suffice to send a shipload of our finest books to developing countries in order to stimulate their scientific growth.

Polanyi wants to see any act of knowing as an active⁵ integration act by the knower. “Active” means here that epistemic activity involves, presupposes or demands a certain practical ability. The intellectual and the practical, the “*wissen*” and the “*können*,”⁶ the “knowing that” and the “knowing how” (cf. Ryle) are in his perception interwoven.

These two aspects of knowing have a similar structure and neither is ever present without the other. (...) I shall always speak of “knowing,” therefore, to cover both practical and theoretical knowledge.⁷

Polanyi refers to a psychological experiment that reveals the structure he wants to describe. R.S. Lazarus and R.A. McCleary⁸ presented a trial subject with a large number of nonsensical syllables. After some of these syllables, the trial subject got a small electric shock. After a while, the trial subject began to anticipate these shock-syllables bodily, but when he was asked to identify these syllables he wasn’t capable of singling them out. Clearly he possessed a form of knowledge which he couldn’t communicate.⁹ On the basis of this experiment, it is possible to give a sketch of the basic structure of tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge always implies the presence of two terms (or elements). In the experiment, the shock syllables were the first term and the electric shocks were the second term. The trial subject had managed to link the first term with the second. How is it that the first term, and its connection with the second, remained tacit? This is due to the fact that the trial subject’s attention was entirely focused on the electric shock. His attention moved, so to speak, from the shock syllables to the electric shock. His knowledge of the first term was a function of his knowledge of the second term. Polanyi states it like this:

(...) in an act of tacit knowing we *attend from* something for attending *to* something else; namely *from* the first term *to* the second term of the tacit relation. In many ways the first term of this relation will prove to be nearer to us, the second further away from us.¹⁰

Because of the proximity of the first term and the distance to the second term, Polanyi also speaks of the “proximal” and the “distal” term. Because the attention for the first term is at the service of the orientation on the second term, he also calls them “subsidiary” and “focal.” We can therefore draw up the following scheme:

first term	□	second term
proximal	□	distal
subsidiary	□	focal
tacit	□	explicit
from	□	to

Another example is someone who tries to find his way in complete darkness for the first time with a stick. This person feels the impact of the stick in his palm and fingers and hasn't got the least idea what the stick is touching. Only after a lot of practice is this sensation in the palm of the hand transformed into a feeling for what the point of the exploring stick is touching. So, in the beginning of this learning process, our attention is focused on the sensations in our hand. At the end of this process our attention has shifted to the objects the stick touches. We feel, or see, if you like, the slippery rock, the furry dog, the threshold. etcetera. The sensations in our hand and precisely how they tell us something about the objects we meet, however, remain tacit. We decode, as it were, tacitly the sensations in our hand into three dimensional objects.

In this way, the stick becomes something from which our attention proceeds, and not something which attracts our attention. Polanyi call this process a process of incorporation. He writes: "we incorporate it in our body--or extend our body to include it--so that we come to dwell in it."¹¹ Someone who has true knowledge of something (as opposed to having it memorized), has interiorized the object of his knowledge. A physicist cannot suffice with memorizing physical theories. When we say that he has a thorough command or mastery of his subject matter, we mean precisely that his theories have become instruments to him.¹²

Our first attempt at describing tacit knowledge was rather negative: tacit is what we know but cannot tell. Now we are in a position to give a more positive account: tacit knowledge is interiorized knowledge.

What happens when one tries to make tacit knowledge explicit? When what is proximal is placed at a distance and scrutinized carefully, one witnesses the destruction of the meaning the proximal had.¹³ Think what happens when you repeat a word with great attention for the movements of lips and tongue, when a piano player focuses his attention on his fingers in the middle of a concerto, or when you, while writing, suddenly stop worrying about what to write and, instead, start looking at your moving pen. The word loses its meaning, the piano player has a black out and the writing turns into scribbling. But still, this is the way how instruction starts. We learn to pronounce difficult words by paying attention to movements of tongue and lips, to play the piano by paying attention to the positioning of our fingers and to write by thinking how to write and not what to write. Surely, portions of what is tacit, can and must be made explicit. There are manuals for fingering at the piano, for pronunciation, for writing. One could even write a book about how to drive a car. Only, the necessary interiorisation of this knowledge will not be achieved purely on the basis of this explicitation.¹⁴ The piano player will not play any better because he has read about fingering, but because he has practiced it. And nobody can drive a car because he has read a book. The same holds for mathematics, physics, philosophy, morality and religion.

The tacit component of our knowledge can never be made wholly explicit for two reasons. Firstly because even when an explicitation is possible, we still have to know how this explicit knowledge has to be applied. As noted above, the integration of knowledge cannot be achieved solely on the basis of the explicit.¹⁵ Secondly, because the activity of making tacit knowledge explicit too is based on tacit knowledge, one must know how to make things explicit.

Any epistemic activity consists, in Polanyi's view, of two parts: an articulate and an inarticulate part. The knowledge this inarticulate part offers is not open to criticism, but forms the ground from which we criticize.¹⁶ Trust plays a considerable role in science, according to Polanyi, just as it does in religion. This doesn't mean, of course, that any form of rational criticism is impertinent in Polanyi's view. But one can only criticize what is explicitly known at some point in time and not the at that very moment operative tacit

knowledge that makes explicit knowledge possible.¹⁷

This acritical tacit foundation of explicit knowledge is passed on, both in science and in religion, within a tradition. To pass on tacit knowledge requires in most cases the presence of a parent, a teacher, a tutor, a professor or a master. The teacher's demonstrative act consists in leading the attention of his pupil away along his pointing finger towards a distal term on which the pupil focuses his attention. In doing so, the pupil acquires at the same time tacitly the proximal principle that makes the pointing possible. So tradition does not mean in Polanyi's terminology a set of rigid dogmas or prescriptions. "Tradition" stands for the passing on of tacit knowledge. In this sense, tradition¹⁸ forms part of the conditions of knowledge: "An art which cannot be specified in detail cannot be transmitted by prescription, since no prescription for it exists. It can be passed on only by example from master to apprentice."¹⁹ This relation of master and apprentice indicates, again, that trust is an essential characteristic of epistemic activity:

You follow your master because you trust his manner of doing things even when you cannot analyse and account in detail for its effectiveness. By watching the master and emulating his efforts in the presence of his example, the apprentice unconsciously picks up the rules of the art, including those which are not explicitly known to the master himself. These hidden rules can be assimilated only by a person who surrenders himself to that extent uncritically to the imitation of another. A society which wants to preserve a fund of personal knowledge must submit to tradition.(ibid.)

3. Analysis of a Text from Master Eckhart's *Counsels on Discernment*

Religious life contains in itself a fund of religious tacit knowledge.²⁰ Thanks to this religious know-how, the believer can give attention to God.

"The words of prayer and confession, the actions of the ritual, the lesson, the sermon, the church itself, are the clues of the worshipper striving towards God." (ibid.)

Without a practical understanding²¹ of how one has to go about with these elements, they lose their meaning.

"Divine service can mean nothing to a person completely lacking the skill of religious knowing."²²

In this perspective, religious knowledge is the result of a practice (in any case of knowing how to practice). It's all about "things which can be apprehended only in serving them."²³ The devout life is therefore in Polanyi's view the first source²⁴ of religious knowledge.

When the devout life consists in giving attention from the prayer, the ritual, the sermon to God, the purpose or goal of it is to come nearer to God. This coming nearer to God entails the inversion of the original from-to relation. In leaving the church, the believer wants to give attention to the world and the people that surround him from his nearness to God. The devout life implies an oscillation between giving attention to God and giving attention to something else from the source of divine nearness. This is, of course, the well-known

distinction between the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa*.

Now, if we want to investigate this tacit religious knowledge we could certainly turn to the religious life of the common man. The most telling examples however are to be found in the monastic and spiritual tradition. There we find texts that tell us about the transmission of religious know how in the relation between the experienced and the inexperienced (the *Apophthegmata* of the Desert Fathers or Cassian, for example), about how a school in the service of the Lord is to be conceived (Saint Benedict's *Rule*), about how one can acquire religious virtues (Evagrius of Pontus, Bernard's *De Gradibus Humilitatis*) and so on. More than any other texts, they tell us how a religious life has to be lived.

The medieval German mystic Master Eckhart (1260 -1328) rejects a mysticism that is concentrated on experiencing *transient* ecstasies. He is much more oriented towards the ideal of a mystical disposition or attitude. His ideal is not an ecstatic or visionary experience of God, but an inner divine life that colours *all* experiences of a person and carries one in all deeds. In this light, he sees the incarnation not just as an historical event, but as an existential event that concerns every one of us. The incarnation is to him an incorporation (in Polanyi's sense), an attempt to embody the Christian ideal. The Christian believer follows herein the word of Luke, who says "the kingdom of God is in you." The never ending process of learning to be a believer consists in Christ becoming the *habitus* of the soul, in trying to live, think and speak *from* Christ (and not just to live *for* or speak *to* Christ). When Master Eckhart discusses John 1, 14 ("The Word has become flesh and has lived in us"), he renders the meaning of "*habitavit in nobis*" with an alliteration: "*Habitavit, inquit, in nobis, id est habituavit.*"²⁵ Now, how do you learn this? How can one learn to live, think and speak from a divine source? Master Eckhart says that he who tries this will fare as someone who tries to learn to write.

A man should accept God in all things, and should accustom himself to having God present always in his disposition and his intention and his love. (...)

But a man in whom truly God is not, but who must grasp God in this thing or in that from outside, and who seeks God in unlike ways, be it in works or people or places, such a man does not possess God. (...)

On what does this true possession of God depend, so that we may truly have him?

This true possession of God depends on the disposition, and on an inward directing of reason and intention toward God, not on a constant contemplation in an unchanging manner, for it would be impossible to nature to preserve such an intention, and very laborious, and not the best thing either. A man ought not to have a God who is just the product of his thought, nor should he be satisfied with that, because if the thought vanished, God too would vanish. But one ought to have a God who is present, a God who is far above the notions of men and of all created things. That God does not vanish, if a man does not wilfully turn away from him.

The man who has God essentially present to him grasps God divinely, and to him God shines in all things; (...)

A man cannot learn this by running away, (...); but he must practice a solitude of the spirit, wherever or with whomever he is. He must learn to break through things and to grasp his God in them and to form him in himself powerfully in an essential manner. *This is like someone who wants to learn to write*. If he is to acquire the art, he must certainly practice it hard and long, however disagreeable and difficult this may be for him and however impossible it may seem. If he will practice it industriously and assiduously, he learns it and masters the art. To begin with, he must indeed memorize each single letter and get it firmly into his mind. Then, when he has

the art, he will not need to think about and remember the letters' appearance; he can write effortlessly and easily--and it will be the same if he wants to play the fiddle or to learn any other skill. It will always be enough for him to make up his mind to do the hard work the art demands; and even if he is not thinking about it all the time, still, whatever he may be thinking when he does perform it, this will be from the art he has learned.

So a man must be penetrated with the divine presence, and be shaped through and through with the shape of the God he loves, and be present in him, so that God's presence may shine out to him without any effort. What is more, in all things let him acquire nakedness and let him always remain free of things. But at the beginning there must be attentiveness and a careful formation within himself, like a schoolboy setting himself to learn.²⁶

It might be thought that the function of tacit knowledge is rather marginal in religion; that it only lays the foundations for something better or more important; that it offers but a substructure or infrastructure. I hope that Eckhart's text has indicated the contrary. There is no other aim of spiritual life but this: to know how to pray, to meditate, to confess, to love in order to live a life which is, in most senses of the expression, completely normal, but which springs from a hidden godly well. Religious knowledge that would be only and wholly explicit is of no meaning whatsoever for religion and religious life. A non-religious person too can acquire and possess it.

That one must learn to become a believer²⁷ is an insight that is often neglected in the philosophy of religion, but I don't believe it to be a philosophically redundant fact.²⁸

Endnotes

¹ J. WHITTAKER [1981], p. 40: "(...) if we cannot know enough about God to tell the difference between his true nature and figurative representations of it, then we cannot invest any version of the literal/non-literal distinction with any sense."

² I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, transl. by J.M.D. Meiklejohn, London: Dent, 1979, p. 114-5.

³ Polanyi (Budapest, 1891 -- Oxford, 1976) published his principal work *Personal Knowledge. Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* in 1958. For more information: SANDERS, A.F. [1988].

⁴ Compare Polanyi's comment in "Sense-Giving and Sense-Reading" (POLANYI [1969], p. 191): "Kant wrote of the process of subsuming particular instances under a general term that it was a 'skill so deeply hidden in the human soul that we shall hardly guess the secret that Nature here employs.' The secret was indeed inaccessible so long as one looked for an explicit procedure to account for the subsumption of particulars under a general term, but the secret can be found in a tacit operation of the mind."

⁵ POLANYI [1975], p. 42: "The characteristic structure of all our personal knowledge comes out even more vividly when we realize that all knowing is action (...)"

⁶ Compare WITTGENSTEIN [1994], § 150: "The grammar of the word "knows" is evidently closely related to that of "can," "is able to." But also closely related to that of "understands." ("Mastery" of a technique)."

⁷ POLANYI [1967], p. 7.

⁸ See *Journal of Personality*, 18 (1949) and *Psychological Review*, 58 (1951).

⁹ Polanyi wouldn't agree to an equation of the tacit with the unconscious. See POLANYI [1975], p. 39.

¹⁰ POLANYI [1967], p. 10.

¹¹ POLANYI [1967], p. 16.

¹² Compare ROUSE [1987], p. 117: "Theories, like other equipment, recede from thematic attention in order to highlight the things they make accessible to us. They themselves become the objects of attention only when we need better equipment to deal with the problems at hand."

¹³ POLANYI [1975], p. 39: "Suppose that it would be possible, at least in principle, to identify all the subsidiaries involved in achieving a particular focal integration. We would still find that anything serving as a subsidiary ceases to do so when focal attention is directed on it. It turns into a different kind of thing, *deprived of the meaning* it had while serving as a subsidiary."

¹⁴ Compare these verses from Friedrich Hölderlin's poem "An die Deutschen" ("To the Germans")

"Oder kommt, wie der Strahl aus dem Gewölke kommt,

Aus Gedanken die Tat? Leben die Bücher bald?"

(Or comes, like sunburst out of clouds,

a deed out of thoughts? Will books come to life soon? -- my translation)

¹⁵ POLANYI [1975], p. 61: "Any rules we have must be applied, of course; and, to do this, we may have additional rules for their application. But we cannot go on having specific rules for the application of specific rules ad infinitum." It goes without saying that this is the same regressus ad infinitum-argument as can be found in the work of Kant, Ryle and Wittgenstein.

¹⁶ POLANYI [1958], p. 264: "But systematic forms of criticism can be applied only to articulate forms (...). We should not apply, therefore, the terms "critical" or "uncritical" to any process of tacit thought *by itself*; any more than we would speak of the critical or uncritical performance of a high-jump or a dance." POLANYI [1975], p. 37: "You cannot use your spectacles to scrutinize your spectacles."

¹⁷ POLANYI [1958], p. 285: "Yet we can apply to our action no test of the kind to which we appeal for proving or disproving an explicit declaratory statement. There is therefore no possibility either for doubting what we do (or declare we do) in the sense in which an explicit statement can be doubted."

¹⁸ For more information on tradition in this sense: ACTON [1953], NYIRI [1992], especially Ch. 5 and O'HEAR [1992].

¹⁹ POLANYI [1958], p. 53

²⁰ WHITTAKER (1981), p. 49: “This kind of understanding consists in seeing the *point* of what is to be said and believed about God. To have this understanding one must know what it would mean to *abide* by a religious teaching, to bring one’s thinking and living under its rule and to form one’s cares and concerns in accordance with its implications. Such understanding is largely a practical matter.” Whittaker doesn’t mention Polanyi in this article; GILL [1975] and HIGH [1986] however draw heavily on Polanyi for an elucidation of religious knowledge.

²¹ POLANYI [1958], p. 198: “(...) the worshipper dwells within the fabric of religious ritual, which is potentially the highest degree of indwelling that is conceivable. For ritual comprises a sequence of things to be said and gestures to be made which involve the whole body and alert our whole existence. Anyone sincerely saying and doing these things in a place of worship could not fail to be completely absorbed in them. He would be partaking devoutly in religious life.”

²² POLANYI [1958], p. 282.

²³ POLANYI [1958], p. 279.

²⁴ Compare LINDBECK [1984], p. 35: “The primary knowledge is not *about* the religion, nor *that* the religion teaches such and such, but rather *how* to be religious in such and such ways.” See also the interesting discussion of Lindbeck in PHILLIPS (1988).

²⁵ ECKHART, Meister [1989], nr. 118, p. 234.

²⁶ ECKHART, Meister (1981), p. 252-4, my italics.

²⁷ Compare DE PATER (1988), p. 75.

²⁸ I would like to thank Prof. Phil Mullins and two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions.

Bibliography

ACTON, H.B. (1953), Tradition and some other forms of order, in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society N.S.*, Vol. LIII, 1-28.

COOPER, D.E. (1986), *Metaphor*, Aristotelian Society Series Vol. 5, Oxford: Blackwell.

DAVIES, B. (1993), *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

DE PATER, W. (1988), *Analogy, disclosures and narrative theology*, Louvain: Acco.

ECKHART, Meister (1981), *The essential sermons, commentaries, treatises, and defense*, transl. and introd. by E. Colledge and B. McGinn, New York: Paulist Press.

———, Maître (1989), *L'oeuvre latine de Maître Eckhart. Le commentaire de l'évangile selon Jean. Le*

- prologue (chap. 1, 1-18)*, A. de Libera, E. Wéber et E. Zum Brunn (eds.), Paris: Cerf.
- GILL, J.H. (1975), Tacit knowing and religious belief, in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. 6, 73-88.
- HIGH, D.M. (1986), On thinking more crazily than philosophers: Wittgenstein, knowledge and religious belief, in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. 19, 161-175.
- KANT, I. (1979), *Critique of Pure Reason*, transl. by J.M.D. Meiklejohn, London: Dent
- LINDBECK, G. (1984), *The Nature of Doctrine*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.
- NYIRI, J.C. (1992), *Tradition and Individuality. Essays*, Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- O'HEAR, A. (1992), Wittgenstein and the transmission of traditions, in PHILLIPS GRIFFITHS, A. (ed.), *Wittgenstein Centenary Essays*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 41-60.
- PHILLIPS, D.Z. (1988), *Faith after Foundationalism*, London: Routledge.
- POLANYI, M. (1958), *Personal Knowledge*, London: Routledge.
- , (1967), *The Tacit Dimension*, New York: Doubleday / Anchor Books.
- , (1969) "Sense-Giving and Sense Reading", in GRENE, M. (ed.), *Knowing and Being: Essays by Michael Polanyi*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 181-210.
- / PROSCH, H. (1975), *Meaning*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- ROUSE, J. (1987), *Knowledge and Power. Toward a political philosophy of science*, Ithaca / London: Cornell University Press.
- SANDERS, A.F. (1988), *Michael Polanyi's Post-Critical Epistemology. A Reconstruction of some Aspects of "Tacit Knowing"*, Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- WHITTAKER, J.H. (1981), Literal and figurative language of God, in *Religious Studies*, Vol. 17, 39-54.
- WITTGENSTEIN, L. (1994), *Philosophical Investigations*, ed. by G.E.M. Anscombe, Oxford: Blackwell.

Notes on Contributors

John Flett lives in New Zealand and is a professional chef and secretary of the DeepSight Trust (www.deepsight.org), an organization concerned with the effect Western culture has over the practice and content of religion. He has included on the DeepSight WWW site some information of Polanyi as well as a link to the Polanyi Society home page. (jflett@deepsight.org)

Walter Van Herck studied philosophy at the universities of Antwerp and Louvain. He received his PhD in Philosophy from the Catholic University of Louvain in 1996 with a dissertation on the problem that metaphor poses to religion, given the relativism that is intrinsic to metaphors. Since 1997, he has been research fellow for philosophy of religion at the University of Antwerp. Among his publications (mostly in Dutch) are a monograph on religion and metaphor, a volume (edited with Paul Cortois) on rationality and religious trust, and translations into Dutch of D.Z. Phillips, Alvin Plantinga and David Hume. Address: University of Antwerp, Dept. of Philosophy, Prinsstraat 13, B-2000 Antwerpen, Belgium. E-mail: (Walter.VanHerck@ufsia.ac.be)

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 double-spaced 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 normally will be sent out for blind review. Authors are expected to provide a hard copy and a disk or an electronic copy as an e-mail attachment. Be sure that electronic materials include all relevant information which may help converting files. 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.

Phil Mullins
Missouri Western State College
St. Joseph, Missouri 64507
Fax (816) 271-5987
Phone: (816)271-4386
E-mail: mullins@griffon.mwsc.edu

Walter Gulick
Montana State University, Billings
Billings, Montana 59101
Fax (406) 657-2187
Phone: (406) 657-2904
E-mail: wgulick@msu-b.edu

REVIEWS

Georg Hans Neuweg, *Könnerschaft und implizites Wissen. Zur lehr-lerntheoretischen Bedeutung der Erkenntnis- und Wissenstheorie Michael Polanyis*. Münster: Waxmann, 1999. 464p. 68 DM. ISBN 3-89325-753-5.

Michael Polanyi is hardly known in Germany today. His work outside of physical chemistry is not available in German, with the exception of *The Tacit Dimension* (available in a rather inexact translation) and the Eddington lectures (“Beyond Nihilism”). Language is not the only problem for his reception or lack thereof, however. There are at least two further problems which make Polanyi almost inaccessible to the German reader. One is his style of scholarship. Writing essentially for an English-language audience, he presents even his greatest breakthroughs as if they were common sense. German language readers simply do not know where to put him in intellectual history, unless they are very well trained philosophers. The other problem is that Polanyi wrestled with the problems posed and solutions found by the southwest German school of philosophy and sociology which is practically extinct, and does this, of course, implicitly. He even misleads the reader who is not too careful into believing that he is following the lead of Dilthey.

Neuweg’s book addresses the first problem splendidly. It is a very learned work (apparently his Habilitation, the “second book” required for a career in German language universities). The title gives the focus of the book: it is the expert and his or her implicit knowledge. In particular, Neuweg examines the importance of Polanyi’s theories for theories of teaching and learning. He relates Polanyi’s contributions to philosophy and psychological research. In particular, Neuweg discusses the work of Gilbert Ryle at length and relates it to Polanyi.

It is a little odd that an introduction to Polanyi’s life and work is given in the middle of the text (Chapter 8, 14 pages). It seems to this reviewer that Neuweg tends to overstate the importance of the tacit dimension and to underplay the importance of levels for his thought. For a systematic introduction, one going beyond theories of learning, it would have been worthwhile to at least hint at the links of Polanyi’s thought to the southwestern German school of philosophy and sociology (Windelband, Weber).

The book certainly does give the flavour of Polanyi’s work. It contains quite a few of Polanyi’s striking examples which are frequently so convincing that the reader does lose the argument they are supposed to prove. Neuweg places them in their systematic context. It is important to note that he is concerned with learning and teaching rather complex skills, such as those required in a profession, thereby going well beyond more simplistic models of learning.

This is the first major exposition of Polanyi’s work in German. It is to be hoped that the increased visibility and accessibility will lead to an awareness of this great scholar who was one of Germany’s leading scientists until 1933.

Klaus R. Allerbeck
Kronberg, Germany
allerbeck@soz.uni-frankfurt.de

Jeffrey Wattles, *The Golden Rule*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. Pp. x + 257. \$19.95, paper. ISBN: 0-19-511036-6.

Wattles seeks to “erode our familiarity” with the so-called Golden Rule so as to assess its value as a philosophy of life (8-9). He does so by providing what he calls histories of the Golden Rule, beginning with Confucian teachings and ending with twentieth century western philosophy and theology. Although he does some cross-cultural work, the bulk of his summaries deal with western culture. Upon reading the history, he tells a story of an ethic rooted in ancient cultures that grows until criticized under the microscope of modernity, from whence some efforts to reclaim and rehabilitate the ethic have been made in liberal theology, psychology, ethics and phenomenology. While the bulk of this book is devoted to summary of what other people have said about the Golden Rule, Wattles does think that criticisms of the Golden Rule can be successfully refuted and that it can be a useful part of an ethic. The last section of the book thus contains his constructive ethic. An ethic of the Golden Rule, for Wattles, is at least religion-friendly. It is an ethic that understands that agents are people who are embedded in relationships and their socio-historical context. It takes the rule as what, at first, seems intuitively obvious but leads the person onto the pathway of intellectual, emotional and spiritual growth. It is thus an ethic of character development.

Although Wattles does not describe himself in these terms, he supports an ethic of character. He is to be commended for attending to the moral importance of imagination, empathy and our emotional capacities in general, themes that Polanyians will find congenial. He rightly recognizes that emotions are not enemies to be overcome, but resources for living well that need exercise and training, just like our intellectual powers. The book is clearly-written, effectively organized and impressively wide-ranging. If there are deficiencies, one might wish that he engaged more contemporary post-modern thinkers and offered less summary and more of his own critical analyses along

the way. Nonetheless, Wattles provides an excellent and useful resource for anyone interested in the Golden Rule that could profitably be used in upper-level religion and philosophy classes.

Paul Lewis
High Point, NC
lewis@highpoint.net

WWW Polanyi Resources

The Polanyi Society has a World Wide Web site at <http://www.mwsc.edu/~polanyi/>. In addition to information about Polanyi Society membership and meetings, the site contains the following: (1) the history of Polanyi Society publications, including a listing of issues by date and volume with a table of contents for recent issues of *Tradition and Discovery*; (2) a comprehensive listing of *Tradition and Discovery* authors, reviews and reviewers; (3) information on locating early publications; (4) information on *Appraisal and Polanyiana*, two sister journals with special interest in Polanyi's thought; (5) the “Guide to the Papers of Michael Polanyi” which provides an orientation to archival material housed in the Department of Special Collections of the University of Chicago Library; (6) photographs of Michael Polanyi.

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 three issues of *TAD* each year.

Annual membership in the Polanyi Society is \$20 (\$10 for students). The membership cycle follows the academic year; subscriptions are due September 1 to Phil Mullins, Humanities, Missouri Western State College, St. Joseph, MO 64507 (fax: 816-271-5987, e-mail: mullins@griffon.mwsc.edu) Please make checks payable to the Polanyi Society. Dues can be paid by credit card by providing the card holder's name as it appears on the card, the card number and expiration date. Changes of address and inquiries should be sent to Mullins. New members should provide the following subscription information: complete mailing address, telephone (work and home), e-mail address and/or fax number. 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.

