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Preface

This issue includes an interesting article by Spencer McWilliams, a psychologist, who draws out parallels between Polanyi and George Kelly's Personal Construct Psychology. It also has an article by Phil Rolnick which explores Polanyi's assumptions about progress. The essay is an extensively revised and expanded version of a paper given in 1991 at the American Academy of Religion Polanyi Society meeting; it was an effort that produced an animated discussion. At the end of Gelwick's "News and Notes," he mentions that William Poteat will be the special guest at the upcoming Polanyi Society meeting in Washington in November. In the next issue of TAD, there will be more about this, including an article on Poteat and his use of Polanyi's thought. Poteat's new book, A Philosophical Daybook (and his old book, Polanyian Meditations), is good preparatory reading for the Washington meeting.

Electronic Polanyi: INTERNET List Access

Through the good work of Polanyi Society member John Apczynski and the folks at Saint Bonaventure University, The Polanyi Society now has an electronic "discussion list." In my "Preface" to TAD 18:3 and TAD 19:1, there were a few comments about John's efforts and the eventual uses of an electronic address which interested persons across the world can tap into. A "discussion list" is obviously a place where people can exchange ideas; hopefully, it will serve both those in The Polanyi Society as well as persons who are not yet thoroughly familiar with Polanyi's writing. Materials, such as the papers which are written each year for Polanyi Society meetings, can be made available electronically. This will save meager Society funds. Eventually, perhaps some TAD materials can be electronically archived. Andy Sanders in Holland will be using the "discussion list" to manage a bibliography project on Polanyi; the next issue of TAD should provide some details about this immediately forthcoming electronic endeavor.

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JOHN PUDDEFOOT, Head of the Mathematics Department at Eton and Coordinator of the CONVIVIUM Group in the United Kingdom and on the Continent is one of the featured leaders of a conference on “Science and Theology: Questions at the Interface” to be held at Dunedin, New Zealand, August 15-21, 1993. Other speakers are Norma Emerton, DANIEL HARDY (Director of the Center for Theological Inquiry at Princeton and speaker at several Polanyi centennial meetings), John Polkingorne, and Carver T. Yu.

POLANYI AND EDUCATION. Last year The Nation asked educators, public school activists, scholars and writers to tell them about a book on education, written in the twentieth century, that they would propose as a tool in the struggle to uphold the idea of democratic schooling today. The editors of The Nation are concerned about the political right’s attack on the U.S. public school as a history of “failed experiments.” One of the persons asked was Howard Earl Gardner, a psychologist, professor in the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Gardener is the author of six very interesting books: The Shattered Mind (1975), Art, Mind, Brain (1982), Frames of Mind (1983), The Mind’s New Science (1985), To Open Minds (1989), and The Unschooled Mind (1991). He has also been the director of a major educational research program known as “Project Zero.” Gardener’s choice of one book written in this century that would serve to aid the preservation and development of free public education was Personal Knowledge. In the brief space that he was allowed, Gardner wrote for the September 21, 1992 issue:

I’d like to use this opportunity to call attention to a deep meditation on the nature of teaching and learning - Michael

Polanyi’s Personal Knowledge (University of Chicago). A scientist by training, Polanyi contends that the most crucial forms of understanding can never be achieved simply by reading or listening to lectures in a schoolroom. It is crucial that learners, of whatever age and persuasion, participate in a community in which experts use their knowledge in meaningful ways.

Much, perhaps most, of what a scholar or scientist or sculptor or surgeon knows or does can never be captured in words; it must be absorbed by an extended apprenticeship in the presence of that expert. Moreover, learners can only become part of such a community if they themselves come to have a personal stake in that knowledge, a passion for it, a sensitivity to its uses and its abuses.

Reading Polanyi will not tell you how to prepare a lesson for Monday morning or how to lead a protest against an action of your school board. But Personal Knowledge will remind you of what education can be like and how we must radically reconfigure our institutions if we are to have a citizenry that wishes to understand, that can create a new knowledge and that cares about community.

Howard Gardner’s article led me to search the computer online files of ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) for Polanyi which turned up the following list that includes some members (NAMES IN CAPITALS) of our Society. The list for 1982-93, reported the following:


Finally, a note and journal copy from WALTER THORSON lets us know that our distinguished member, THOMAS F. TORRANCE, published in the 1992, Fall issue of Touchstone: A Journal of Ecumenical Orthodoxy an article supporting the ordination of women. The article has stimulated a strong response in the Winter issue.

Remember to include William Poteat’s works in your summer reading. We will have a special opportunity to discuss with him at the November meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Washington, D.C.

Richard Gelwick, General Coordinator