# REVIEWS

Michael S. Gazzaniga, *The Ethical Brain: the Science of Our Moral Dilemmas*. New York: HarperPerennial, 2005. Pp. xix + 218. ISBN 0-06-088473-8. $14.95. Paperback.

In this intriguing, yet ultimately exasperating book, the director of the SAGE Center for the Study of the Mind at UC Santa Barbara and a member of President Bush's Council on Bioethics attempts to bring insights from the neurosciences to bear on moral issues raised by the latest biomedical technologies. Arranging these essays into four sections, Gazzaniga addresses issues at the beginnings and endings of life (Part I), the possibilities of brain enhancement/increasing intelligence (Part II), the implications of the neurosciences for concepts of free will and personal responsibility as they apply in the legal arena (Part III), and calls for the development of a universal ethic based on shared brain structures (Part IV). Each chapter essentially follows the same trajectory: it begins with a dilemma raised by new biotechnologies, reviews the science, reviews the leading arguments about the dilemma, and concludes with a section entitled "Perspectives" in which Gazzaniga states his own position. For example, in the first chapter, devoted to the moral status of the embryo, Gazzaniga summarizes the process of fetal development, reviews arguments for granting or not granting status based on the potentiality of the embryo to become human, its continuity or discontinuity with fully-formed human life, and arguments based on human intention. In the end, he affirms the practice of using the fourteen-day limit for experimentation, since the embryo's nervous system has not yet begun to develop.

Whatever the issue, Gazzaniga generally takes the most optimistic and libertarian stance possible, thus adopting something of an anti-Kass position (Leon Kass chaired President Bush's Council on Bioethics and typically advises caution in the face of new biomedical possibilities). For example, while acknowledging that he could not choose euthanasia, Gazzaniga wants to allow freedom of choice in a pluralistic society (33). He is happy to allow brain enhancement via genetic engineering and/or drug therapy. When confronted with the worries such as those expressed by Michael Sandel, he says,

> Tampering with the evolved human fabric is playing with fire, to be sure. And yet I also firmly believe we can handle it. In the end, we humans are good at adapting to what works, what is good and beneficial, and, in the end, jettisoning the unwise, the intemperate, the silly, and self-aggrandizing behaviors that will always be present in certain proportions of our species (53).

Rather than seeing such expressions of "hyperagency" as Promethean, he interprets them as nothing but "the human, evolutionary drive to engineer our survival" (40). His point is well-taken, for human beings are inevitably creative, experimenting creatures. Nevertheless, one wonders if he downplays too much the dangers and costs of trusting in human beings to self-correct. Gazzanaga notes that previous attempts at social engineering in the name of science have failed, but he does not address the millions killed by the Nazi or Soviet experiments he mentions explicitly (53). Might the price of waiting for such "self-correction" be too high? One wishes that his optimism reflected a more Niebuhrian realism, or at least was grounded in a thicker historical/sociological analysis.

His writing is also sometimes careless. Whether he does so intentionally or not, Gannaziga makes claims that can easily be misinterpreted or gloss over significant debates. For example, in discussing the moral status of the embryo, he makes the claim that the brain makes us distinctly human (4). This statement

ignores the fact that legions of living creatures have brains. No, what makes human beings distinctive is that we have brains that are distinctive in size and structure. That may be what he means, but it is not what he says. Other claims that he blithely takes as true—such as the modularity of the brain (147) or the existence of a moral sense (167, 177) are at best disputed, if not rejected by many other neuroscientists.

At other times, some parts of Gazzaniga's analysis at best rest uneasily with others. Take, for example, Gazzaniga's claims about brains and personhood. At several points, he makes clear that human beings are nothing but their brains (e.g., 31). As noted above, this claim gives him warrant for *not* granting moral status to an embryo—which does not have a brain. However, Gazzaniga argues that one should not withdraw moral status from someone in a persistent vegetative state because the person exists "in you" even if the brain is functioning at a level that no longer is humanly distinct (32). Thus Gazzanaga lets the social dimension of personhood trump issues at the end of life, but does not explain why it applies only then, rather than at the beginning; after all, embryos exist in relationships and have significance to others.

This social dimension of personhood is also central to Gazzaniga's defense of personal responsibility in Part III of the book, where he takes pains to argue that "brains are automatic, rule-governed, determined devices, while people are personally responsible agents, free to make their own decisions" (90; see also 99). But if we are our brain, and our brains are automatic, etc., then what happens to responsibility? Gazzaniga is frustratingly silent on how these two realms might coexist. The resources are out there; as members of this Society well know, Polanyi's ideas about multi-leveled reality and dual control provide such tools, as do others, but Gazzaniga makes no attempt to identify or use them.

The book is at its strongest when Gazzaniga sticks to the basics of the neurosciences. His descriptions of fetal development (4-7), the biology of the aging brain (23-28), basics of genetic engineering (41-49), neuroplasticity (59-68), and the workings of memory (126-139) are among some of the most lucid summaries this reviewer has seen. Gazzaniga therefore does an excellent job of communicating complex matters of science to a lay audience.

In the end, the book offers an eminently readable, but confounding attempt to bring neuroscience and ethics together. I have no doubt that we are wired to form beliefs (xviii) or that a scientific understanding of brain mechanisms can make important contributions to ethics. At the same time, this book serves as an example of what can go wrong when an expert in one field colonizes another. Just as philosophers and theologians need to be wary about pretending to be scientists, scientists need to be more careful when taking on the role of philosopher or ethicist than Gazzaniga appears to be in this work.

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Tibor Frank. *Double Exile: Migrations of Jewish-Hungarian Professionals through Germany to the United States, 1919-1945.* Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009. Pp. 501. ISBN 978-3-03911-331-6. £50. $85.95.

Tibor Frank's *Double Exile* presents a thoroughly-researched and well-thought-out account of the emigration of intellectuals from Hungary during the interwar period. One portion of chapter 5 deals specifically with Michael Polanyi, although there is much more that this: Polanyi appears throughout the book as an example of many of the points Frank makes about emigrants and their experience. In fact, Frank draws, in his concluding chapter, on a quote from Polanyi to sum up what the book is about. "Polanyi spoke for, and spoke of his generation when discussing originality and invention, discovery and the heuristic act, investigation and problem solving" (432). Polanyi, Frank explains, offered his own understanding of genius.

Frank, who is Professor of History and Director of the School of English and American Studies at

Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, has published a number of articles about Hungarian scientists and migrations of Hungarian intellectuals. This book appears in the Exile Studies series (vol. 7) by Peter Lang Publishers, a series that includes titles in German and English. *Double Exile* is a social history of Hungarian scientists and artists, mostly Jews, who left Hungary after the First World War. It is the biography of the interwar generation, a research strategy Frank refers to as "prosopography," by which he means, "a vision of a group rather than a series of personal biographies" (13). He brings together the experiences of these travelling intellectuals, most of whom migrated through Germany, and many of whom ended up in the United States, to identify the conditions for Hungarian genius. To carry out this project, Frank collected documents at some forty archives located across the United States, as well as Germany, Austria and Hungary. His biographical sketches are drawn from archival materials. For some, there is abundant material; for others, the material is much more limited.

Frank discusses the social origins of Hungarian genius, the social tension of 1918-1920 which motivated emigration, Germany as a port of call, the situation concerning refugees in the United States, the experience of the migrants, and their contribution to the American war effort. He explains the Hungarian contribution to the war effort with reference to George Pólya, Theodore von Kármán, John von Neumann, and Leo Szilard. The origins of the genius behind the Hungarian contribution can be traced to the Hungarian economy and its emphasis on technology advances, social chemistry within the city of Budapest, the Hungarian school system (largely influenced by German pedadogy), and cultural transfer from Germany. His approach is "social historical rather than biographical." He includes an appendix with the names of more than 250 notable Hungarian-Americans. These include composers, authors, journalists, playrights, actors, photographers, chemists, singers, mathematicians, engineers, painters, sociologists, filmmakers, physicians, psychoanalysts, historians, economists and designers.

Many, although not all, of these Hungarian émigrés, were Jewish. The dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian empire at the end of the First World War brought about a vastly different period in Hungarian history, particularly with respect to Hungarian Jews. "Some of the best minds, most of them Jewish-Hungarian mathematicians, scientists, and musicians [were] compelled to leave the country" (15). The fact that many of these individuals were "more Hungarian than Jewish" did not shield them from the anti-Semitism that came to expression in the Horthy regime after the failed Bolshevik-style revolution of 1919 in which Jews were perceived to have played an important role. They represented "mostly an assimilated, Magyarized, typically non-religious middle or upper class" (15). They gravitated to one of the German-speaking countries, and as Hitler claimed power, left for the United States. This category includes the Polanyi family. Polanyi was born into a non-observant Jewish family, and he learned to appreciate the wonders of science rather than the traditions of Judaism. He left Budapest for Germany, found his way to England, and would have entered the United States if it were not for a misunderstanding on the part of US immigration authorities about his political commitments.

The details Frank provides about Polanyi will not be new to those familiar with Polanyi's life and work, but the larger canvass on which Frank presents Polanyi's portrait offers fresh insight and understanding. There are many interesting comparisons that can be made. One of the fascinating aspects of the book is the way in which the émigré intellectuals pursued individual solutions to collective problems. In many cases, the solutions they found were more positive than negative, particularly from the standpoint of contributing to the defeat of Hitler's Germany. That said, the toll on the individuals themselves was often a high price to pay. Many left family members behind, in Hungary and Germany; most experienced recurrent psychological dilemmas and these were by no means positive. Leo Szilard retained "psychological complexes" that drove him to live "always in hotels or rented rooms instead of setting up his own residence" (149).

This brings us to the "double exile" of the title. There are two senses in which this can be understood. The Hungarian emigrants of Polanyi's generation were *doubly exiled* in the sense of being Hungarian and Jewish. When in Germany, and in the United States, they represented a subset within a set, a minority within a minority community. They were also double exiles in the sense of being *twice exiled*; first from Hungary, then from Germany. While in Hungary, many had absorbed German language and culture, and the escape from Germany amounted to a profound loss. Polanyi's "Copernican turn" illustrates this well. "Polanyi chose" Frank says, "a very special, complex form of emigration: first he left medicine, then Hungary and the Hungarian language, then he left Germany for Britain, as well as science for philosophy, and chose English rather than German as an exclusive language of publication" (268).

Actually, Polanyi's life changes illustrate something more along the line of a triple exile, or in Frank's language, "multiple exiles" (243). Polanyi's conversion meant that he was estranged from Jewish identity as well as German and Hungarian identity. Frank proposes that conversion to Christianity represented "a certain type of mental pattern that enabled and prepared some of the émigré intellectuals and professionals to adapt to the challenges of life outside Hungary" (45). Conversion may have reduced some of the difficulty of exile, although even assimilation or integration on this level was problematic. Frank quotes Hannah Arendt who spoke of the "quick identity changes" immigrants were advised to make on arrival in the United States. "We were told to forget; and we forgot quicker than anybody ever could imagine...after four weeks in France or six weeks in America, we pretended to be Frenchmen or Americans" (208). If, while in Germany, Polanyi had managed to forget his Jewish background, he was reminded in the 1930s. Baptism meant nothing to the National Socialist regime—a converted Jew was a Jew. But, it signified a great deal to Jewish relief committees; they regarded converts as apostates and overlooked them in arranging assistance.

Frank raises a question that applies to many of the scientists and scholars he considers, including to some extent, Polanyi. In thinking about national origins of scholars, is it their country of origin, or that of their training, which matters? (321). As a matter of research methodology, it is a practical question, and as a matter of explaining genius, it is a substantive question. In Polanyi's case, it raises a question about his "republic of science." Polanyi had envisioned a community of scientists, guided by pursuit of the truth, committed to mutual criticism. Scientists formed their own nation above and beyond the nations in which they were born, educated and worked. In becoming a scientist, he sought to transcend national identity. Frank concludes that "the bulk of this outstanding group lived a relatively happy and successful life in America" (438), as evidenced by their enviable life span. About a third reached 85 years of age or more. It seems a reasonable conclusion, although what Frank explains about US immigration policy demonstrates that America was not always happy to receive them.

*Double Exile* offers an interesting and evocative read for anyone interested in Polanyi or his contemporaries. Frank has unearthed a wealth of archival data to support a thoughtful account of Hungarian émigrés, intellectuals who had such an important role in the events of the twentieth century; his book will remain an invaluable resource for years to come.

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Keith Clements (ed.). *The Moot Papers, Faith, Freedom and Society, 1938-1947*. London: T &T Clark, 2010. Pp. viii +740. ISBN: 978-0-03257. $295.

This massive new volume contains the minutes of the first twenty meetings of "The Moot," running from April 1-4, 1938 through June 23-25, 1944. What was "The Moot" ? It was a remarkable British discussion group of intellectuals who were gathered together by an extraordinary figure, J. H. Oldham, who was an important British religious intellectual but was also a very effective change agent. "The Moot" aspired to analyze the contemporary world and catalyze a wider

movement drawing on the resources of Christianity to transform the social order. This was a group vitally concerned about the emerging world in the era of wartime Europe. The discussions in "The Moot" were quite diverse, but perhaps Clements captures the general orientation when he says that "The Moot" discussed "the nature of modern society, the relationship between social planning and freedom, and the role of religiously-based values in shaping society" (1). Those who participated in Moot discussions were an important but diverse set of intellectuals including T. S. Eliot, Karl Mannheim, John Middleton Murray, Walter Moberly, John Baillie, and, very late in this group's life, Michael Polanyi. "The Moot" was convened in 1938 and chaired by J. H. Oldham, who was possibly the most important leader in British and international Christian missionary affairs from l9l0, when he chaired the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, until the middle of the last century. Oldham loomed large in the ecumenical movement and as a Christian activist engaged in the affairs of the world in the first half of the twentieth century; he was honorary President of the World Council of Churches from 1961 until his death at 94 in 1969.

Polanyi was invited to "The Moot" as a guest at the June 23-26, 1944 meeting, and this was the last of "The Moot" meetings whose records are in this volume. "The Moot " had one member, Eric Fenn, who attended nearly every meeting and took almost verbatim notes on these gatherings that often lasted several days, and these notes became the official Moot minutes which Oldham circulated (along with papers by participants and others) to prepare for subsequent meetings. Fenn's notes of the June 1944 meeting indicate that, although Polanyi was a "guest," he was a very lively participant who had much to say about science. Polanyi was invited back to the December 1944 meeting where he, as well as Karl Mannheim, provided a formal response to a paper by T. S.Eliiot on the role of the clerisy. Polanyi's nascent ideas about the operation of the scientific community and the importance of tradition seem to have jelled as he was interacting with the ideas of figures like Eliot and Mannheim. According to correspondence with Oldham, Polanyi also provided another paper for this meeting, "Scientific Materialism and the Modern Crisis." There are, unfortunately, no notes for Polanyi's second meeting because Eric Fenn was absent. Fenn also missed the one Moot meeting held in 1945, 1946 and January 1947, but Polanyi was almost certainly involved in at least two of these, providing a paper or response. Oldham officially disbanded "The Moot" in early 1947 after the death on January 9th of Karl Mannheim, another Jewish Hungarian émigré and a friend of Polanyi who was at least partly responsible for Polanyi's original invitation to "The Moot." Mannheim was in many ways the central figure in "The Moot" and his earlier work in Germany as a sociologist of knowledge interested in the crisis in modern culture made him a natural to recruit for "The Moot" with its interest in transforming the social order. Mannheim's ideas about "planning for freedom"—ideas that Polanyi at least in part disputed in his interaction with Mannheim outside "The Moot"—were central to the discussions of "The Moot." Less than a year after Mannheim's death, Oldham convened the first of several successor groups which were very like the original Moot and in fact included a number of former Moot members. Michael Polanyi was likely involved in as many as ten of these successor group meetings over the next thirteen years and perhaps, as Clements implies, the agendas of many of Oldham's successor group meetings reflect "the decease of Mannheim and the advent of Polanyi," since the meetings become "more focused on issues of scientific interpretation and belief rather than on society" (17). Certainly, it is clear that many Polanyi essays and elements of Polanyi books originate and are worked over in the context of the serious discussions in Oldham's groups (e.g., one meeting in September 1953 apparently was devoted to discussion of themes in Polanyi's Gifford Lectures). Perhaps this is one reason that Michael Polanyi told Richard Gelwick in 1962 that participation in Oldham's groups did more to influence his thought than anything other than his experience as a scientist (see Gelwick's dissertation, "Michael Polanyi: *Credere Aude*, His Theory of Knowledge and Its Implications for Christian Theology," Th.D. Dissertation, Pacific School of Religion, 1962, p. 11, note 8).

Clearly, Oldham was one of Michael Polanyi's most influential friends from 1944 until Oldham 's death. Polanyi openly acknowledged that Oldham and his circle played a role in expanding his intellectual life; they seem particularly to have been important in broadening Polanyi's interest in religion and culture. There are more than a hundred letters to and from Oldham—as well as some materials from "The Moot" and successor Oldham groups in which Polanyi participated—in the Papers of Michael Polanyi in the Department of Special Collections at the University of Chicago Library. Oldham was one of the five people who read the whole draft of *Personal Knowledge* and his letter to Polanyi of May 11, 1957 (Box 15, Folder 5) led Polanyi to rewrite the final chapter of his *magnum opus*. Polanyi's *The Study of Man* (1959) is dedicated to J. H. Oldham (see my analysis of Oldham's influence in "Michael Polanyi and J. H. Oldham, In Praise of Friendship," *Appraisal*, v. 4, n. 4 [Oct. 1997]: 179-189). Nobody knows more about J. H. Oldham than Keith Clements, who in 1999 published the definitive biography of Oldham, *J. H. Oldham: Faith on the Frontier*. *The Moot Papers* is in many ways a natural extension of Clements' work on Oldham since "The Moot" was such an interesting and influential creation of Oldham.

Clements is aware that most people now know little about the British context of World War II. He goes to great lengths to see that readers will understand these Moot minutes in their proper wartime context. His book begins with a short overview chapter on "The Moot" and its formation, who its members were, the pattern of Moot meetings, the themes that are developed and run through sets of meetings, published material outside "The Moot" that draws on Moot discussions (e.g., Eliot's *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* [1948]), and finally, Oldham's termination of "The Moot." There follows a more extensive discussion of who "The Moot" members were. Since Mannheim was the central figure in the group, a short chapter is devoted to the development of his ideas, showing how "The Moot" proved to be a natural incubator for this new refugee. There are shorter bibliographic notes helpful for orientation on other Moot members, including Polanyi. The twenty primary chapters following the introductory materials are, of course, focused around the minutes to the successive meetings, but Clements provides with each chapter several helpful elements. There is a brief comment on the immediate context of each particular meeting which outlines events on the world stage (e.g., the first touches on events leading up to the war) and also often notes more local activities of figures like Oldham. There is a short discussion of what Clements dubs "preparatory material." Each Moot meeting in some ways built on its predecessor. Not only were the minutes circulated, but also papers prepared by members or non-members, which members were expected to study before the meeting. Clements often summarizes at least some of the papers, responses to papers and other circulated materials. Sometimes the bulk and the range of the reading were significant. Oldham seems to have been something of a circus master who put together (often in consultation with members) and sent out materials and worked out an agenda for meetings which covered most of the material. Finally, it is worth noting that in the meeting minutes themselves, Clements has added many footnotes; these identify figures or ideas referred to in Fenn's often very concise summaries of points made in discussion. In sum, Clements does an outstanding job of "surrounding" the minutes with resources that allow the reader to follow the discussion.

While the price of this book is steep, it certainly is the sort of solid scholarly resource that one hopes to find in a good library. Keith Clements has carefully assembled here an important set of materials; anyone interested in Polanyi who takes a look at these materials will certainly better understand the British milieu in which Polanyi's philosophical ideas take shape.

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