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# Tradition & Discovery

## Submission Guidelines

# PREFACE

Welcome to this **bonus issue of *TAD***, as this indeed a fourth issue for Volume 42. Normally, we publish three times per year, but because the publication calendar has now been aligned with the new date for dues payments, the first issue of each volume will begin with the February issue. Rather than skip our normal October issue, we simply made it number 4. Future volumes will, however, contain only the usual three issues: February, July, and October.

As Volume 42 opened with an issue devoted to papers from the **Poteat conference** held at Yale in 2014, this issue closes the volume with more essays from the conference. Robert Hyatt and Dale Cannon served as guest editors and I am grateful for their hard work in pulling this intriguing set of essays together. Hyatt's introduction to this latest set of essays from that conference found on page 9. Ron Hall's paper on Poteat, submitted independently, makes a fitting addition to the contents of this issue. In keeping with the Poteat focus of this issue, note the ad/notice in News and Notes for *Recovering the Personal: the Philosophical Anthropology of William H. Poteat*, edited by Dale Cannon and Ron Hall. The book contains more papers from the conference and has been published by Lexington Press.

Pay special attention in this issue, too, to the information in News and Notes about the 2016 Annual meeting, especially the information about the session devoted to **Matt Crawford**, who is scheduled to meet with us. To whet your appetite, this issue contains a review of his latest book, *The World Beyond Your Head*.

While it is a rare item in our contents, we publish in this issue a letter to the editor from **Paul Craig Roberts**, who adds to the material in the last issue on Polanyi's economic thought. Roberts certainly speaks with authority on this issue as he studied with Polanyi from 1963-1965 and 1967-1968 and stayed in relationship with the Michael and Magda until their deaths. He has taught at Stanford and Georgetown, served in the US government (most notably as Assistant Secretary of the US Treasury for Domestic Economic Policy), and written for the *Wall Street Journal*. Currently, he chairs the Institute for Political Economy and maintains the website, www.paulcraigroberts.org.

In addition, you will find our membership renewal form inserted in this issue. Be sure to **send in your annual dues by December 31** in order to keep a print copy of *TAD* coming to you (if you have paid ahead, check your mailing label for the due date).

I also need to note **changes to the editorial board** for *TAD*. **Walt Gulick** has stepped down as Book Review Editor after many years of service and **Andrew Grosso** has agreed to take on that role temporarily until **Spencer Case**, a graduate student in Philosophy at University of Colorado who has joined the board, is ready to take over. I want to thank Walt for his hard work at keeping us informed on books of interest, his eagle eyes for proofreading, and his ability to find people to write reviews. I also want to welcome Spencer aboard.

*Paul Lewis*

# NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**Ellen W. Bernal** (ellermob@gmail.com) is a graduate of Beloit College and Duke University. She served the Bioethics Network of Ohio in various capacities and has been Director of Ethics at St. Vincent Mercy Medical Center, Toledo, Ohio. She continues to offer presentations for Ethics Committees, health care professionals, and other groups.

**Allen Dyer** (adyer@mfa.gwu.edu) is Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and Vice-chair for Education at the George Washington University, where his academic foci are global health and mental health, ethics and professionalism, cancer survivorship, spirituality, and health and psychoanalysis. He is a graduate of Brown and Duke Universities.

**Walter Gulick** (WGulick@msubillings.edu) is Professor of Philosophy emeritus at Montana State University, Billings. He has served the Polanyi Society in many capacities, including President, Book Review Editor for *TAD*, and Chair of the Annual Meeting Program Committee.

**Ron Hall** (ronhall@stetson.edu) is Professor of Philosophy, Stetson University, as well as Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion.*

**Robert P. Hyatt** (shoalcreekhyatt@aol.com) is a graduate of Yale and Duke. Prior to retiring, he taught Religion and Political Philosophy at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts where he also served as Dean of Students. He has also worked as a public elementary school counselor and in private practice as a child therapist.

**Sam Mann** (revmann@aol.com) is a graduate of Birmingham Southern College and Duke University. He is retired after a career as pastor of the all-Black St. Mark Union Church in Kansas City, MO. Mann is also a past chair of the Kansas City chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

**Robert C. Prust** (prust@yahoo.com) is retired from St. Andrews University in North Carolina, active in the Forum on Persons, and working on a book, *By the Character of Their Resolve: How We Identify Those We Judge.*

**Sam D. Watson** (S.Watson@uncc.edu) wrote his dissertation on Polanyi; both Polanyi and Poteat responded generously as he was writing it. Guided by their thought, Sam devoted his career to teaching writing at UNC Charlotte.

# NEWS AND NOTES

## 2016 Annual Meeting to Feature Matthew B. Crawford

We hope to see many of you at the 2016 Annual Meeting of the Polanyi Society, which will take place this year in San Antonio on November 18 and 19. Our featured speaker will be Matt Crawford, the author of the stimulating *Shop Class and Soul Craft* (reviewed in *TAD* 37:1) and *The World Beyond Your Head* (reviewed in this issue). Crawford earned a Ph.D. in political philosophy from the University of Chicago and counts Polanyi as a major influence on his thought. For more information about Crawford, check out http://www.matthewbcrawford.com.

The meeting will consist of three sessions:

- *Friday 4:00-6:00 pm*: TBA
- *Saturday 9:00-11:30 am*: Crawford
    Presentation by Crawford
    Panel of Responses
    Open Discussion
- *Saturday 7:00-9:00 pm*: The new introductions to *Personal Knowledge* and *The Tacit Dimension*.

For up-to-date information, watch for announcements on the Polanyi discussion list and the Polanyi Society website: http://polanyisociety.org. Information on how to sign up for the discussion list can be found, later in this issue.

## Brief Report on Wisconsin Conference

A total of 35 people participated in "Polanyi Studies: Past, Present, and Future," held at Nashotah House Theological Seminary in Wisconsin on June 7-10, 2016. The Wednesday sessions were set up primarily for newcomers to Polanyi's work, of whom there were several at the meeting. Other sessions explored a variety of topics, including epistemology, economics, moral philosophy, and aesthetics. There was a fascinating presentation of Polanyi's involvement with various study groups funded by the Ford Foundation. The recent book by Hubert Dreyfus and Charles Taylor, *Retrieving Realism*, was the subject of a panel discussion. Photos from the conference are available at https://picasaweb.google.com/100448186460177805196/629365 3853714856769?authuser=0&feat=direc tlink

## December 31 is Deadline for Paying 2017 Dues

December 31 is now the deadline for payment of annual dues, unless you have paid ahead. The due date now appears on mailing labels. Dues must be current to receive the print copy of *TAD*.

## *Recovering the Personal* Now Available

*Recovering the Personal: the Philosophical Anthropology of William H. Poteat*, edited by **Dale Cannon** and **Ron Hall** has been published by Lexington Press. The book contains more papers from the Yale conference. For more information, see https://Rowman.com/Lexington.

# LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Congratulations and thanks to Paul Lewis and the contributors to *TAD* 42/3 for the essays on the foundational role of economics in Michael Polanyi's thought. Polanyi's explanations of economic and social organization are as unique as his ideas about the structure of knowledge, but he did not have time to develop all of his ideas generated by his unique awareness of the intellectual crisis of his time, a crisis that has continued into our time. As Polanyi's student to whom he assigned the clarification and development of his economic thought while he focused on his theory of knowledge, I am stimulated to attempt to add to the discussion.

## Polanyi's Purposes and Contributions to Economics

By the 1930s Polanyi was established as one of the most important scientists of his time. Some of his students won Nobel Prizes as did his son, John. I remember Polanyi telling me that at one time every section chairman of the Royal Society was his former student.

Polanyi did not leave science because he was unsuccessful or bored with its practice. He left it because he saw that science and liberty itself were threatened by inconsistencies in the intellectual foundations of Western civilization. It was his unique insights into these dangerous inconsistencies that launched his career into economics and epistemology.

It is my contention, expressed in a letter to *TAD* 38/3, that a full understanding of Polanyi requires an understanding of his motives and of Polanyi's unique awareness of the intellectual failures that produced an inverted morality that threatened the continuation of "a society of explorers." For a number of years, I have noticed the tendency on the part of academics to academicize Polanyi, thus removing him from his purposes. Once

removed from his purposes, he becomes lost in academic disputes.

The essays in *TAD* 42/3 by Eduardo Beira, Anne McCants, and Harry Prosch, together with Polanyi's 1937 address, "On Popular Education in Economics," show that the redirection of Polanyi's intellectual energy had moral purpose. Anne McCants, for example, realizes that Polanyi's critique of utilitarian or laissez faire economics is a moral critique and that his film, *The Money Circle*, "is itself a deeply moral project." Polanyi's purpose was to save Western civilization, which he regarded not as a gift from natural law but as a human achievement.

Michael placed in my hands his contribution to macroeconomics, his contribution to understanding the polycentric organizational structure of the modern economy, and his contribution to understanding the Soviet Economy and its motives. I did as he wished, although not as well as he would have done, and here is my report.

## Polanyi and Keynes

In his 1945 book, and in his earlier film on the money belt, Polanyi uniquely interpreted Keynes in a way that predated by two to three decades the synthesis of Keynesian economics and the monetarist economics later associated with Milton Friedman.

Keynesians understood from Keynes that unemployment resulted from insufficient aggregate demand for goods and services to fully employ the labor force. Their remedy was for government to spend in excess of its revenues from tax collection, thus adding to total spending by running a budget deficit.

The government's budget deficit would be financed by the sale of bonds. Thus, for Keynesians deficit spending financed by borrowing was the path to full employment.

Polanyi's interpretation of Keynes was very different. Polanyi attributed the insufficiency of aggregate demand to the dearth of money, that is, to an insufficient supply of money for the public to be able meet its demand for cash balances and purchase the goods and services necessary to maintain full employment. For Polanyi, the solution is not to sell bonds, on which interest must be paid and the purchase of which subtracts from consumer spending on goods and services, but to overcome the inadequacy in the supply of money by creating new money with which to finance the government's deficit spending.

I first explained Polanyi's interpretation of Keynes in a paper titled "Michael Polanyi: A Keynesian Monetarist," presented at the annual conference of the Western Economics Association in the 1970s with my colleague Norman Van Cott. I returned to the subject in *TAD* 25/3; in *Emotion, Reason and Tradition*, (ed. Struan Jacobs and R.T. Allen, 2005); in *The Failure of Laissez Faire Capitalism* (Clarity Press, 2013), and elsewhere.

## Polycentricity and the Soviet Economy

Polanyi's writings on the polycentric structure of a free society were in large part a response to the idea that science could be planned and that the Soviet Union had achieved a centralized planned economy in which planning authorities replaced the allocation of resources by prices and profits. Polanyi understood that this was not the case. However, at that time it was important to progressive and left-wing intellectuals that an alternative to market capitalism existed. This made it difficult to establish the truth.

Unlike economists, Polanyi understood that the original intent of Soviet central planning was to organize the entire economy as if it were a feudal manor without the intervention of prices and profits and buying and selling. Instead the communist society would produce for the direct use of its members.

This attempt failed. Sovietologists got rid of the failure by describing the attempt as a response to war, designating the attempt at central planning "War Communism." I demonstrated that this explanation was false in my article: "War Communism": A Re-examination," *Slavic Review* (June 1970). In the autumn 1973 issue of S*urvey: A Journal of East & West Studies*, I explained the concept of planning in the Soviet Union and how Stalin saw the collectivization of agriculture as a step toward renewing the attempt to achieve a non-market economy.

Polanyi and I understood that although the Soviet economy was not centrally planned, the attempt to plan the economy was infused with Marx's aspiration to have humanity free of commodity production, that is, production for the market, which according to Marx produced alienation and economic crisis. However, investigation into Marx's influence on Soviet economic practices was barricaded by the authority of Sovietologists. In 1968 in his Richard T. Ely Lecture at the 81st annual meeting of the American Economic Association, Harvard's Alexander Gerschenkron concluded: "hardly anything in the momentous story of Soviet economic policies needs, or suffers, explanations in terms of its derivation from Karl Marx's economic theories."

I described the impact of Marx on Soviet economic practice in my book, *Alienation and the Soviet Economy* (1971) which I dedicated to Polanyi. The book was republished in 1990 without a word changed with a foreword by Aaron Wildavsky, professor at the University of California, Berkeley, who asked why no one but Roberts got the story correct.

In my account of the Soviet Economy, Soviet managers organized the economy by interpreting gross output indicators with the result that resources were allocated without regard to consumer wants and needs. The Soviet economy was a polycentric organization with inefficient allocative

signals that produced outputs unrelated to needs—thus, the deprivation of the Soviet consumer. This inefficient use of resources resulted from an attempt to avoid the appearance of commodity production by substituting gross output indicators for prices and profits.

In my book, true to Polanyi's insights, I explained Soviet economic history as a product of the interaction of utopian intentions with a refractory reality, an interaction that ended in the abandonment of the original aims. In my account, economic and historical necessities have to make room for speculative excess as a force in history.

Michael not only understood science better than his contemporaries, he understood all things better. He understood that for Marx and, therefore, for his followers, good will did not exist, only class interests. Therefore, there was no basis for compromise and reforms between social classes or different interests. Marx declared all morality to be expressions of class interest. Therefore, there was no basis except violence for resolving disparate interests. Polanyi understood that the direct implication of Marx's position is that "violence is the only effective force in history."

Polanyi presented this idea in his lecture, "Beyond Nihilism," at a conference in Berlin in 1960 (published as *History and Hope*, edited by K. A. (Jelenski, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962). Richard Lowenthal, a professor in Berlin and subsequent reporter for *The Observer*, took exception to Polanyi's insight and declared that Polanyi had put words into Marx's mouth that bear no "relation to anything Marx ever wrote, and is indeed in demonstrable conflict with much he did write."

I disposed of Lowenthal and others lost in romantic visions of Marx-the-Moralist in my book, *Marx's Theory of Exchange, Alienation and Crisis* (Hoover Institute Press, Stanford University 1973).

## Regulations and the Market Economy

Polanyi regarded the view that there should be no government economic intervention to be both impractical and immoral. He regarded a social safety net and the public provision of public goods such as education and health care as normal components of any social order. He regarded regulation as necessary to restrain monopoly behavior, to protect the health and safety of workers, and to restrain environmental damage. In order to get beyond the "regulation—no regulation" debate, I proposed that regulations should be considered as factors of production. Up to a point, regulation adds to the efficiency of the economy, but beyond the optimum number and quality of rules, "the more stifling the manager's environment and the less his creative activity, the more his time is spent in red tape rather than in productive activity, the more resources are absorbed in enforcement of the rules, and the more contradictory the rules become, eventually producing inefficient outputs." See, for example, my articles: "Idealism in Public Choice Theory" (*Journal of Monetary Economics*, August 1978), and "An Organizational Model of the Market" (*Public Choice*, Spring 1971).

I learned many things from Michael, the best teacher imaginable. Perhaps first and foremost, I learned that even intelligent and highly educated people can hold as truths mutually incompatible ideas. This lesson created my life as a dissident scholar. The one thing that I can say with complete confidence is that if humans in general had Michael Polanyi's moral and public-spirited character, there would be far less strife in the world.

Paul Craig Roberts
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# INTRODUCTION TO FURTHER EXPLORATIONS OF POTEAT AND POLANYI

Robert P. Hyatt, Guest Co-Editor

The following six papers are drawn from the June 2014 conference at Yale, *The Primacy of Persons*, which marked the opening of the collection of unpublished manuscripts, letters, and other writings related to William H. Poteat at the Yale Divinity School Library.

In "Poteat and Psychoanalysis," I examine Poteat's understanding of Freud and his (Poteat's) use of psychoanalytic terms in his critique of western culture. I also point to some of Poteat's allies in the contemporary psychoanalytic community who seek to expunge Cartesian influences within psychoanalysis. Finally, I explore the psychoanalytic and philosophical roots of Poteat's creativity leading to his writing of *Polanyian Meditations*.

Allen Dyer's "Therapeutic Implications of Post-Critical Thought" examines Polanyi and Poteat's understanding of the "madness of modernity" with its bifurcation of reality into a God's-eye view of detached objectivity versus lived experience. Dyer explores the ways in which both Poteat and Polanyi's post-critical analysis of the regnant culture of modernity is "therapeutic" and points the way to a recovery of personal action which combines "right thinking with right feeling."

Ellen Bernal's paper, "Health Care Ethics Consultation: Personal Knowledge and Apprenticeship," reflects on the "haunting ambiguity" of her practice as a hospital ethicist. In 1990 she became Hospital Ethicist for St Vincent Medical Center. There she observed firsthand the attempt to achieve "objectivity" which resulted in the elimination of the "ambiguous elements" of lived experience to the detriment of patient care.

As a teacher of writing, Sam Watson's "Writing into the Post-critical: the Mindings Collage," developed a way, in collaboration with his students, to "encourage persons to recognize, honor and assume responsibility for the workings of their own distinctive minds." By means of the "Mindings Collage" Watson has been able, in a printed format, to evoke from his students responses which might well be characterized in tone and substance as "oral-aural."

Richard Prust's paper, "Poteat and the Challenge of Identifying Persons," rejects definitions of persons by category or attribute. Instead Prust plumbs the depths of Poteat's reflexive understanding of "I" as implicating both "act and actor" in a narrative context, a story, in which *I* have *intentional* being. Extending Poteat's notion of reflexivity to legal judgments, Prust concludes that if we give up on identifying persons the consequences for forensics will be grave.

In "Reflections of a White Ghetto Preacher on the Life and Teachings of Dr. William H, Poteat," Sam Mann analyses the roots of racism in white assumptions of superiority which pervade western culture. Mann senses a resonance between Howard Thurman's quest for freedom and W.H.Poteat's search "for his soul" Both call for the radical dismantling of a profaned culture. As a student of their teachings, Mann affirms a cultural renewal by means of *relationships* based on equality in power and authority.

Each of us whose papers are published here are profoundly grateful to Dale Cannon, guest co-editor, for his careful, scholarly and generous editing of our work. Each of our papers is immeasurably improved by his painstaking efforts.

# POTEAT AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

**Robert P. Hyatt**

## ABSTRACT

*In this essay I will argue that Poteat clears post-critical ground for the discoveries of Freud the "humanist," the practice of psychoanalysis, and for the legitimacy of Freudian psychological reflections on human development. I maintain that Poteat considered Freud to be a great genius, dimensions of whose work illuminate the human condition in a most profound way. Freud was a fascinating subject for Poteat because he exemplified many of the philosophical commitments of the Enlightenment that Poteat meant to critique. Further, I argue that several contemporary psychoanalytic theorists are allies in Poteat's battle against the philosophically corrosive effects of Cartesiansism.*

## Part One: Poteat, Freud and the Freudians

Sitting in a classroom on the Yale Divinity School campus 57 years ago, I asked Browne Barr, professor of homiletics, "What good are words?" Looking back, it was an impertinent, everybody knows the answer to that, question. Nevertheless, it was a question that troubled me because I had lost faith in the bearing of words on reality. Professor Barr, to his credit, suggested I needed to consult a philosopher.

It turns out that six years later the person I met who had thought deeply about this taken for granted commonsensical question was William Poteat. That meeting was considerably after I had, ironically, plunged into an exploration of counseling psychology based largely on the discoveries of Freud, the founder of "the talking cure," whose

medium of exchange relies heavily on the power of words to reveal a certain kind of reality.

Regarding Freud, it was Poteat who said,

> It is only because 'believing,' even 'neurotic believing'…is a transaction that must occur in the interpersonal universe of speech and personal identity that psychotherapy, by means of talking and a form of acting out, can enable one who 'owns' his beliefs to come to 'own-up-to' them. It is all of this that makes the Freudian use of 'cause' so odd, so revolutionary, and so productive. *It is a cause that can be dissolved with a word* (*PP,* 227, emphasis mine).[1]

When I first read these underlined words, tears of recognition came into my eyes. I felt the emotional power of their impact before I was able to articulate their meaning. What Poteat is referring to in this cryptic statement is that Freud's use of the word 'cause' entails a rejection of the explanation that neurotic beliefs are "caused" by lesions in the central nervous system in favor of a use which refers to neurotically engendered beliefs as capable of being dissolved through first-person dialogue between patient and therapist, an interpersonal dialogue in which actions and reasons have cash value.

However, as soon as Poteat says these words about the healing power of words he points out that "…as valuable as words may be, the shape of the world in which we live is not given only, perhaps not even primarily, in concepts" (*PP,* 323). Characteristically he says the "shape" of our world "…is *lived* in and through our bodies, our choices as they are manifested in our actions, our movements routines, rituals, shapes, colors, sounds, joy, depression, anxiety, etc. Our way of *feeling* in the world, the rhythms of our being at home here have some kind of order and therefore may be thought of as having a kind of syntax" (*PP,* 328, italics his). Here Poteat footnotes Eric Fromm, a Freudian psychoanalyst whose *The Forgotten Language* speaks "unhesitatingly" (Poteat's word) of the nonconceptual ordering of our world after the analogy of language. Poteat goes on to say, "These structures cause each of us to take hold of our world in one way rather than another" (*PP,* 323). This idea of taking hold of our world in one way or another is very important to Poteat. We will return to it later.

Continuing to emphasize the nonconceptual dimensions of being human, Poteat asserts that "Each man's own existence is essentially the enactment of a drama having for its stage both the conceptual and the nonconceptual. If it were not so, deep personal disorientations of the sort with which psychoanalysis has to deal could quite simply be cured by bracing verbal clarification, an attempted translation of the symbolic into the verbal." Poteat says, "There is a very strong hint of this in Freud's theory (in contradistinction to his practice, of which he was a bad observer)" (*PP,* 323).

If "bracing verbal clarification" is not enough to overcome "deep personal disorientations," then what more is required in the psychoanalytic process? Poteat hints at this when he says that psychoanalysis operates not only by talking but by a "form of acting out" (*PP,* 227). The reference is to the fact that the patient will "act out" in his/her relationship with the therapist, patterns of his/her disorientation, opening the process to the nonconceptual or feeling level in which tone, rhythm, mood, posture, gesture, facial expression, anxiety, fear, depression and all the tacit features of human interaction are present. Analysts call this process the "transference."

Erik Erikson says, "Freud, after observing some patients who in hypnosis suggested that he stop interrupting them with his authoritative suggestions, and that when he did they unearthed memories and *affects* he would never have suspected, he came to realize that if he treated them like whole people, they would learn to realize the wholeness which was theirs. He now offered them a conscious and direct partnership: he made the patient's healthy, if submerged, part his partner in understanding the unhealthy part" (*EER,* 146ff, italics mine).

Poteat puts it this way: "There is a sense in which we may say that the neurotic is a creature of a world of his own 'imagination' to which he then becomes subject—incarcerated as a prisoner. The job of the therapist is, as an outsider, to invade that world and *to enhance his patient's wish to be free*. The invasion is a kind of incarnation for the therapist enters the neurotic's world from the outside and remains, while in it, an outsider, lest he, like his patient, becomes the subject of that world, powerless against it" (*PP,* 283, italics mine). Poteat expands this analogy saying that we are "prisoners of the picture each of us has of what the world is like." We are "defensive" and "anxious" before any invasion of it. "We can be set free only when that picture is ravished by reality or by God" (*ibid*).

How could Poteat use Freudian concepts in good faith when so many of Freud's ideas have been rejected as mechanistic, reductionist, etc.? The answer to this question for Poteat lies in the inherent difficulty which Freud had in his attempts to explain how neurotic beliefs could be caused by lesions in the central nervous system. Failing to find a satisfactory "cause" for "neurotic beliefs" in physiological terms, Freud found an alternative "cause" which turns out not to be, as Poteat was wont to say, "on logical all fours" with "cause" as understood in physiology. Based on self-observation and recurring evidence from his patients' memories of sexual affects and fantasies and the transfer of an early father image onto later individuals, it is Freud the humanist who remembers Sophocles' drama of the Greek tragic hero, Oedipus, and uses its heuristic potential to illuminate the neuroses of his patients. Freud chooses what for Poteat is one of the signal achievements of ancient Greek drama: the elevation of the human being to a position where he is seen performing an act of freedom from the world of necessity by playing "let's pretend," thereby intimating some sense of the pronoun first person singular, some sense of what it means to be a "person" (*PP,* 57).

Contrary to critical philosophizing, says Poteat, the Oedipus complex, shows us, that "mind is not just consciousness, but, as Augustine said, 'man is a great deep.' And the Oedipus myth reminds us that we are not only mysteries to ourselves but also we repress and rationalize painful anxiety producing truths about ourselves" (*PP,* 282f).

According to Poteat, with the Oedipus story as his model, Freud's concepts like Oedipus complex, repression, infant sexuality, the "unconscious," and "cause" were "in the same logical environment with persons, action, reasons, belief, assents, 'owning-up-to,' etc., albeit in an unusual but legitimate way" (*PP,* 225).

In a typically elegant way, Poteat affirms the stance of Freud the *analyst* when he says that,

> even in the case of neurotically engendered belief there is an 'ownership' of the words and the acts. The person holding them is *responsible* or at least proto-responsible, for them: *actually* responsible in one way: *potentially* in another. He is taken by Freud the analyst as proleptically responsible. No account of neurotically engendered beliefs which lacks this built-in logical tension and complexity is Freudian. And I will say, neither is it really believable (*PP,* 226f, italics his).

With this linguistic analysis Poteat has preserved the post-critical legitimacy of psychoanalytic discourse in so far as it attends to its healing task and to a non-reductive understanding of human development.

Pursuing the dimension of human development, Poteat says, "The child who knows what it is to be securely and lovingly held, lives, moves and deploys his body, and expresses himself in action in a *very* different world from one who has never known this" (*PP,* 324, italics his).

Although he gives no specific reference for this assertion, elsewhere in a note Poteat makes reference to the illuminating work of Freudian psychoanalyst Erik Erikson (*PP,* 48). Erikson's Pulitzer Prize winning book, *Childhood and Society,* elaborates and extends the insights of Freud the "doctor" as Erikson calls him, for understanding human development from childhood forward in its individual, social, and cultural manifestations. Poteat says of Erikson that his "psychological reflections" upon our ways of being in the world are of great import, that they are "cognate" findings of Polanyi's tacit/explicit, proximate/distal poles being "primitively given" (*PP,* 48f).

The operative words here for our purposes are "primitively given" as in archaic, as in the natal matrix and infancy, the primitive linguistic substratum, the time in which the infant, for better or worse, is experiencing what it *feels* like to be alive in the world, to *live* in the world, to *be* in the world in one way rather than another. This is what Poteat calls the pre-reflective, pre-linguistic Eden out of which, for Erikson, and

Poteat also, human beings have an enduring sense of "paradise forfeited" (*CS,* 250). In Polanyian terms, for Erikson it is the primitive proximate of the "proximate-distal" poles, the tacit memory of which causes us to take hold of the world psychologically in one explicit way rather than another.

For both Poteat and Erikson the primal ground, the bodily beginning, the progenitor of human being is the natal matrix and infancy. The implications of this point for infant language acquisition are spelled out in some detail by Poteat, where he cites a number of empirical studies of language learning among human infants as confirmation of his own findings (*PM,* 94-197).

Erikson rejects the narrow positivist approach to psychology and the separation of psychology from biology and from the social sciences, preferring instead to study the "process" of "human life" (*CS,* 36). This approach bears great similarity to Poteat's view when he speaks of the "inherent interest for us of *psyche, socius* and *polis* as the arena of human action" as "manifestations of our human, personal context" from which we "mindbodily demand" a larger meaning (*PM,* 249). It is a human meaning which Erikson gives in an incredibly persuasive way in his elaboration of the "Eight Ages of Man." Working developmentally, Erikson presents eight contrasting pairs of ways of being in the world which are primitively given. They spring from the primitive, archaic, tacitly given natal matrix and infancy to articulate ways of being in the world, and Erikson ties each age to this primitive given. The eight stages, spanning the life time of the individual and incorporating the social and cultural implications and consequences of each age are as follows: Basic Trust vs. Basic Mistrust, Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt, Initiative vs. Guilt, Industry vs. Inferiority, Identity vs. Role Confusion, Intimacy vs. Isolation, Generativity vs. Stagnation, and Ego Integrity vs. Despair.

I will give just one of many examples in which Erikson relates the parent/child nexus to its communal/institutional manifestation. Discussing the Age of Basic Trust vs. Basic Mistrust, Erikson says, "The parental faith which supports the trust emerging in the newborn, has throughout history sought its institutional safeguard (and on occasion its greatest enemy) in organized religion. Trust born of care is, in fact, the touchstone of the actuality of a given religion" (*CS,* 250). In a footnote to this section Erikson is careful to point out that he is referring only to the communal and psychosocial side of religion and not, for example, it's spiritual aspect. He is not a Freudian reductionist!

Poteat was very critical of the Freudianism of some of Freud's followers whose rigid views he characterized in his last book as various expressions of critical absolutism: including "abstraction," which is identifying thought as such with its embodiment in language; "ecumenism," which is certainly seeing an object as a finite totality; and "ontological monism," which decontextualizes its object (*RG,* 155ff). Although Poteat does not criticize Freud himself for such rigidity, he (Poteat) recounts a beautiful story

of family tragedy and triumph in which he points out that Freudian categories, as important as they may be for psychotherapy, cannot encompass the full meaning of the richly complex lives and histories of persons (*RG,* 154). Poteat affords a very important illustration of this point with regard to the psychoanalyst himself in a discussion of the relationship between Freud's theory and his practice when he says that between Freud's theory and Freud's practice there is a tacitly supplied *tertium quid*: the practitioner himself with all his complex life and personal history, most of which he, in this case Freud, is only tacitly aware, i.e., subsidiarily, but which has some bearing on his interchange with patients, a dialogue which explicitly stated theory does not and cannot exhaustively explain (*PD,* 38-40, 53ff.).

Poteat's most pointed critique of Freud is as follows: "Even so great a genius as Freud, the contemporary articulator of the profound importance of the no conceptual world and what we have rather simplemindedly called the irrational, betrays the power of rationalism over his own imagination by repeatedly implying that the norm for *human* existence is the power which man has to *conceive*, that the *rational* or conceptual grasp of the etiology of one's past is that by which man becomes human rather than the far richer notion that man becomes human through the capacity for assuming responsibility, for taking his past upon himself, for speaking in his own name, for saying 'I'" (*PP,* 324, italics his).

The very important corollary of the assumption of responsibility for oneself is that in the wider *verbal* culture it is the antecedent "non-conceptual openness and responsibility of persons to one another" (*PP,* 326) that is the *common ground* of their relationship, a relationship which must be *acted out*. This is also the ground of genuine psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. Concluding Part One, I quote a few lines from WH Auden's poem, "In Memory of Sigmund Freud," written on the occasion of Freud's death in 1939 (Poteat liked and sometimes quoted this poem):[2]

> He wasn't clever at all: he merely told the unhappy
> Present to recite the Past like a poetry lesson till sooner
> or later it faltered at the line where
> long ago the accusations had begun,
> and suddenly knew by whom
> it had been judged, how rich life had been and how silly,
> and was life forgiven and more humble,
> able to approach the Future as a friend
> without a wardrobe of excuses,
> without a set mask of rectitude
> or an embarrassing over-familiar gesture.

## Part Two: Poteat's "Philosophical" Therapy

Considering the influence of Freud and psychoanalysis on Poteat's thought, two questions come to mind. First, does Poteat's notion of the insanity of modernism agree with a psychotherapeutic/psychoanalytic notion of insanity? Insanity is a word almost never used in contemporary psychoanalysis/psychotherapy. "Mentally ill" is the more often used term. My understanding of mental illness includes suffering from highly problematic emotions and/or behavior which affect one's way(s) of being in the world, usually accompanied by an underlying sense of anxiety which manifests itself in a wide variety of guises including depression, feelings of isolation and hopelessness, which, if severe enough, can lead to suicide and/or murder.

Poteat's contention is that modernism, philosophically speaking, is "mad" or "insane" because it is profoundly unsettled and disordered, having lost the sense of form and order in the cosmos. With regard to knowing and being, modernism has lost the primacy of the personal, surrendering it to the impersonal. These losses have gone unnoticed. In *A Philosophical Daybook*, Poteat puts it in psychoanalytic terms: "It [Cartesianism] functions at a tacit level like a repetition compulsion; it is ubiquitous and pervades the atmosphere of our life like a chronic depression" (*PD,* 5). As a result, modernism harbors a pervasive sense of unease which Auden characterized as "The Age of Anxiety." The madness of modernism leads to personal hopelessness and despair. (Note: a "repetition compulsion" is a psychoanalytic term which refers to the compulsion to repeat negative patterns of behavior even though they continue to be counterproductive.)

A second question concerns how Poteat's "philosophical therapy" for his students/readers/interlocutors corresponds to actual psychotherapy. The analogy holds in general yet important ways. Both "therapies" are devoted to curing/healing, to self-knowledge. Both rely on trust, mutual respect, ongoing dialogue and the uncovering of "hidden" assumptions which affect ways of being in the world. Both rely heavily on the provision of a "safe" place to explore ideas/feelings without fear that one will be shamed for mistakes or misspoken words. In my experience Poteat was a master in creating such an atmosphere in his classroom. "Mistakes" were prized opportunities for learning![3]

In both "therapies" a "good outcome" is the assumption of responsibility for one's previously hidden beliefs and actions and the ability and desire to deal with new experience in light of insights, skills and self-confidence one has developed in "therapy." Both therapies give rise to hope in situations of despair. Of course they differ with regard to matters related to the reasons for seeking help, number of clients/students engaged at a time, frequency of meeting, dream work, analysis of transferences, etc.

# Part Three: Poteat's Psychoanalytic Allies

Some of Poteat's staunchest allies in "recovering the ground" lost to the Cartesian mind/body split and consequent idealist/materialist reductionisms are to be found in the ranks of contemporary psychoanalysts and psychotherapists. They are explorers of the "philosophical/psychological" primal ground which Poteat sought to recover. Their concerns in many ways are his. I believe Poteat sensed accurately the heuristic potential that the Freudian enterprise, especially as elucidated by Erik Erikson, held not only for confirmation of his (Poteat's) own findings but for the extension and elaboration of those findings.

Let's look at some examples: First with regard to Cartesianism, in a remarkable work titled *Worlds of Experience* (published 2002) three prominent analysts (Robert D. Stolorow, George E. Atwood and Donna M. Orange) launch a frontal assault on Cartesian influences on psychoanalytic theory with these words: "Our aim is twofold: first to expose and deconstruct the assumptions, largely a legacy of Descartes' philosophy, that have undergirded traditional and much contemporary psychoanalytic thinking; and second, to lay the foundations for a post-Cartesian psychoanalytic psychology grounded in an intersubjective contextualism" (*op. cit.*, vii).

In this work, Stolorow *et al.* mount a thoroughgoing, devastating critique of Cartesian "isolated mind" thinking beginning with Freud and extending through contemporary psychoanalytic theory. Drawing on philosophical resources found in Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Wittgenstein, William James, C.S. Peirce and H.G. Gadamer they fashion a post-critical philosophical stance not unlike that of Poteat and Polanyi which they call "perspectival realism," seeing truth as gradually emergent in dialogic community.

Donna M. Orange in *Emotional Understanding*, relies heavily on Polanyi's concept of "tacit knowledge" for the *foundation* of her understanding of "emotional memory" which refers to the critical importance of the affective component of knowing which is sensorimotor and affective, present in infancy prior to language, and continues throughout life not as the precursor of representational or symbolic cognition but as *"the core of our knowing"* (*Ibid.* 8, 116).

The very title of a book of essays written by a group of eight prominent Canadian and American psychoanalysts, *The Embodied Subject, Minding the Body in Psychoanalysis* (hereinafter referred to as *ES*) should pique the interest of Poteat scholars. The title of this work was the theme of a yearlong seminar sponsored by the Forum on Psychiatry and the Humanities of the Washington School of Psychiatry.

On the first page of the introduction, one of the editors, John P. Muller, says, "My basic premise is that only a speaking being can be embodied, in contrast to views of embodiment in which mind is 'in' a brain or a brain is in a body, as if embodiment is equivalent to physical containment" (*ES,* vii). And that's just for openers!

One of the contributors, Roger Frie, who is co-editor of the *International Journal of Psychoanalytic Self Psychology*, in an essay titled, "The Lived Body: From Freud to Merleau-Ponty and Contemporary Psychoanalysis," begins his essay as follows: "I argue that Merleau-Ponty's conception of the 'lived body' has come closer than most to collapsing the Cartesian duality of mind and body. His philosophy of the lived body demonstrates the way in which understanding, awareness, and communication are all fundamentally embodied. For this reason, I suggest that his ideas are particularly relevant for helping psychoanalysts close the gap between intellect and soma" (*ES*, 55).

In another outstanding essay in this same volume titled, "That Subtle Knot," Richard Simpson, a student of French psychoanalysis, addresses the subject of language and the body. Simpson begins by quoting part of John Donne's poem "The Ecstasy," the first lines of which are as follows:

> As our blood labors to beget
> Spirits, as like souls as it can;
> Because such fingers need to knit
> That subtle knot, which makes us man (*ES*, 17).

By way of a critique of what he calls "one dimensional" cognitive linguistics, Simpson maintains that in John Donne's poem "what was born in the inarticulate language of the soul is transferred into a higher order of nature by means of the body. And, so the body is the location of a bearing across or transfer to a higher order, a *metapherein*, a literal metaphor" (*ES*, 26). Poteat would find this fascinating.

The work of British psychoanalyst D. W. Winnicott is particularly instructive for its heuristic value when contemplating what I have termed Poteat's philosophical "primal ground." The heuristic potential is enhanced by the fact that, in this instance, Winnicott's ideas are advanced in a philosophically astute "Afterword" of a work that is considered to be the best criticism ever written of Robert Frost's poetry, Richard Poirer's *Robert Frost: The Work of Knowing*. In what follows, I have relied heavily on Poirer's exposition of Winnicott's ideas because he extends the implications of these ideas in such a persuasive way.

In Winnicott's experience with infants and mothers he became aware of what he termed "transitional objects," which refer more to "transitional states" than objects. He noticed that the child has an enormous subjective and creative investment in these transitions. The essential transitions are these: the infant initially has a sense of being merged with its mother; it then attaches itself to an external object, usually the breast, which is felt by the infant to be a part of itself; it then moves from this to an object even more external: anything soft fondle-able like a doll, a piece of blanket, a toy which is endowed with some associations attached to the breast. At all stages, including the last, the infant, though in transition from internal to external objects, may and should

be given a sense of omnipotence and of magical control of those objects. A sensitive mother who anticipates her infants' needs and quickly responds to signs of tension gives the infant the healthy illusion of omnipotent (magical) control over the mother's responses and a consequent sense of agency. By "magical control" Winnicott means the creative interpretation of experience. Paradoxically, the infant, who feels omnipotent, confirmed in its illusion that it creates and controls the object of its desire, has by means of this illusion the best chance to find its way to a more realistic kind of contact with the increasing number of things which call for its attention as it grows and develops. Conversely, the child who is denied a sense of creation and control grows up with a very limited self-confidence, creativity, and agency.

In these "transitional states" the infant enters what Winnicott calls an "intermediate area of experience, unchallenged in respect of its belonging to inner or external (shared) reality, constitutes the greater part of the infant's experience, and throughout life is retained in the intense experiencing that belongs to the arts and religion and to imaginative living, and to creative scientific work" (1989, 319ff.). In his "Afterword," Poirier relates Winnicott's findings to William James views expressed in "La Notion de Conscience," one of James' *Essays in Radical Empiricism* in which James says that "certain experiences can lead some to others by means of distinctly characterized *intermediary experiences*, in such a fashion that some play the role of known things, the others that of knowing subjects. The attributes 'subject,' and 'object,' 'represented' and 'representative,' 'thing' and 'thought' mean, then, a practical distinction of the utmost importance, but a distinction which is of a FUNCTIONAL order only, *and not at all ontological as understood by classical dualism … * Finally, things and thought are made of one and the same stuff, which as such cannot be defined but only experienced" (Poirer 1990, 320, italics mine).

Commenting on James' and Winnicott's views Poirer says, "Think for a moment what happens to 'things,' to 'objects,' in James' 'intermediary experiences' or in Winnicott's 'intermediate area of experience.' It is an area 'unchallenged'… in respect of its belonging to inner or to external (shared) reality. *It is precisely in this area, first created by the infant, that the adult creation also takes place*" (Poirier 1990, 320ff., italics mine).

An example of the kind of adult "creation," about which Winnicott and James speak, comes immediately to mind: Listen to Jonas Salk, inventor of the polio vaccine, describe his understanding of the process of discovery: "I do not remember exactly at what point I began to apply this way of examining my experience, but very early in life I would imagine myself in the position of the object in which I was interested. Later, when I became a scientist, I would picture myself as a virus, or as a cancer cell, for example, and try to sense what it would be like to be either. I would imagine myself as the immune system, and try to reconstruct what I would do as an immune system

engaged in combatting a virus or cancer cell. Before long, this internal dialogue became second nature to me; I found that my mind worked this way all the time." [4]

To sum up, what we have in Winnicott's "transitional objects" is psychoanalytic confirmation of what I have described as Poteat's "primal ground:" a mother "minding" her child rocking to the rhythms of her body's beating heart, the in and out of her breathing, intoning the child with her voice and the texture of her touch. This is the primal place where divisions of subject and object, intelligence and emotion, body and mind do not obtain. This is the primal source of metaphor, words spoken and unspoken. Out of this place, this Eden, the child playing "king of the world" later emerges as the adult who 'becomes' a virus and saves the world from polio!

So also for William Poteat: at dusk on an October evening in Athens, torn apart, dis-membered by the sight of a lusty, powerful, inspirited statue of a bronze horse. Through that dancing figure he re-members himself as a brother to Vangelis (the sculptor) and heir of Orpheus who bids him sing, before and beyond his literacy, the music and lyrics of the *Polanyian Meditations* (*PM,* 2-10).

For myself, the question I once posed, "What good are words?" has begun to be answered. Words, especially metaphors, spoken and unspoken, call my world(s) into being. As my senses bring me to them, words bring me to my senses. For understanding this gift I am deeply indebted to William H. Poteat, my teacher and my philosophical therapist! In gratitude I leave you with this poem from another Orphic voice, that of Elizabeth Sewell:

<div align="center">

Ideas

The coming of new forms
Is priestly and war-like: doubled they campaign,
Ringing, besiege the head with holy storms,
Till shouts and trumpets crack
The glassy air; fortifications spill,
And we lie open, to fury and to sack,

And then to all the expanses of the plain,
The World's wide landscape suddenly appears,
And nine huge stars waiting above the hill
Will march through walls of clay-dust to the brain
And camp there, silent, leaning on their spears (Sewell 1971, 419).

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## ENDNOTES

[1]Abbreviations used in the text as follows: *PP* refers to Nickell and Stines *Primacy of Persons.* *PM* refers to Poteat's *Polanyian Meditations. RG* refers to Poteat's *Recovering the Ground. PD* refers to

Poteat's *Philosophical Daybook. CS* refers to Erik Erikson's *Childhood and Society. EER* refers to The *Erik Erikson Reader*.

[2]W. H. Auden, *Collected Poems*. New York, NY: Vintage International Edition, 1991.

[3]For a beautifully written insightful presentation of Poteat as teacher, which focuses on the "how of being both an intellectual and oneself, a whole person," see Dale Cannon's article "Haven't You Noticed That Modernity's Bankrupt? Ruminations on the Teaching Career of William H. Poteat," *Tradition & Discovery 21:1*, 20-32.

[4]This quotation is cited in Clark Moustakas (1980, 15ff). This work by a co-founder of the humanistic psychology movement is devoted to first-person epistemology based explicitly on the insights of Michael Polanyi. See my review in *Tradition & Discovery* 38:3, 71-74.

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# MADNESS AS METAPHOR:
# THERAPEUTIC IMPLICATIONS OF
# POST-CRITICAL THOUGHT

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## ABSTRACT

*Poteat often spoke of our modern predicament as "madness." His use of this term was not strictly technical, but he meant it most emphatically. Modern thought created an alienation of self from lived-through experience, which had to be recovered through careful examination of the assumptions of the regnant culture. Polanyi and the post critical enterprise offered a perspective and certain tools for this recovery of self, which may properly be understood to be "therapeutic" both in the metaphorical sense and with the understandings that might be offered by the psychoanalysis and psychotherapy.*

William H. Poteat, in his PhD dissertation, "Pascal's Concept of Man and Modern Sensibility," identifies the crisis of modernity with a bifurcation of thought that brought about an "external" as well as an experienced view of reality. This bifurcation has profoundly undermined any sense of self. Man in this understanding, once the holder of a unique dignity in the universe, became a mere object, a three dimensional thing (*res extensa*, as Descartes put it, with a detached mind, *res cogitans*).[1] Poteat has shown the consequences of this view. It

caused a feeling of ambivalence; in it there was something supremely satisfying, something flattering to human vanity and the desire to

become as gods, not only knowing good and evil, but having power over the very earth itself. Yet this self-flattery had to be purchased at the awful price of something terrifying to human vanity, at the price, namely, of losing any assurance that human life has any unique status in a world the last reality of which is the 'hurrying of matter endlessly, meaninglessly'. For this reason, modern thought has been vacillating between pride and despair—the pride bred of man's power to control nature, the despair bred of his fear that it is really nature that has the last word (Poteat 1950, 121).

The anxiety stems from this presumption that the new "objective" view of reality foisted upon us by modern critical thought must somehow trump the world of lived-through experience, the primary world of the senses (Merleau-Ponty), the comfortable certitudes of a close relationship with God, an ordered known universe.

Polanyi's post-critical epistemology (personal knowledge) becomes therapeutic in dealing with this malaise. Polanyi, with the authority of a scientist who sees through the ruse, points out what should be obvious to anyone not willing to pretend (recall "The Emperor has No Clothes") that all knowledge is based on an antecedent tacit experience of reality, which becomes a commitment to a held belief.

Poteat, not occasionally and not incidentally, referred to this cultural alienation as a form of "madness" and even "insanity." I think he used these terms quite deliberately and quite emphatically, born out of feelings of frustration, exasperation, at dealing with people, his/our contemporaries, who accepted such duplicity unselfconsciously, or worse, presumed a moral superiority. He did not suggest lightly that this bifurcation was a psychiatric (or mental) disorder. Psychiatric nomenclature itself is subject to mind/body bifurcation, which insurance companies try to exploit by reimbursing at lower rates than true physical disorders. Schizophrenia is more than a split-mind. Depression is more than unhappiness. Anxiety is more than angst. And PTSD is more than the aftermath of a post-traumatic event. All have biological components, which may be modified by medications, herbs, substances, or "mind-altering" chemicals, but cannot be completely reduced to physical-chemical understandings of transmitters at synapses. They also have psycho-social, economic, and spiritual determinants, which are part of the more complex reality of human understanding that Poteat sought to elucidate. They have an aspect of lived-through experience (history, narrative) that may with difficulty be communicated to others though the medium of language (talking therapy) or use of other symbols, such as art or ritual.

Poteat is diagnosing a very real form of cultural neurosis, a conflict based on fear, anxiety or dread. Poteat's understanding of dis-ease is a metaphor. It takes something familiar and makes us look at it in an unfamiliar way, thus taking something we

thought we understood, madness, and showing us that we did not really understand it at all. Poteat's quest for understanding has a therapeutic dimension that is as much psychological as it is philosophical or theological.

Madness as metaphor opens the possibility of understanding the relationship between thoughts and feelings. As such it can be a bridge between mind and body ("mindbody" to use Poteat's neologism), as a way of overcoming the mind/body split, the legacy of Cartesian dualism. Madness as diagnosis has its detractors, further stigmatizing those already marginalized. Anti-psychiatry objects to the medicalization of distress. Scientology promotes its own brand of religion, which many would not recognize as either religious or therapeutic. Thomas Szasz suggests that mental illness is a myth, by which he means "myth" as a non-reality (rather than "myth" as an explanatory system) because, in his view—only biological illnesses are real illnesses.

R.D. Laing, a popular counter-culture psychiatrist in the 1960s and 1970s, further suggested that sane society, and psychiatry as its instrument, actually perpetuate rather than alleviate certain kinds of mental illness. Laing's first book *The Divided Self* (1960) attempted to make schizophrenia and the process of going mad intelligible in existential terms. In his *Politics of Experience* (1967), schizophrenia has become a sane reaction to an insane society so that normality becomes madness, the development of a false-self system. Without quite mastering the metaphor, Laing in an objectivist way, confuses the experience of alienation and the cause of alienation (see Dyer 1973).

Robert Pirsig is more perceptive in his exploration of madness. His widely read *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* is not only an odyssey through life, an extended motorcycle journey, reflections on facing life's challenges honestly, it is also a useful review of ways in which the Western philosophical canon, as taught at the University of Chicago, could literally—*literally*—drive one mad.[2]

Pirsig's second book, *Lila: An Inquiry into Morals*, though less popular, is no less insightful. It details another odyssey. An anthropologist, an observer of culture, takes a sailboat from the Great Lakes down the Hudson River. As he travels, he reflects on how people form their sense of self—how for example, American culture can be seen as a blend of Native American and European cultures. Native Americans appear to Europeans as wild and unrefined, while European Americans appear to Native Americans as forked-tongue and duplicitous—we might even say "Cartesian." In this journey the anthropologist meets a woman named Lila, who becomes progressively unhinged, grieving a drowned baby doll as her own lost child. By the time we reach New York, we are prepared to empathize with Lila as someone who lives in a culture of her own making, which no one else shares or understands.

Richard Gelwick, perhaps sensitized by years teaching in a medical school, sees Polanyi's task as a physician of culture or a cultural diagnostician. Polanyi uses this

metaphor himself with great effect in an early paper, "The Scientific Outlook: Its Sickness and Cure:"

> In the days when an idea could be silenced by showing that it was contrary to religion, theology was the greatest single source of fallacies. Today, when any human thought can be discredited by branding it as unscientific, the power exercised previously by theology has passed over to science; hence, science has become in its turn the greatest single source of error (Polanyi 1957, 480).

In his paper, Gelwick notes that Polanyi documents the dangers posed to our moral ideals by false epistemological beliefs. I will explore those themes below, but I would like to call attention here to Polanyi's formulation of the power of ideas. He is talking about an implicit power of cultural conformity, which at one point in history (pre-Enlightenment, pre-critical) was possessed by religion and which subsequently passed to science.

Susan Sontag suggests that we travel with two passports, that of the well and that of the sick. Having a diagnosis like cancer, tuberculosis, or HIV is doubly difficult because of the social burden added to the affliction: the way people react to the person with illness (1978, 3). Getting well is more than getting over a biological affliction; it also means recovering our sense of self, our sense of wellbeing. Madness by extension is like traveling with two passports, metaphorically speaking. Objectivist thought requires us to see ourselves as (we imagine) others see us and at the same time as we experience ourselves.

Polanyi's critique of modern epistemology was generated by an ethical problem: the damage he thought objectivist epistemology was doing to our moral ideals. Although Polanyi was implicitly concerned with moral problems, he does not explicitly take on ethics as a philosophical undertaking.[3]

In a sense the word "ethics" and all it connotes covers two different terrains, the attempt to discern right from wrong and at the same time the attempt to know the right thing to do. We might say one is the domain of ethics as a discipline and the other of morality in terms of cultural or even individual norms. But even that distinction is fraught with ambiguity. Post-critically we appreciate a from-to vector in ethical undertaking, but the undertaking of "doing ethics" skates dangerously close to the thin ice of Cartesian thought, especially as it is often done, laying out rules for conformity or for judging the behavior of others from a purportedly solid objectivist vantage point.

Polanyi saw a danger to our cultural ideals, which he once described to me as no less than "the dissolution of European culture" (Personal communication, Oxford, 1969). Most poignantly for him was the Soviet oppression of his native Hungary (1966, 24-39). His most direct comments about ethics come in his description of

moral inversion, where utopian moral perfectionism results in immorality. I don't think enough has been made of these insights when everyday news accounts provide new examples of seemingly impenetrable dynamo-objective couplings, where moral passions depart from all reason and short circuit any possibility of a convivial order, even a civil order.[4]

Polanyi gives two examples of the dynamo-objective coupling: first, Soviet Marxism, in which disguised moral passions lead to oppressive immorality:

> Alleged scientific assertions, which are accepted as fact because they satisfy moral passions, will excite the passions further. Any criticism of the scientific part is rebutted by the moral passions behind it, while any moral objections are coldly brushed aside by invoking the inexorable verdict of its scientific findings. Each of the two components, the dynamic and the objective, takes it in turn to draw attention away from the other when it is under attack (*PK*, 230).[5]

The other example Polanyi offers as a "spurious" form of moral inversion, is Freud's interpretation of culture in light of his psychology. Polanyi sees this as an example of the way "men may go on talking the language of positivism, pragmatism, and naturalism for many years, yet continue to respect the principles of truth and morality, which their vocabulary anxiously ignores" (*PK*, 233). Freud here may be seen as speaking in the language of the regnant culture, even while creating a new vocabulary. He might be said to be travelling with two passports, epistemologically as well as when the Nazis entered Vienna and he was forced to emigrate to London. The loss of his son in World War I left Freud deeply pessimistic. Polanyi is in no way dismissive of Freud or his insights or hypotheses, but recognizes in Freud's yearning for acceptance by his scientific colleagues and a reliance on their objectivist metaphors, at least in his theoretical formulations.[6]

I have found it useful to distinguish "Freudianism" as the theoretical extrapolation of Freud's insights from "psychoanalysis," the clinical application of his method to helping individual persons understand their own motives and choices. Ultimately psychoanalysis is a form of transformative personal knowing, a moral undertaking in unraveling the unconscious dynamisms that shape feelings and drive behavior, aligning the impulses of childhood (id) with the ideals of society (superego) through insight and understanding (ego).

I find Murray Jardine's 2013 article, "Michael Polanyi's Response to the Crisis of Modernity," a helpful reminder of Poteat's understanding of "modernity as mixed metaphor." Modern man lives in the tension between two incoherent worldviews, the primarily visual worldview that the efficient Greek alphabet fostered and the primarily oral/aural narrative experience of Hebraic culture. The self-knowledge of psychoanalysis,

like the Socratic admonition to "know thyself," like the personal knowledge of Polanyi, recovers an antecedent experience analogous to the figure-ground of Gestalt psychology, where the recovery of the self (figure) stands out against the background of the culture in which it exists. We feel whole only when connected to both parts of our experience, the inner and the outer, the private and the public. Otherwise we may feel "alienated, anxious, a divided self" (Dyer 1974, 257).[7]

This is what I take to be Freud's contribution to the therapeutic enterprise as recognized by Poteat: the recovery of the first-person narrative of the history that lies behind the public persona. In this sense, Freud is relying on the Hebraic tradition in creating a space away from the agora ("public sphere"), where one can gradually become comfortable speaking one's innermost thoughts and feelings. This narrative I take to be essential to the healing enterprise of medicine more broadly, the communication of the patient/sufferer with the doctor/healer: the medical history, the chief concerns, the history of the present illness, the past medical history, the family history, the social history, the developmental history; in short, the patient's story.

Even Freud's placement of the analysts' chair outside the line of vision of the patient/analysand must be understood as Hebraic in this oral/aural tradition. It is sometimes said disparagingly that Freud did not want to be stared at by his patients all day. That might or might not be part of his motive, but more importantly, psychoanalysis is conceived as something that occurs by means of verbal communication, not "acted out" in a public space. Following that were Freud's strict requirements for minimal interaction outside the sessions and no physical (certainly no sexual) contact between doctor and patient, proscriptions that we understand as the ethical boundaries, or frame, which are requisite for the development of trust (faithfulness or fidelity) required for healing.

## The Dreams of Descartes

The crisis of modernity, or the modern predicament—indeed the scientific method itself—is often identified with René Descartes. Descartes claimed that this method was "revealed" to him in a series of dreams, which he had on the night of November 10, 1619.[8] The dreams are instructive, for they reveal the workings of Descartes' mind and his anxieties behind the Cartesian veil. The first two dreams were frightening to Descartes, which he took to be warnings about the dangers he faced in developing a new philosophy challenging ecclesiastical authority, but the third dream was soothing in that he felt it revealed the blessing of God for his scientific undertaking. In the third dream, he sees two books on a table, one a dictionary, which he takes to be all the sciences joined together, and the second an anthology of poems, *Corpus Poetarum*, which he took to be Philosophy and Wisdom joined together. He felt some disdain for the [scholastic] philosophy of his time. He felt that poets, indeed all men, had maxims

and insights which were deeper and more sensible than the writings of the philosophers. One of the poems was called *Quod vitae sectabor iter?* (Which way shall I choose?) The pleasantness of the dream he took to be divine blessing for his new vocation.

The great turning point in dream interpretation came with Freud's classic book, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in which he suggested that dreams offer clues to a person's past, a somewhat radical departure from the usual understanding that dreams were portents of the future. Recall Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream about Seven Fat Cows/Seven Lean Cows, which Joseph interpreted as a prediction of seven fat years, and seven years famine. Descartes took his dreams as a blessing for his future, but looking at his life developmentally, we see that there were problems the dreams did not solve.

Notable in Descartes' life was the death of his mother when he was fourteen months old. His father, a prosperous lawyer, provided for the sickly child, but never developed an emotionally close relationship with him, and when he was ten placed him in a Jesuit school.

Descartes' life, his philosophy, and his dreams all reveal conflicts between a desire for certainty and security and a desire for independence and solitude, between a submission to authority and defiance of that authority (his father, his school, the church and its traditions), and between a fascination with his emotions and a rationality devoid of emotional content.[9]

Descartes' seventeenth-century solution is our contemporary problem. What appears to have been a revolution of liberation from a most oppressive dogmatism, we now recognize as a compromise solution at best. Intellectual freedom was accomplished at the expense of loss of personal and moral wholeness. At the heart of the Cartesian method of abstraction lies a fundamental deception, the outward appearance of conformity and subjugation to authority, while maintaining an inward mental life (Dyer 1986, 172).

The liberation of the pursuit of knowledge from the authority of the church was a truly astonishing accomplishment. Yet our appreciation of Descartes' genius is ambivalent, for the price of that liberation was a split of the material and spiritual worlds with the result that Man (as a person) was to be impersonally studied by the methods of understanding physical objects in space and time. Descartes was no Cartesian. He learned to navigate perilous territory by travelling in disguise. He professed always to be a devout Catholic. Yet he claimed to doubt everything—everything, that is, except his own existence, which he claimed to be proof of a sovereign God.

# Religion as Moral Inversion?

Descartes taught moderns to hold two worldviews simultaneously, the exterior world of extended things (*res extensa*) and the inner world of thinking things (*res cogitans*). For him they were separate realms, separate frames of reference, and for Descartes, this dualism protected him from the strictures of ecclesiastical authority and provided a space for his thinking method. Thanks in part to Descartes, contemporary persons are less likely to feel the constraints of ecclesiastical authority and have gotten out of the habit of being told what to believe. Personal knowledge becomes instructive here particularly in Polanyi's equivalence of doubt and belief. No less important, I believe, is his caution about the dangers of ideology when personal commitments and moral passions go unrecognized and unacknowledged.

For many if not most moderns (or are we ready to claim ourselves as post-moderns?), post-critical epistemology makes it impossible for us to go back to modern habits the way that it is hard (but not impossible) in a post-Freudian era to imagine pure thoughts without embodied feelings, stored in unconscious memories and over-determined motives. Is not the cat irreversibly out of the bag? Is not the post-critical enterprise an inoculation, protective against the "madness" Poteat altered us to, therapeutic in the sense that once we realize that we are *neither* interior *nor* exterior beings, we can live comfortably, both as we experience ourselves and as others see us, from the inside and the outside simultaneously in our mindbodies?

And now back to my question about the place of religion in post-modern experience. It seems that for many contemporary persons, the articulated certitudes of organized religion, presented as unassailable facts, do not ring true. The evils sanctioned in the name of God and the rationalizations for political misbehavior undermine for many the credibility of stories and traditions which might offer guidance and comfort. Having been alerted to the workings of the dynamo-objective coupling, it is hard not to see moral inversions, the coupling of moral certitude with an objective view of reality, at operation in many religious institutions. Do the possibilities for faith require us to turn a blind eye to the more mundane aspects of religion?

Of course these are problems of "Western" modernist thought. Our Asian friends remind us that "Eastern" thought never underwent the mind/body split. Spirituality has always been casually and sometimes usefully part of life. Descartes and his contemporaries needed a cover to protect them from the life-or-death coercion of the ecclesiastical authorities. This kind of alienation and madness is primarily a problem created by the excess of power the medieval church accrued to itself, an historical aberration that has created anxieties that persist to this day.

Finally, we come back to the question of the therapeutic implications of post-critical philosophy. Can philosophy ultimately ever really be therapeutic, i.e. psychotherapeutic? Can it move us from dis-ease to at-ease? In a metaphorical sense, we may feel less

discomfited by trying to adhere to external expectations, which we may experience as false, but dare not say so. These are the false-self systems Laing identified. But only in psychosis can we truly live a solipsistic existence. Post-critical philosophy thus clears the deck for self-understanding. But the task remains to narrate one's own experience (through language) to other human beings and to move from thought to the actions of lived-through experience.

Ethics thus emerges from epistemology, the knowledge of our selves in the world we inhabit, the knowledge of being-in-the-world or, to put it post-critically, personal knowledge. Awareness of self comes from acting in ways that are congruent with beliefs, actions that feel right as well as think-right. Our sense of who we are is an ethical identity. Poteat explicitly (both philosophically and personally) saw psychotherapy as a means towards achieving this congruence.

> There is a sense in which we may say that the neurotic is the creator of a world of his own 'imagination' to which he then becomes subject—incarcerated as a prisoner. The job of the therapist is, as an outsider, to invade that world and to enhance his patient's wish to be free. The invasion is a kind of incarnation, for the therapist enters the neurotic world from the outside and remains, while in it, an outsider, lest he, like [the] patient, becomes the subject of that world, powerless against it (1993, 283).[10]

I would add to this observation that the patient does not at first see that all his assumptions about reality are just that, assumptions, which must be reconsidered and reassessed. The neurotic person in therapy—as in life—struggles to maintain this familiar view of the world as real, even as the evidence for it begins to crumble.

The passport metaphor is limited by the fact that these two worlds do not have distinct boundaries, but the inner world and the outer world are linked by an invisible umbilicus. We can never really forget who we are, even in our existential confusion and ambivalence. Poteat emphasized this by eliminating the hyphen from mindbody. Polanyi's tacit/explicit tension is explicated with corporeal analogies: proximal/distal, from/to, focal/subsidiary. And Freud's famous "discovery" of the "unconscious," brings into focal awareness that which had previously been only subsidiary.

These two world-views "oscillate between pride and despair" as Poteat so trenchantly observed. They are existential concerns, "ultimate concerns" (Tillich) and may properly be considered spiritual questions. Post-critical philosophy teaches us to "systematically recognize and hold our own beliefs" (Polanyi). It thus clears the deck for speaking in the first person, active voice (Poteat's Private-I). The remaining task is to identify a personal sense of meaning and value and to translate that understanding into actions in the real world. That is the therapeutic task.

# ENDNOTES

[1]"Man," as philosophical anthropology formerly identified humankind.

[2]Richard Gelwick recognized similarities between Pirsig's insights and Polanyi's post-critical approach and invited him to a conference on post-critical thinking he organized at Harvard in 1992. Pirsig suggested at one of the breaks, that society needed psychiatrists to help people deal with the sorts of problems he experienced by taking philosophy too seriously in the wrong way.

[3]We should also note that Poteat never explicitly addresses ethics beyond the implication of our actions that derive from our indwelled knowledge. He hints at this in the Appendix to *Recovering the Ground*, reflecting on the fact-value distinction that has so plagued modern philosophy. Again, he too finds metaphors of illness useful in suggesting, "A wasting disease has afflicted the human spirit, perhaps mortally, for now more than 300 years" (1994, 187). He goes on to suggest that it has become "a form of madness" (1994, 221).

[4]For a thoughtful discussion of the moral inversion, see Yeager (2002).

[5]Dynamo-objective coupling might be understood to operate analogously to the way psychological defense mechanisms keep unpleasant feelings from conscious (focal) awareness.

[6]Poteat has expounded on this observation sympathetically to Freud's attempt to explain his discovery to his positivist colleagues. Poteat reflects on Freud's 1895 "Project for a Scientific Psychology" as a misguided attempt to explain the "cause" of neurotic symptoms on a neurological basis, which ironically has greater credibility in the 21st century in light of the understandings of modern neuroscience (Poteat, 1993b, 228). More ambiguous is the idea that neurotic symptoms are "caused" by childhood experiences particularly, early feelings and fantasies about sexuality. Freud was not unaware of the possibility of reductionist pitfalls when he suggested that such symptoms were "overdetermined," meaning that there could be multiple "determinants." Indeed this observation is prescient in the 21st century as we recognize social and economic determinants of health as well as psychological and biological determinants.

[7]It is probably a mischaracterization to suggest that Poteat's style of teaching was "Socratic" at least in the later years of his career. While both were interrogatory, it was Plato's intent through his character, Socrates, to show his students that they did not know what they thought they knew from long-established wisdom. Poteat, on the other hand, was more intent on showing his students that they *did* know what they might heretofore have been shy about articulating.

[8]Descartes recorded his dreams in a manuscript called *Olympia*, which is no longer available, but which was used by his biographer, Baillet (*Vie de Monsieur Descartes*, 1946) and which are reproduced in their entirety in Dyer 1986.

[9]Psychoanalysts characterize the first phase of development as dyadic object relations in that the infant distinguishes self and other, a more primitive view which is later supplanted by triadic object relations when the child realizes a parent of the same sex and a parent of the opposite sex and different, more complex relationships. This theme is beyond the scope of this paper but is one I develop in Dyer 1986. It is worth noting that this psychoanalytic formulation, based on developmental considerations, mirrors the philosophical concern with a dualistic world-view as inadequate to the more complex realties of lived-through experience.

[10]Poteat saw the story of Oedipus, who knows enough to answer the riddle of the Sphinx and is a being who walks, as "compactly" told in his name, which means swollen foot. In the Oedipal

story, both as Sophocles told it and as Freud understands it, man is swollen with knowledge, but yet a mystery to himself. Politely, neither Poteat nor even Freud suggested the swollen foot as a tumescent appendage, yet the story is always fraught with urgently sexualized anxieties, which are hard to speak out loud even obliquely.

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# HEALTH CARE ETHICS CONSULTATION: PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE AND APPRENTICESHIP[1]



**Ellen W. Bernal**

**Keywords**: Healthcare Ethics Consultation, objectivism, Michael Polanyi, personal knowledge, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, William H. Poteat, lived experience, complexity and ambiguity in ethics consultation, post-critical thought, teaching ethics consultation, internship, apprenticeship, and virtue

## ABSTRACT

*The intellectual history of Healthcare Ethics Consultation embraces objectivism and its emphasis on knowledge that has already been achieved. As a result, official descriptions, standards, and guidelines for this practice, while valuable, ordinarily exclude consideration of the ethics consultant in the process of knowing. Narratives of complex cases, including those that have led to perceived errors, are signs that point to Michael Polanyi's notion of personal knowledge. The writings of Polanyi, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and William H. Poteat support a paradigm shift to "post-critical thinking," opening new avenues for ethics consultation teaching and learning, particularly in the setting of clinical internships.*

## The Haunting Ambiguity: Autobiographical notes

I first became interested in Bioethics during my PhD studies with William H. Poteat at Duke University (1973-1980). My original plan had been to get a graduate degree in Sociology, my major at Beloit College (1967-1971), where I studied with Donald Summers, the Chair of the Sociology Department. Professor Summers taught Sociology at Beloit from 1959-1993. His charismatic teaching style and eclectic

interests in social theory, phenomenology, and philosophy equipped students with a wide-ranging grasp of sociology, coupled with a philosophical tendency to question and critique sociology's methodology and conclusions. We studied the pioneering ideas of Auguste Comte (1798–1857), Émile Durkheim (1857–1917), and Max Weber (1864–1920); along with Phenomenologists Alfred Schutz (1899–1959), Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961).

Introductory Sociology leads the student to entertain the possibility that "social facts" are objective, observable, and governed by laws that generalize across various situations and cultures. Further, students learn to think that social facts wield a causal influence, positioning the individual in a social milieu, sanctioning those who "deviate" from expectations, as well as maintaining and "solidifying" social structures.

Durkheim's foundational study, *Suicide*, compared and contrasted suicide rates between various European social groups. Through careful reasoning and argument, Durkheim concluded

> that different rates of suicide (as distinct from individual cases—a problem for psychology) are the consequence of variations in social structure, especially of differences in degree and type of social solidarity. Thus egoistic suicide, a product of relatively weak group integration, is prevalent in those groups where lack of social cohesion is marked, for example, among the unmarried and Protestants; and anomic suicide, induced by a breakdown of social norms, is encouraged by sudden changes characteristic of modern times. Durkheim also made clear that social solidarity can induce suicide, illustrated by his third type, altruistic suicide, revealed, for example, by high rates in certain primitive societies and in some modern armies (Timasheff 1967, 114).

This is the type of sociological reasoning that began to make me feel anomic myself. If even suicide, an ostensibly individual decision and choice, is merely the reflection of social forces, what about other aspects of life in which we believe ourselves to act freely? Sociology appears to create a double vision, in which one discredits ordinary perception and attends to levels of existence that are unseen, yet purportedly more real and determinative. Lounging in a comfortable arm chair in the Beloit College library, striving to follow Durkheim's complex argument set forth in the conspicuous red book with its huge white SUICIDE, I wondered if those around me would consider me strange, deviant or even suicidal. Perhaps exaggerated self-consciousness is an occupational risk for sociologists.

In the classroom, Summers would often pause in the midst of discussion and ask us, "Do you get a sense of the haunting ambiguity?" He did not explain the meaning of this intriguing question, but my interpretation is that he was alluding to the strangeness

of the sociological imagination. He wondered whether we were beginning to discern the "presence" of social norms and expectations that were all around us, but paradoxically hidden, absent a special, reflexive methodology. Social reality had ineffable, unspecifiable elements. I believe that Summers was calling attention to Merleau-Ponty's insight: we are situated in a taken for granted world of beliefs and expectations which form the essential basis of our observations and reckonings.

My plan for graduate school was to continue studies in theoretical sociology and phenomenology at Duke University (1971-1980). But as I gained more experience with Sociology's emphasis on empirical observation, I became disenchanted with the field. As an example, Erving Goffman (1922-1982), a student of Durkheim, turned his attention to small-scale, face-to-face "interaction." He regarded interaction as a type of drama, in which actors seek to control the way they appear to others by displaying and adjusting roles they have "internalized" during their upbringing and subsequent group memberships. However, like other sociological facts, the roles that actors play are normally "invisible," only revealed when social expectations break down (Goffman 1959, 13). At some point, we graduate students were encouraged to test interaction theory ourselves, by conducting social "experiments" such as walking into a shoe store and trying to buy two left shoes, observing and then reporting the reactions of the hapless, and frankly manipulated, employee. The assumption was that research and observation simply required "standing back" from the social setting, "displaying" a mildly deviant act and describing what followed.

Philosophically unsophisticated, we were not aware of the ethical and epistemological issues of this type of inquiry. I was later able to reflect that in the name of objectivity, we were deceiving the shoe store clerk, perhaps even treating him as a Kantian "means to an end." Colleges have by now established more rigorous standards for the review and approval of research on human subjects; at minimum, this project would now receive expedited review as a student research project.[2] But since we had not reframed in advance the ordinary taken-for-granted situation of a sales event by placing it in a research context, the store clerk reasonably assumed that the person "who wanted to buy two left shoes" was acting in good faith, telling the truth. There is a related epistemological quandary. The sociologist-observer may adopt the pretense of being interested in two left shoes, but it is a mistake to believe that this "bracketing" of one's everyday expectation can "remove" him or her from the situation in its entirety. He or she is still fully present with the clerk by virtue of their mutually affirmed, taken-for-granted reality. As I later realized from studies of Polanyi, sociology's stated methodological ideal rested on a skeptical, "non-fiduciary," approach to social facts, whether in studies of face-to-face interaction or in statistical research. A "skeptical" stance was the stated norm, even though both the founders of sociology, alarmed by the breakdown of many traditional social institutions in the 1800s; and the more recent activists working for social justice, all held deep moral convictions. Sociology had

adopted a second-order, "objectivist" account which described the sociologist as a mere observer and compiler of social facts. According to Polanyi and Poteat, objectivism is the false picture of human knowing, derived most recently from the Enlightenment that endorses a program of universal doubt, skepticism, and personal detachment as the definitive method of discovery in science and other forms of knowledge.[3]

In the mid-1970s I heard that William H. Poteat was offering a seminar on Merleau-Ponty, and I began a change of majors to Religion. I participated in Poteat's seminars on Merleau-Ponty, Michael Polanyi, Walker Percy, Soren Kierkegaard, and Paul Ricoeur. Poteat would skillfully lead us to "go for the jugular" of whatever author we were reading (Breytspraak 2008, 16). He helped us demonstrate that the writer's stated purpose was riddled with fatal flaws, inconsistencies and the "infelicities" of unexpunged Cartesian dualism. My hope was someday to teach, *like Poteat*, philosophy or religion in a college or university. To be on the safe side, though, my dissertation chapters addressed quasi-practical applications that might allow a wider range of options: sociology of religion, acquisition of language, and the newly developing field of bioethics.

When I moved to Toledo, Ohio, in the early 1980s, I learned that the new Director of the Medical College of Ohio School of Nursing was from Georgetown University and wanted to establish a nursing and humanities program. With others, I created the program, then for several years taught nursing ethics and humanities for classes of R.N. and M.S.N. students. During this period I continued to read extensively in bioethics, attended early conferences of The Society for Bioethics Consultation, and served as a founding board member and officer of the Bioethics Network of Ohio. In 1990, I accepted the position of Hospital Ethicist for what is now Mercy St. Vincent. My charge was to "revitalize the moribund" ethics committee and serve as chair of Human Subjects Research.

## History, Intellectual Commitments, and the Practice of Health Care Ethics Consultation

Bioethics is a practice discipline and "convivial order," a community of like-minded persons who, over time, have jointly accredited a body of knowledge (Polanyi 1962, 203-222). This sedimentation (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 89-92) is rooted in ancient philosophical and religious commitments, but is noteworthy for rapid development in the years following World War II. Consistent with Polanyi's description of knowing, one can observe individuals and groups in the field of Bioethics as they rely on previous commitments to actively consider key events and deepen general understanding of ethical practice.

The war crimes trial of Nazi doctors (1946-1947) led to vigorous articulation of human rights and insistence upon their integration in medicine and research.[4]

Beginning in the 1950s, the virtual elimination of many infectious diseases brought longer life spans, but ironically, was accompanied by the emergence of "diseases of aging" that posed issues relating to quality of life. Patients and health care professionals began to wonder whether they had an ethical obligation to employ every newly developed technology.

Early questions about ventilator support provide an example. Physicians in the 1950s originally used ventilators as a temporary measure, to sustain the lives of polio victims and to resuscitate patients in the operating room. Doctors then began to extend the technology to a wider range of patients, including those who were seriously ill and might not recover. In 1957, Dr. Bruno Haid, Chief Anesthesiologist at the University of Innsbruck, brought personally troubling questions to Pope Pius XII. Please note Dr. Haid's perplexity, hesitancy, awkward language, and his reliance on religious tradition; all accord with Polanyi's descriptions of the person in the act of knowing:

> **First**, does one have the right, or is one even under the obligation, to use modern artificial respiration equipment in all cases, even those which, in the doctor's judgment, are completely hopeless?
>
> **Second**, does one have the right, or is one under obligation, to remove the artificial respiration apparatus when, after several days, the state of deep unconsciousness does not improve if, when it is removed, blood circulation will stop within a few minutes? What must be done in this case if the family of the patient, who has already received the last sacraments, urges the doctor to remove the apparatus? Is Extreme Unction still valid at this time?
>
> **Third**, must a patient plunged into unconsciousness through central paralysis, but whose life—that is to say, blood circulation—is maintained through artificial respiration, and in whom there is no improvement after several days, be considered *de facto* or even *de jure* dead? Must one not wait for blood circulation to stop, in spite of the artificial respiration, before considering him dead? (Pius XII 1957).

The Pontiff responded,

> Normally one is held to use only ordinary means—according to circumstances of persons, places, times, and culture—that is to say, means that do not involve any grave burden for oneself or another. A more strict obligation would be too burdensome for most men and would render the attainment of the higher, more important good too difficult. Life, health, all temporal activities, are in fact subordinated to spiritual ends. On the other hand, one is not forbidden to take more than the strictly necessary steps to preserve life and health, as long as he does not fail in some more serious duty.[5]

Drawing on centuries of Roman Catholic ethics, the Pope's distinction between ordinary and extraordinary means of treatment continues to inform decision-making in today's Bioethics (Taboada 2008). The consensus in Bioethics is that the benefits and burdens of a potential treatment should always be weighed in the light of the patient's own goals of care (Ross 1993), and the informed patient with reliable decisional capacity has the right to refuse any treatment, whether or not it is life-sustaining.

In the late 1960s, a series of well known "right to die" cases fostered public, academic and legal commentary, and a small number of academics began to offer clinical ethics consultation in hospital settings.[6] Ethics consultation is currently established in virtually all health care settings in the United States, Canada, and throughout much of Europe; the standards of accrediting organizations such as the Joint Commission require a process to address ethical issues.

Healthcare ethics consultation is a service that clinical ethicists provide, on request, to those directly involved in the care of a patient, including patients themselves, family, and health care professionals (Jonsen, et al 2010). Questions about whether or not ethics consultation is a profession are now, for the most part, answered in the affirmative. The American Society for Bioethics and Humanities (ASBH) has a membership of over 1,800 individuals and institutions. The ASBH has published *Core Competencies for Health Care Ethics Consultation*, 2nd Edition (2011) and *Improving Competencies in Clinical Ethics Consultation: an Education Guide*, 2nd Edition (2015). There are multiple training programs throughout North America and Europe, most requiring a period of in-person mentoring by skilled providers of clinical ethics consultation. The ASBH (2013) is also piloting a quality attestation process for evaluating the practice of clinical ethics consultants (Kodish, *et al.* 2013, 26-36).

Ethical decisions in the hospital often attempt to balance the benefits and burdens of life-sustaining treatment. Ethics consultants are deeply involved in complex, emotionally fraught and frequently tragic clinical situations, but descriptions of the lived experience of becoming skilled in ethics consultation or of serving as an ethics consultant are almost entirely absent from published guidelines and professional literature. Further, although clinical ethicists are beginning to learn ways to address the "moral distress" of those we serve, there has been little explicit attention to the "moral distress" and emotional reactions of the consultant him/herself. Some noteworthy exceptions that we will discuss later are Frolic's (2011) work on "mindful embodiment" and several first-person accounts of ethics consultants' experiences with errors.[7]

## Objectivist Thought in Current Descriptions of Ethics Consultation

Michael Polanyi found that modern, objectivist descriptions of scientific discovery and all other fields of knowledge were at odds with his own experience as a scientist. Polanyi realized that a personal, lived process of *coming to know*, or *knowing*, is

antecedent to and continues in established knowledge, giving it a personal backing within the convivial order of science. As we have remarked earlier in our discussion of the growth of bioethics, Polanyi observed that scientists tacitly rely on previously discovered knowledge and embark on a series of educated guesses towards uncovering new understandings. However, according to Polanyi and Poteat, objectivist thinking

> tends to lose track of the *how* of knowing while presuming a relationship of hypercritical suspicion, guarded distance, and objectification to achieve "objective knowledge," from which personal presence and involvement are withheld or repressed. By presuming personal involvement in the process of knowing to be illegitimate, because it is thought to adulterate the objectivity of what is to be known, features of that knowledge that are the result of personal participation drop out of the resulting conception, including most notably the presence of the subject who is doing the knowing and who is indwelling the context and discerning the facts of that knowing (Cannon 2014).

According to Poteat, this is a captivating imaginative picture, largely unnoticed, that we who are caught up in modernity both have and are in the midst of (Poteat 1985, 13). Precursors of this worldview can be traced to early Western thought, but it is perhaps best articulated in the modern age by Descartes (Poteat 1985, 151).

> Cartesianism, as characterized in [Poteat's] *Polanyian Meditations*, is not a systematic theory rigorously explicated by its exponents. Rather it is a dominant but deeply sublimated metaphysical grammar composed of a vocabulary of paradigmatic images and values, motifs and metaphors that operate at a subterranean level in the imagination; and this grammar informs all our implicit beliefs about the nature of Reality and our relationship to it, determining even the motivation to think or inquire in the first place (Cashell 2008, 54).

Descartes believed that the philosopher could only achieve certainty in knowledge by mentally doubting everything, and building up a collection of impersonal knowledge claims that, if successful, will have overcome our best attempts to doubt them, effectively placing himself or herself outside of nature and relationship. However, Poteat observes that Descartes obviously relied on his French language, a contradiction and inconsistency that renders the project fatally suspect (1985, 275).

Of course, ordinary descriptions of healthcare ethics consultation do not explicitly raise objectivist thought as a standard. Nevertheless, the widespread cultural reliance on the ideal of purely objective thought, uncovered by Polanyi and Poteat, may well influence the tendency to avoid descriptions of personal knowing in clinical ethics consultation. The ASBH Core Competencies are valuable, even necessary guidelines

for practice, but if taken as a complete description, without considering the ethics consultant in the context of practice, they may give the impression that ethics consultation is simply the application of explicitly known standards. This diverts attention from the *consultant who is struggling through* the steps of gathering information, speaking with all involved, identifying and describing the ethical issues, and attempting to reach an acceptable course of action. Frolic, an anthropologist with expertise in Bioethics, conducted ethnographic research with ethics consultants, asking them what they do when they are consulting. Their typical answers were rote role descriptions: writing policy, doing consults, and teaching. When pressed, they would occasionally remember the faces of patients or responses of doctors in difficult cases, "but [the consultants] were absent from these narratives, as if they were not agents in the drama but rather a Greek chorus standing in the wings, narrating the unfolding of fate" (Frolic 2011, 371-372).

In a positive development, the second edition of the *Core Competencies* has a more extensive discussion of the "attributes, attitudes and behaviors" of ethics consultants. Actually, these appear to be a set of core virtues: tolerance, compassion, honesty, honesty, self-knowledge, courage, prudence, humility, leadership, and integrity. The persistent controversy about whether these characteristics should be defined as "observable behaviors," an "internalized inclination to behave in a certain way," or a more "fundamental constituent of persons" may signal an objectivist, modern critical influence on Bioethics conversation. At the same time, the report does encourage nurturing and modeling these behaviors in educational programs (ASBH 2011, 32-33).

Another source of the tendency towards objectivist thought in clinical ethics may be the discipline's early grounding in Enlightenment philosophical concepts. The eclectic group of academics, administrators, clergy and health care professionals who put together the field needed a common language for ethics discourse. Some leaders turned to the philosophical styles of Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill. Other scholars proposed the use of four ethical principles (respect for autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice; fondly known as the "Georgetown Mantra") to identify an ethical dilemma, which was conceived as a conflict between two of these principles, either of which might be reasonably justified (Beauchamp and Childress 2001). While Bioethics continues to rely on principles for conceptual analysis, other methods have been suggested, including descriptive phenomenology (Zaner 2006), feminism (Tong 1997), narrative ethics (Charon 2006), and casuistry (Jonsen 1986). However, in even these approaches, the primary focus is not on the *consultant's own self-reflection*, but rather on how the consultant may better understand *patients, families and health care professionals* in their milieux. Frolic notes that many of these

> approaches to [ethics consultation]…helpfully draw attention to how context and power shape the analysis of cases and the agency of involved actors…However, they fall short in applying this insight.

First, they highlight the situatedness of *others* involved in [ethics consultation], but tend not to look in the mirror at their own situatedness. Using metaphors like "witnessing" and "hearing" to describe the work of [ethics consultation] characterizes the consultant as a passive vessel or conduit of communication, without acknowledging their own contextual filters. Even as other parties become more fully "fleshed out," the [ethics consultant] remains a wraith-like character, a disembodied "voice of reason,"…providing unbiased facilitation and principled advice (2011, 374).

Churchill's account of a "fairly routine" ethics consultation also draws attention to the situatedness of the consultant in his or her own "story" (2014 S36).

## Personal Accounts of Error as Signs
## that Point to Post-Critical Thinking

As an alternative to objectivist accounts of knowledge, Polanyi and Poteat seek to establish a *Post-Critical* description of knowing, an exceedingly rich and complex endeavor. Both Polanyi and Poteat described the embodied person (for Poteat, the mindbody) as the radix of all acts of knowing. Polanyi demonstrated that our powers of discovery are continuous with those of all living things. Poteat's especially difficult task was to encourage his students and readers to begin to take notice of, and bring to the surface, the tacitly held commitments that underlie all knowing.

In the context of the present discussion of ethics consultation, the most telling features of this project are: (1) restoration of confidence in the embodied, situated person as the source of all new and previously received knowledge; (2) accreditation of discovery as the person's skillful integration of subsidiarily known clues into a comprehensive whole; (3) acknowledgment that knowing is to some extent unspecifiable, that is, not amenable to clear and distinct description; (4) recognition that apprenticeship is key to taking up a practice; and (5) reclamation of a "fiduciary" aspect to language, morality, and the social world. This essay will attend to those aspects of post-critical philosophy most connected to my discussion: the personal appraisal that is most easily discerned in complex, unresolved ethics consultations and that is nonetheless present even in routine consultations.

Errors in judgment cause regret, intense rehearsal of missed clues and actions that might have been taken differently, renewed inquiry with colleagues, and search of published literature for alternative approaches. The personal feelings, reconsideration of missed opportunities and actions, and consultation with one's own convivial order echo Polanyi and Poteat in their contention that knowing is a skilled performance of integrating tacitly known clues into a comprehensive whole within a convivial community of like-minded knowers.

In the medical literature, Bosk recounts a "forgive and remember" response to mistakes that he observed as a sociologist "embedded" in a surgical residency program (2003, 39). Hilfiker courageously relates his own experience in an incident involving his patient, "Barb." The clinical picture was ambiguous; after four negative pregnancy tests and an ultrasound, Hilfiker concludes that while Barb had been pregnant, the fetus had died and that a dilation and curettage was necessary to prevent infection. During the procedure, Hilfiker is alarmed to realize that he is removing recently living body parts; the pathologist confirms that at the time of the operation, the fetus had been alive. Hilfiker's personal account was a confession that greatly influenced subsequent discussion of how to prevent and address medical error (1984,118-122).

Ethics consultants' mistakes also occasion personal regret, reaching out to colleagues, and new learning. Paul Ford and Denise Dudzinski (2008) arrived at the idea for *Complex Ethics Consultations: Cases that Haunt Us* during a conversation with their mentor, Richard Zaner, whose own philosophical commitments include phenomenology and ethics. They agreed that the personal, affective components of ethics consultation should receive more attention, so they invited experienced ethics consultants to contribute first person accounts of cases that they remember with regret, consternation, and at times a feeling of failure. These are the perplexing cases that continue to "haunt" ethics consultants months, or even years after the fact; in a sense they are unresolved. They are occasions for reconsideration, mental experiments with alternative courses of action, and attempts to construct the fact patterns differently. If ethics consultation were merely the application of impersonal, quasi-logical rules to the facts of a particular case, as in the objectivist account, such persistent revisiting would be superfluous; but this "timeless," unsituated approach does not fit with lived experience. As Al Jonsen wrote in the book's introduction,

> In my immature days as a scholar of ethics, ethical problems appeared in my books as timeless moments: whether or not to tell a lie, whether or not to save a threatened life. Also, these ethical problems existed in the conscience of the one who must choose, or between several persons debating right and wrong. When I entered the world of clinical medicine, ethical problems were suddenly swept into a temporal sea, moving, changing, sweeping to an ever-receding horizon. Cases concerned persons with a developing illness, an imminent crisis, a constantly shifting physiological picture, and deepening emotional responses. I was surprised by the clinicians' oft-uttered phrase, "We should give this some time." For me, ethics was [supposed to be] timelessly true (2008, xvi).

Authentic descriptions and teaching of clinical ethics consultation should attend to the personal experience of practitioners and learners. Here is the account I contributed to Ford and Dudzinski's book.

## Listening to the Husband

In September, two months after I began my position at a Catholic hospital, Fr. Kelly, a Catholic priest on staff requested what turned out to be my first ethics consult. He related that Ms. Barnes, a middle-aged woman on a ventilator with advanced chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) was asking to be taken off ventilator support. "How should we respond to requests like this in a Catholic hospital?" (USCCB 2009, 29-33). Logistical problems interfered with my attempts to schedule a full ethics committee meeting in a timely fashion, so with the endorsement of the ethics committee chair and hospital attorney, I used an individual consultant model.[8] I kept in touch with these officials and with other ethics colleagues as I worked through the case. The basic steps of ethics consultation are gathering facts, speaking to all involved, identifying and analyzing the ethical issues, often participating in a family care conference, and writing an extensive chart note with a range of acceptable options supported by ethical theory/readings.

I proceeded to the hospital unit on a Friday. I spoke with Ms. Hernandez, the Nurse Manager. She said nursing staff were very frustrated by the case. Ms. Barnes repeatedly expressed a desire to be taken off the ventilator and was refusing food and most medications. Ms. Barnes was married, and her husband was strongly opposed to removal of life support. It seemed to the nurses that Ms. Barnes was being treated against her will simply because Dr. Evans, the attending physician, feared a lawsuit. Also, nurses had suspicions that Mr. Barnes was having an undue influence in the situation; Ms. Barnes seemed to "act differently" when her husband was in the room. I saw Mr. Barnes as an unusual, possibly dangerous, shadowy figure. Why did he sometimes come to the hospital in camouflage clothing—was he a survivalist or in a paramilitary organization? One of the nurses heard that someone saw him carrying a knife. How should these observations affect medical decision making?

I interviewed Dr. Evans, who described Ms. Barnes as a "pulmonary cripple" who had required frequent hospital admissions and ventilator support over the past months. At first, the patient and family had agreed that discontinuing life support was appropriate, but now the husband was "adamantly opposed." On the other hand, inconsistently, the husband was not in favor of a "full code," i.e., all measures to attempt resuscitation if Ms. Barnes' heart should stop beating. Perhaps he felt that this event would take the life support decision "out of his hands."

Dr. Evans explained that he often withdrew ventilator support in patients with end-stage chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, but not when other family members

disagreed. Another problem was that the patient's out of state medical insurance made it difficult to find a nearby ventilator support extended care facility (ECF). Attempts to "wean" Ms. Barnes from ventilator support were continuing. No, Dr. Evans did not see a need for an ethics consult or ethics committee meeting, but he had no strong objection to proceeding.

I made a short chart note about the ethical question, and left for the weekend, hoping that "weaning" efforts would be successful, but on Monday the nurses reported that whenever ventilator support was decreased, Ms. Barnes became very anxious and indicated she wanted support increased once again. It was time, actually past the time, to talk to the patient.

A nurse accompanied me as we entered Ms. Barnes' room. Ms. Barnes could speak "a little" by blocking the tracheostomy tube for short periods. I felt awkward and concerned about the seriousness of the decision. I had never tried to communicate with someone on a ventilator and worried about misunderstanding or misinterpreting what she said. I asked yes or no questions:

> "Do you want to stop the ventilator machine?"
> "Yes.
> "Do you understand that you will die when the ventilator is stopped?"
> "Yes"
> "Do you know your husband is against this wish?"
> "Yes"
> "Should we listen to him?"
> "No."
> "Do you want him included in this decision?"
> "No."

I explained to Ms. Barnes that in my role, I could not promise a particular outcome, but that I would speak to Dr. Evans and her husband. The case seemed to be a clear conflict between patient autonomy and unjustifiable paternalism. However, I also had concerns about inconsistency in Ms. Barnes' wishes and the quality of her informed consent.

After this conversation, while I sat at the nurse's station writing a lengthy, carefully considered, almost "textbook" chart note, Mr. Barnes called into the unit to speak to the social worker. Should I now take the opportunity to speak with Mr. Barnes, and/or involve the social worker as an interested party? She informed me that she had been working with Mr. Barnes for his "ongoing emotional problems" and "it might not be a good idea for an additional person" (me) to speak with him. I pondered this, as well.

In the chart I indicated that Ms. Barnes was the primary decision maker and recommended that the medical team continue, as well as document, conversations with her to be sure she understood the consequences and process of ventilator withdrawal.

This recommendation, I hoped, would address the inconsistency in Ms. Barnes' views and support her autonomy, defined as free action, the ability to reason and deliberate about choices and authenticity.[9]

After several days I returned to the unit. Unfortunately, the program I had so carefully set out in the chart was not happening. There was no evidence of any ongoing conversation between the health care professionals and Ms. Barnes. No one had followed my recommendations.

The pattern continued at length: weaning attempts were unsuccessful, Mr. Barnes wanted treatment to continue and his wife to be transferred to a nursing home, Ms. Barnes refused to be transferred and at certain times voiced a desire to stop ventilator support, but would inevitably become anxious when "weaning" was attempted. I continued to "follow at a distance."

In October, the nurses put up Halloween decorations. The cardboard pumpkins, spiders and witches reminded me of the passage of time, the triviality of death in public awareness, and the real suffering experienced by Ms. Barnes and those around her, a suffering that it seemed I was powerless to change. Ms. Barnes eventually agreed to, or gave into, transfer to an ECF, but was this her authentic decision, or just a form of surrender? All too often, we assume that the ethical question has been resolved when a patient agrees to what "we" think she should do. Ms. Barnes' death after several weeks in the extended care facility seemed to vindicate the nurses and their moral dis-ease with the situation.

As I look back at this case, I recognize that it was complex, difficult, and could not be resolved by simply identifying and analyzing the dilemma of autonomy vs. paternalism (seemingly based on the wishes of the husband and doctor instead of Ms. Barnes' best interests). Ambiguities included multiple perspectives among those involved, issues of family dysfunction and emotional instability, perceived threats of violence, worries about lawsuits, uncertainty about the ethics consultation process, and logistical problems (Bernal 2008, 108).

In addition, the power structure in the hospital was difficult to navigate: ethics consultation is supposed to serve the patient, but it seemed she was at the bottom level of a complex hierarchy: hospital administration, medical staff, nursing administration, social work, pastoral care, and finally, it seemed, the patient herself. The suffering of the patient, time pressures, contingencies, risk, and ambiguity of this process obviously stand in sharp contrast to the received accounts of ethical deliberation represented by utilitarianism and Kantian idealism and principlism. Over the years, I have continued to feel regret about this case.[10] As I stated in the article, "I felt new, inexperienced and overwhelmed. I doubted my own skills and authority… By proceeding so cautiously, I might have overlooked opportunities to facilitate an earlier and more ethically sound resolution" (Diekema, D., 2013). More diplomacy with each of the involved parties might have helped, for example:

Dr. Evans, please tell me more about why you are reluctant to withdraw ventilator support when the family disagrees. What is your concern? Under what circumstances might you agree? What would be the medications used to help Ms. Barnes' air hunger if and when the ventilator is withdrawn? I recommend a family conference; would you agree to attend?

Ms. Barnes, sometimes you say that you would like to be removed from the ventilator, but at other times you seem to want continued support. Please help me understand. Would you be willing to participate in a family conference, here in your room?

Mr. Barnes, are you aware that your wife has expressed the wish to stop ventilator support? Are you against letting her decide? Why? At the hospital, we like to see the patient herself make her own decisions. Do you see a way to come to an agreement?

After these conversations, and with a sense of what each party would endorse, a family conference at Ms. Barnes' bedside should have taken place; perhaps with more direct assistance from others on the ethics team, and regular follow-up visits to the nursing unit. Another alternative would be simply to end ethics involvement in the case, as do other consulting services when they have given a final opinion that is, in some situations, making no appreciable difference in patient care. The ethics service could make a note in the patient's chart: "Nothing further to add. Signing off." But would this be a form of patient abandonment? At what point should an ethics consultant draw back from a case that shows no sign of resolution?

I approached the case with the virtues of caution, good faith, integrity and humility; more courage and persistence might have been helpful. On the other hand, not even the highly experienced and virtuous ethics consultant can easily and simply resolve every case. The patient's illness, family dysfunction, the choices available to modern medicine, and the persistent expectation of cure all contribute to ambiguous ethical problems; as well, the responsibility of the ethics consultant is circumscribed by his or her role. The best approach is to strengthen and enhance ethics consultation skills and resources, for example, by more readily asserting the authority of the Ethics service, convening the full ethics committee and seeking colleagues' advice in the most complex cases.

The personal participation of the ethics consultant is clearly apparent in this, and in other accounts in Ford and Dudzinski; the consultants are deeply involved in the situations they relate. Relying on their knowledge and acquired skills, they strive to reach satisfactory conclusions. However, ambiguities, complexities, the demands of the situation and messy contingencies can prove to be intractable. Perhaps the ethicists' tacitly held knowledge and skills were inadequate, or were insufficient to handle the

complexity of the case; despite their best efforts at the time, the haunting cases persisted as unresolved memories.

But it would be wrong to conclude that when the ethicist gains more experience, or the field itself achieves an even clearer consensus about ethics consultation competencies, that the personal elements so evident in "haunting" cases will no longer be required. It is a Cartesian myth to believe that eventually, all will be made clear and distinct. All too often, we forget that the now commonplace knowledge and skills of the experienced ethicist, as well as those of bioethics as a whole, have been sedimented over time, through the concerted efforts of like-minded professionals who have sought to reach meaningful agreement. The searchlight focus on specifiable competencies to the exclusion of more tentative, unspecifiable forms of knowing may paradoxically diminish the effectiveness of teaching and learning (See Merleau-Ponty 1962, 392).

## Implications for Teaching and Learning

Thus far, we have considered ways in which the field of ethics consultation may have absorbed the ideal of clear and distinct knowledge from modernity as a whole; then reviewed evidence for the personal coefficient of knowing, revealed in errors, complex cases, and the gradual sedimentation of knowledge in a convivial order. We now need to acknowledge a reasonable question, "Isn't it obvious and trivial that actual persons conduct ethics consultations, sometimes making errors, but often reaching satisfactory conclusions? What does a description of personal knowing contribute to the field?" (Poteat 1976).

I believe that many opportunities can be found in the context of ethics consultation teaching and learning. While the ethics consultation knowledge base is extensive, focusing on essential core information, process skills, and guidelines for analysis (Jonsen, et al 2010), there is a tendency to view ethics consultation as an application of clear and distinct knowledge. There has been little attention to personal practice elements, such as *how it is that we come to recognize an ethics problem, consider courses of action, and strive to reach an acceptable outcome.* This is the case despite the nearly universal insistence on ethics consultation internships, fellowships and other forms of guided clinical practice: a tacit acknowledgement that these personal skills are essential and must be acquired through interaction in clinical settings with skilled ethics consultants. Polanyi and Poteat's descriptions of personal knowledge are precisely the tools needed to more adequately account for and foster personal skills in ethics consultation. A more true-to-life, honest description of how we go about serving as ethics consultants, and a humbler approach to our interactions with patients and families, with whom we are co-adventurers, should enhance learning and practice (Ramsey 2002, xii-xiii). To this end, I would recommend that educational programs:

(A) Attend to the exercise and development of virtue in ethics consultation. The ASBH Core Competencies Report discussion (2011, 32-33) views "attitudes," "attributes" and "behaviors" as rather static entities, but I believe that considering these "traits" as *virtues* is more fruitful. Virtues in philosophical literature, particularly in the natural law tradition, are active forms of personal practice with the intent of promoting human flourishing.[11] They are not timeless characteristics, but actions of a person within an ongoing practice (Muller). First person accounts of errors in ethics consultation, particularly the discussions of "haunting aspects," are excellent material for discernment, via positive and negative examples of aspects of virtuous practice. Ford and Dudzinski provide extensive questions and educational exercises keyed to the cases in their book. Further reflection on the nature of virtue is available from resources such as McIntyre (2007).

(B) Acknowledge and discuss "moral wounds" and "moral "distress." With few exceptions, the bioethics literature overlooks the possibility that ethics consultants themselves may experience moral distress. It would be good openly to discuss such experiences, using Ford and Dudzinski and mentors' own reflections on their cases. An exploration of learners' perceptions as they and their mentors approach a new case would be useful. Do learners experience excitement, anxiety, confusion, trepidation or something else? Are their experiences *walking to* the nursing unit different from *returning* to the ethics office? (Spielberg 1972). Compare and contrast their perceptions to those of their teacher.

(C) Explore the multiple convivial relationships in the hospital, and especially those with the persons who bring us ethical problems. How do the learners' feelings (for example, anxiety or fatigue) align with those of the patient, family, or health care professionals? (Ulrich, et al 2010, 20-22). How might the similarities/differences affect the relationships? Do learners perceive themselves as unsituated analysts, or as "co-adventurers" with the patients we serve? These reflections are an opportunity to consider the virtues of respect, humility and compassion.

(D) Consider the personal values, commitments and beliefs of the learners. How does their decision to pursue this field relate to their own experiences and background? Are there specific events in their lives, or the lives of persons close to them, that have fostered their

interest? How might these experiences influence their learning and perceptions?

(E) "Think out loud" about the clues, key findings and patterns uncovered by the mentor. Compare and contrast them to Polanyi's description of medical students learning to read X-rays of the lungs:

> At first the student is completely puzzled. For he can see in the X-ray picture of a chest only the shadows of the heart and the ribs, with a few spidery blotches between them. The experts seem to be romancing about figments of their imagination; he can see nothing that they are talking about. Then as he goes on listening for a few weeks, looking carefully at ever new pictures of different cases, a tentative understanding will dawn on him; he will gradually forget about the ribs and begin to see the lungs… He has entered a new world. He still sees on a fraction of what the experts can see, but the pictures are definitely making sense now and so do most of the comments made on them. He is about to grasp what he is being taught; it has clicked (Polanyi 1962, 101).

Student ethics consultants acquire their skills in a similar fashion; gradually recognizing the issues, problems, and appropriate next steps in a clinical case under the guidance of their mentors.

(F) Incorporate conversations with professionals in other, related disciplines. Perhaps conduct patient rounds along with Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) students, and/or adopt some of their learning practices: "In CPE training, a significant amount of time is spent, through individual supervision and in peer group meetings, helping trainees process their emotional, personal, spiritual experiences and feelings resulting from their patient/family encounters" (Smith 2015). Clinical programs for psychiatrists and clinical psychologists also attend to the professional-patient relationship, asking questions such as, "Who is this patient to you? What memories and/or perceptions are you having? How do these affect your practice?" (Argueta-Bernal 2015).

(G) Frolic describes the ways her clinical ethics program has built "reflexivity" into the clinical experience (2011, 372-374). Small ethics consultation teams allow frequent discussion and peer commentary. When discussing a case, ethics consultation students comment on four questions: "What was the issue? What can I celebrate? What

challenges did I encounter? What did the team learn from this case?"
This allows self-awareness, accountability, and attention to moral
distress. Role play and reflective practice journals are complementary
strategies.

## Conclusion

Objectivism focuses on already achieved, explicit knowledge. It thereby fails to
describe adequately the person in the process of knowing and omits from consider-
ation all the more or less unspecifiable, ambiguous elements that are involved when,
for example, the person begins to perceive a problem, strives to resolve the facts into
a meaningful pattern, and then applies the findings. While the physical sciences can
generally proceed without incident under this false description, the human sciences
and the professions, including ethics consultation, may unfortunately downplay those
features that may appear to be "trivial," yet are in fact essential to the practice, such as
one's good faith commitment to others, one's tacitly held skills, and one's setting within
a rich convivial order. I hope that the insights of Polanyi and Poteat will open a deeper
understanding of these, and other non-explicit features of knowing, so as to enrich
practice and teaching in ethics consultation.

## ENDNOTES

[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2014 Primacy of Persons Conference, Yale
University.

[2] For extensive discussion, see Bankert and Amdur (2006).

[3] See Polanyi, M., 1962. *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*. New York:
Harper Torchbooks.

[4] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "The Doctors' Trial: The Medical Case of the
Subsequent Nuremberg Proceedings." *Holocaust Encyclopedia*. Washington, D.C. See also Pellegrino
(1997, 307-308).

[5] See the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2009).

[6] President's Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine and Biomedical and
Behavioral Research (1983).

[7] See Rubin and Zoloth (2000) as well as Ford and Dudzinski (2008).

[8] There are three "models" of ethics consultation in general use: full ethics committee, small
consulting team, or individual ethicist; all three relying on conviviality. The full ethics committee
model is best suited to newly created Ethics Services or to complex, unusual cases.

[9] For representative definition of these terms, see, for example, Beauchamp and Childress (2001,
1-23) and Jonsen, et al (2010, 1-8).

[10]Many thanks to Diane Yeager for drawing attention to "moral wounds" occasioned by involvement in ambiguous, tragic ethics cases. The Primacy of Persons Conference, Yale University, June 6-8, 2014.

[11]Many thanks to Ronald Hall (2014) for his observation regarding Natural Law Ethics. The Primacy of Persons Conference, Yale University, June 6-8, 2014.

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# WRITING INTO THE POST-CRITICAL: THE MINDINGS COLLAGE

**Sam D. Watson**

**Keywords**: mind, conviviality, self-set standards, education, pedagogy, heuristic passion, calling, mental discipline, literacy/oracy, personal knowledge, embodied knowing, tool, William H. Poteat, Michael Polanyi

## ABSTRACT

*The Mindings Collage offers a corrective of the discarnate and corrosive "critical thinking" image which dominates our institutionalized language, culture, and education. The Mindings Collage provides rationale and directions for a disciplined practice to help persons recognize and exercise their own distinctive minds.*

## Orientation

Bringing minds alive: I take that to be Michael Polanyi's central philosophic mission. But how might we actually *do* it? What practices could encourage persons to recognize, exercise, honor, and assume responsibility for the workings of their own distinctive minds? These are decidedly "post-critical" questions, and the "Mindings Collage" is a response which over years of teaching I, with my students, evolved. I now encourage others to adapt and adopt it.

The Mindings Collage is intended to counteract what William H. Poteat called the "metaphorical intentionalities" pervasive in our language, culture, and education that privilege written literate intelligence over oral-aural intelligence and that prompt us to try to think things out clearly *before* we bring our languages—and ourselves—to bear, which is of course impossible (see Poteat 1985, index references, 324, and *passim*). We are left captivated, abstracted from ourselves in a detached, timeless, Cartesian solitude. Here, we are led to suppose, is where "critical thinking" is to be begun and carried on.

That is, at best, a disastrously incomplete picture. It leaves us all in an impossible epistemological disconnect, suggested by two comments I have heard far too frequently. Professors say, "In their writing, my students will not show their *own* thinking." Students say, "In my papers, what my professors do *not* want to see is my *own* thinking."

The Mindings Collage intends to alter this discarnate picture of thinking, prompting us to have our thinking emerge in and through our spontaneous speaking and writing, actions which are confidently rooted within our mindbody concretely placed in our world, our culture, and our time, and emerging through our ongoing dialogical exchange with others. In such speaking/thinking/writing, we never fully know what we are going to say before we say/think/write it. The Mindings Collage presupposes that that is a good, right, and proper thing that needs to be allowed, encouraged, and guided by standards set by the mind itself.

The Mindings Collage culminates my life-long career of wrestling with matters of mind, not in abstracted terms but as a teacher of writing in a state university (UNC Charlotte). That career began with my writing a doctoral dissertation, during which I solicited and received generous responses from Michael Polanyi and William Poteat. I was not one of Poteat's students, but he became one of my lifelong mentors through direct conversation and letters, through reading his books and articles, and through extended conversation with his former students. I always saw myself primarily and most importantly as a classroom teacher. But in my academic practices and limited scholarship (see References) I always was asking how the teaching of writing in higher education could and should serve actual persons, via the paradigm shift from a critical sensibility to a post-critical sensibility which Polanyi and Poteat have done so much to bring about. As a colleague says, "We are giving ourselves permission to begin before we are finished."

## Beginning a Mindings Collage: Commonplaces

For colleagues and students, commonplaces have proven a good entry to a Mindings Collage of one's own. A commonplace begins with a quotation, but it should also briefly record whatever response the reader finds her/himself having. Below are some of my own favorite quotes; you are invited to read among them, until you come to one which seems especially to be speaking to you. Then jot whatever response you find yourself having to that quote. Even this brief reading/responding is likely to remind you of something else—maybe a question you find yourself having, or an experience you've had in the past, or something you'd like to do in the future, or another quote that has been brought back to your mind, or someone you'd like to write or call, or…. Jot that too.

If it blows up, it's chemistry.
If it has one right answer, it's mathematics.
If it dies, it's biology.
If it's unfinished, it's writing.

   —Anonymous

My task as a teacher is not to teach students how to think but to help them recognize when they are doing it.

   —Dixie Dellinger

I spend a lot of time in writing classes, and they have a thing about "discourses" and teaching various theories. Not as much on conversation, interaction, dialogue and actual discourse (as opposed to teaching theories of discourse).  Students have things to say, but they are told to say what they don't have to say.

   —Henry Doss (May '14)

A writer is not so much someone who has something to say as he is someone who has found a process that will bring about new things he would not have thought of if he had not started to say them.

   —William Stafford

Angels can fly, because they take themselves so lightly.

   —G. K. Chesterton

Just because you don't see nothing, doesn't mean that nothing is not there.

   —The Glorious Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ, Pocket Rd., Florence, SC

Before the beginning of great brilliance, there must be chaos. Before a brilliant person begins something great, they must look foolish to the crowd.

   —*I Ching*

All there is to thinking is seeing something noticeable, which makes you see something you weren't noticing, which makes you see something that isn't even visible.

   —Norman MacLean

Through speech a person dramatically identifies himself with potential acts and deeds; he plays many roles, not in successive stages of life but in a contemporaneously enacted drama. Thus mind emerges.

—John Dewey

We students are always looking for others to do the hard work for us while we relax and read their solutions, rather than attacking the problem ourselves and coming up with our own solutions.

—Anonymous student, ENGL 1101 37, Fall 1994

We write to find out what we know and what we want to say…I thought of how often the act of writing even the simplest document—a letter for instance—has clarified my half-formed ideas. Writing and thinking and learning were the same process.

—William Zinsser

That is why I started to write. To save myself. I realized that no one could save me but myself. The prison authorities were both uninterested and unable to help me. I had to seek out the truth and unravel the snarled web of my motivations. I had to find out who I am and what I want to be, what type of man I should be, and what I could do to become the best of which I was capable.

—Eldridge Cleaver

Education is a matter of placing oneself in a position from which it is impossible to escape without thinking.

—Unknown

Through writing one can continually bring new selves into being, each with new responsibilities and difficulties, but also with new possibilities. Remarkable power, indeed. I write and continually give birth to myself.

—Barbara Mellix

It's hard to do wonderful things in a vacuum.

—Ruth Nathan

Language is the mother, not the handmaiden, of thought; words will tell you things you never thought or felt before.

—W. H. Auden

Education replaces cocksure ignorance with thoughtful uncertainty.
　—Unknown

When we discover that we have in this world no earth or rock to stand or walk upon but only shifting sand and sky and wind, the mature response is not to lament the loss of fixity but to learn to sail.
　—James Boyd White

It seems like in all my lecture classes people just write exactly what the teacher says instead of listening to what the professor is trying to get across. No one uses their minds in class.
　—Anonymous student, ENGL 1101 37, Fall 1994

Socrates, and later Arcesilaus, first had their disciples speak, and then they spoke to them.
　—Montaigne

Thinking is quite as incarnate and local as everything else we do.
　—William H. Poteat

Mental reflection is so much more interesting than TV it's a shame more people don't switch over to it. They probably think what they hear is unimportant but it never is.
　—Robert Pirsig

Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person; it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction.
　—Mikhail Bakhtin

Writing—as is also the case with speaking—however they may differ—is an act of exploration and conquest, launched into the public world from within my mindbody in its convivial ambience *in order that I may discover* what I sense, perceive, remember, understand, and believe.
　—William H. Poteat

Have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language… . The point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.
　—Rainer Maria Rilke

Any delay caused by dialogue—in reality a fictitious delay—means time saved in firmness, in self-confidence, and confidence in others, which anti-dialogue cannot offer.

    —Paulo Friere

Becoming conscious of the myths we are living means really examining our own lives and asking the deepest questions. I don't pretend to know all the questions that we must ask ourselves in this process, but I do want to make three suggestions. A good place to start is with the question, "What are my gifts?" This is related to a second question, "What is it that gives me joy?" Joy is very different from pleasure or happiness because joy involves struggle and pain as well as triumph. And the third question—one that is particularly important to me—is, "At what point is there an intersection between my gifts and the needs of the world?"

    —Sam Keen

The process of examining any topic is both an exploration of the topic, and an exegesis of our fundamental beliefs in light of which we approach it; a dialectical combination of exploration and exegesis.

    —Michael Polanyi

## Mindings Collage: Rationale and Directions to Students

First, a word about "minding." It's an old-fashioned word. We used to talk of "minding the store" (or the house, or the horse, or the baby). It meant something like "looking out after," doing whatever was needful to protect and nurture, to cultivate, to be a worthy steward of the entrusted talents. "Minding" was kin to another old-fashioned word, "husbandry" (which could apply to either sex). "Husbandry" was a matter of good stewardship too; it also meant marshalling your resources to whatever worthy end. For instance future farmers used to major in "animal husbandry," something that any horse-whisperer clearly still practices. (These days I suppose that future farmers major in something like "agricultural science"—a loss, I believe.)

Our "mindings" are a matter, really, of each of us cultivating our own mind, of our representing and encouraging some "movements of mind" which also exercise mind and, like any good exercise, strengthen it. We're "minding our minds," if you will or maybe even "making up our minds." What could possibly be more worthy of our attention, our exercise?

Because we're humans, we live largely in language. So, we've begun by asking what it might be to lead a literate life, and we're seeing it's partly a life you live "behind the

scenes" of what a public will read; it's a matter of "wallowing in complexities," of spinning, between yourself and what's beyond yourself, tentative threads that may be as thin as a spider's—and as strong; over time weaving many of those threads with and against each other until they become the fabric of a text or an idea strong enough for you to stand and act upon. Think of your Mindings Collage as your own "scribal place" (a place of places, actually), an arena within which you allow yourself to make messes, where you uncover thoughts you may not have been aware of having and connections (and disconnects) among your thoughts, where you reach out toward other persons and toward parts of the world which draw your interests. It is your arena, to mind and exercise the workings of your distinctive mind.

Whatever yours may become, a "Mindings Collage" is not a "paper." A "paper" may be neat, orderly, with all stray thoughts tucked tidily out of sight (or it may not be). Think of your Mindings Collage instead as a web; indeed, you might think of its pages as places within a web; to put the whole thing on computer might be an interesting way to go (see diagram on next page). What's important, is that you feel perfectly free to play back and forth between these parts as your mind goes (it may be that such "movings between" is what "creativity" is all about, or even "thinking"). You may well find that something you're writing in one place reminds you (notice that word, "re-minds." Wow!) of something you'd like to jot in quite another place. Do It! You may be writing a letter to a friend (*Between you and me*) when it reminds you of something in your own background (*Where I'm coming from*) that you're bringing to this interest. So, jump to that place and add what you've just been reminded of. Do it! Or you may be reading something (*My readings*) when you see a reference to something else you might want to read. So, jump to *Moving toward*; record that reference, with a quick note about why it might be interesting. Do it! Now! And so on.

What's important is to follow and further the movements of your own mind. And to do it, not in the far reaches of some ever-receding future, but now. That's the watchword: Do it, now! Because "now" has a nasty habit of becoming "then" (or "never")! I'm asking you to do several things:

- Spend some fifteen minutes of concentrated time, every day, writing in your collage.
- At the beginning of anything you write, put that day's date.
- Where writing in a collage place leads you to jump to a different one, jot a note (at the end of what you've just written in the first place) indicating what place you're jumping to.
- Follow directions for Log under "Pages of the Collage." (Actually, they're more accurately "places.")
- Bring your Mindings Collage to our class sessions. At times you will be working with yours in class, individually, in pairs, or in small groups. You will never be

asked to share anything you choose not to. Twice during the semester you will leave your Mindings Collage with me, accompanied by a reflective letter which guides me through your work. Please tape shut any entries that for whatever reason you want me NOT to see. I will respond with a letter to you. Your course grade will NOT be based on your Mindings Collage. However, you MUST keep your Mindings Collage complete and up to date, in order to PASS the course.

The "Mindings Collage" requires some daily modicum of mental discipline and scribal exercise, encouraging you to become both more attentive to (and appreciative of) the movements of your own distinctive mind and more fluent as your mind and your words more deeply connect. The one teacher you really must have is yourself.

## Pages of the Collage

My Mindings

<log>

My Commonplaces

<quotes>

My readings

<readings>

I am moving toward

<toward>

Between you and me

<you>

Now, my present moment

<now>

My compass, my questions

<compass>

My surprises

<surprises>

Where I'm coming from
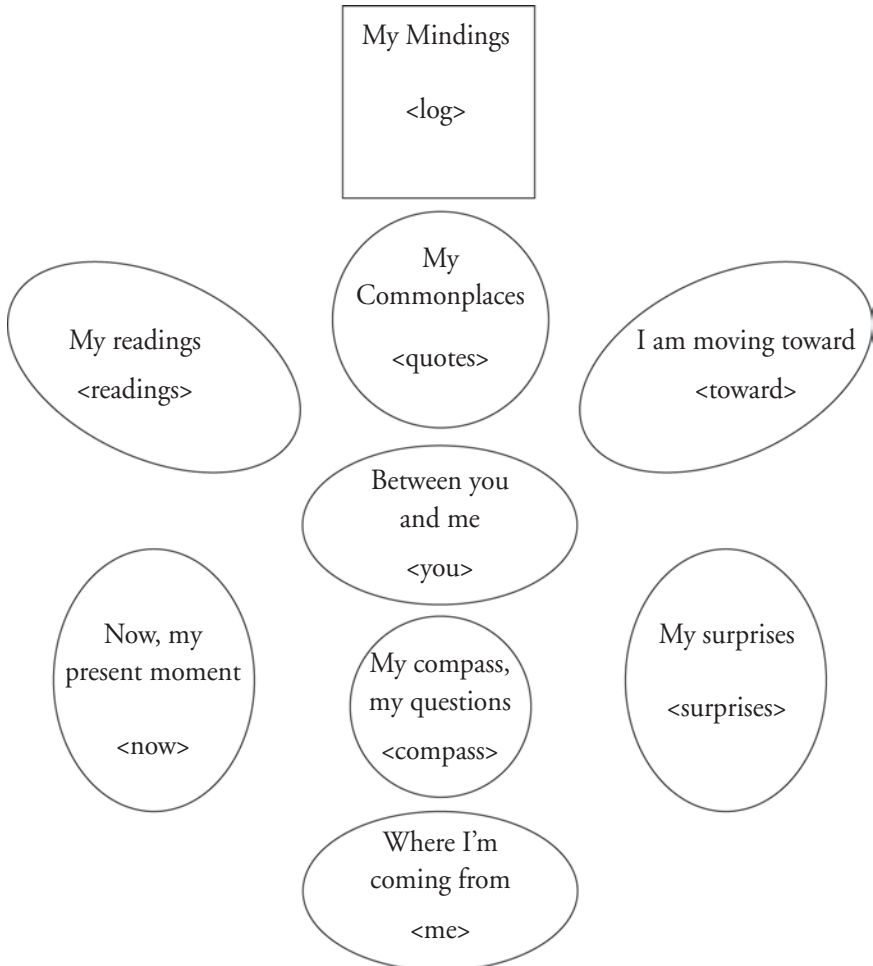
Think of these "pages" as varied "places." Following are brief descriptions of what each might be good for, the "movement(s) of mind" that each might represent and encourage. You may find yourself creating additional pages—good! But if you do that, at some point do write a brief description (as I am doing here) of the particular sort(s) of mental movements that page represents and encourages.

The order of the pages below is largely arbitrary. The descriptions of each page are merely well-intended suggestions, not "rules" of any sort. Over time you'll probably find yourself adapting various pages to fit your own habits of mind or even creating some quite different pages of your own. Fine! Do it!

<Log> **My mindings**. As you *end* each Collage session, *be sure* to jot a one-line Log entry: (1) the date, (2) the page(s) where you have just been working. You may also want to jot a note (3) briefly indicating the subject(s) of your Mindings Collage work for that day, but that is *optional.*

| *date* | *page(s)* | *subjects(s) (optional)* |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

<now> **Now, my present moment.** Some days, you may need to start by just settling down, settling into the present moment of your life, your mind, your Mindings Collage. On those days, here's where to start, and maybe to stay. Or maybe you'll be moving from here to another place in your Mindings Collage.

<compass> **My compass, my quest(ion)(s).** Your compass records the interests, the questions, you find yourself following and developing. A compass is a wondrously useful and reliable instrument; we use it to keep our bearings as we move into unfamiliar territories. But a compass is also a remarkably delicate instrument. Its needle can spin wildly; it can be jiggled away from true north or drawn to some other magnetic fields. In the Collage, your compass consists of your statement(s) of interests you discover. Not that you should spend all that much time gazing at your compass, but that you should rely upon the compass, to guide you into unfamiliar territories beyond (and within) yourself. A compass guides us on a quest, and often statements of our interests take the form of questions, which reshape and refine themselves over time. That is as it should be. *"A good question is half a discovery" (Michael Polanyi.)*

<me> **Where I'm coming from.** What in your background (your experiences, your feelings, your thinking) is informing a particular interest you have? In other words, just who are you, in the context of that interest? As you work, you may well realize other things about yourself that you hadn't thought of at first. That is as it should be, and this is the place to record and reflect.

<you> **Between you and me.** As you sustain an interest, one of the most valuable things you can do is to write letters to a friend, whether you ever send that letter or meet that person. A friend is someone with whom you share something of an important interest.

<toward> **I am moving toward.** *Move confidently in the direction of your dreams. (H. D. Thoreau).* This is the place for dreams (the sort where you imagine yourself toward a future), little hopes (a book you've heard of, that you might like to read? a person you'd like to talk with?), and for plans (moving toward as major? a career? a paper you're working toward?) Most generally, "moving toward" is a place for *setting directions*, large and small, and for *exploring*.

<quotes> **My commonplaces.** From your reading (or sometimes your listening) you come across quotations you'd like to keep for the future. Here's where to jot them down, along with a brief reflection on what that quote is saying to you or what questions it is leading you to ask.

| *the quote* | *my response* |
|---|---|
| | |

<readings> **My readings.** "Reading" can mean many different things, but it usually needs to be more than just "absorbing;" it's more than letting your eyes pass passively over print. Here is where to *interact* with the readings you are doing, from within a particular text or between different ones. At times, your left column might be "something I understand" and your right one "something I don't understand."

| *from the text* | *from me* |
|---|---|
| | |

<surprises> **My Surprises.** They come in many shapes and sizes, as you open your eyes and become ever more "observative" of what you're looking at directly and of what comes to you from "the corner of the eye." Sometimes it's a specific something you notice in the world, sometimes it's something about yourself you hadn't quite realized before. Here's where to take brief note of your surprises, the big ones and the little ones too.

***NOTE: what you have just read are the guidelines given to my students. I trust it is clear that the Mindings Collage is not a panacea. Like anything else, it can be a gimmick, a mere school exercise engaged as thoughtlessly—as mindlessly—as***

*possible. What mitigates against that, in my experience, is my respect for students'*
*privacy and my engaging with them individually, in person and in our written*
*exchanges, as a person myself rather than as an authority only. A person of mature*
*mind may read the Mindings Collage guidelines for students and say, "But these are*
*movements my mind already makes, habitually." Of course! That is the point! The*
*Mindings Collage is merely a web of prompts, encouraging its users to move toward*
*maturity as responsible, engaged persons. How does it actually work for students?*
*That, I trust students to say. "The last word should be theirs" (Sam Watson).*

## The Last Word: Reflections from Students

*(Quoted with students' permission; the first five, from first-year students; the others from upper-division or graduates)*

> When I first began the Mindings Collage, I wasn't expecting it to mature me in the way that it did. I really feel like a grown person, and I don't think that I would've without the Mindings Collage. My mind has a different way of thinking now, and I am not the only one who can see this change in me.

> The Mindings Collage has meant a lot to everyone I've talked to. Not only was it academic, it was personal. The collage allowed us to explore and research something that we have been wondering about for a long time.

> In <My Compass My Questions> I would write about questions that I had. They were just ordinary questions that I would just pick up from day to day that would always, in some way or other, reappear. By jotting down my questions I would keep going over it. Eventually I got some of them answered. Maybe that is why I liked it so much.

> I love to write to my friends that I don't get to talk to, or ask one of them a question, and somehow I can imagine their responses in <between you and me>. But I absolutely love my <commonplaces>. I have always been fascinated with quotes, and this is where I can talk about them.

> I had to first learn how to write about myself before I could feel confident writing about something else. My work with the Mindings Collage greatly changed my daily musings from the way that I wrote with the original mindings. I can now center my thoughts on one

topic and concentrate in that area, where before my thoughts were random and vague. I centered my collage around my interest in anthropology. I already knew that I would stick to my decision to major in anthropology, but I didn't know why I made the decision in the first place. I knew where I was going; I wanted to understand where I was coming from.

I watched my mind in action. Instead of preconceiving entries for my collage, I watched the working of my mind unfold before my eyes. What seemed chaotic and messy with a first glance is actually capturing my mind's sorting through information, seeking answers, asking new questions, and making connections. I understand more about how my mind works than before. For example, I noticed that the entries in my collage tended to resist structure. I noticed that when I was thinking most deeply, I wrote in fragments and jumped from this point to that point.

One question leads to another. One discovery prompts another. My mind, and thus my writing, is branching out into thoughts and ideas that come from me…This side of my literate life allows me to teach myself…The Mindings Collage showed me that I can be my own teacher and that I have the ability to look at something, analyze and to express that in the medium of writing…The collage has become the haven for my thoughts and the grounding for my ideas.

The collage has become a wonderful place for me to be a little crazy with my writing…Because I was reading two really good books during this time, I put lots of quotes from them in the <readings> and <quotes> sections. I tried to find quotes that really turned me on, and then let my mind fly in various directions. I found my mind going from these quotes to all of the other sections of my collage.

My greatest discovery with the collage is that it made me more aware of everything around me. I found myself constantly looking for scrap paper, because I would have a thought, or see something that I wanted to put in my collage. I began to pull over in my car, or stop what I was doing to write down a thought because I quickly realized that later I wouldn't remember it… I can't say enough about the ability it has given me to write from places I never knew.

By early October, the Mindings Collage began to serve as more than just a sounding board of my ideas and thoughts and philosophies. It had evolved into a notebook of research, of projects I could explore, of actions I could take to develop my interest, and of specific ways to improve my world of teaching and writing and learning and thinking…I feel like the categories we were given made me think, really think, about how I process information, dialogue, texts, conversations, words in my world. It taught me to make connections between things I had normally discarded or kept segregated from each other…like how two books I am engaged in, speak to each other (one required for academics and one fiction for pleasure), or how my correspondence with others (email to friends, classmates, students, parents) reflects who I am and what I believe in, sometimes unintentionally; or how my own personal literacy history directly affects the way I teach others to be literate…The collage houses ideas and keeps them safe and ready to be developed into one day, maybe, a deeper thought, an expanded paper, a developed thesis, a changed methodology, and ultimately, an improved world.

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# POTEAT AND THE CHALLENGE OF IDENTIFYING PERSONS

**Richard C. Prust**

## ABSTRACT

*William Poteat's work is suggestive of an account of personal identity. The reflexive use of "I" in "I shot the sheriff" places the act of shooting the sheriff in the context of a story—the story of the agent who reflexively refers to himself as "I"—that contextualizes its significance. Thus, I argue, Poteat shifts the logic of inferences about persons and their acts from the standard Aristotelian category logic to a character logic that represents them as mutually implied and their moments as mutually inclusive.*

I liked the fact that the 2014 Yale Conference on Bill Poteat's legacy was titled, "The Primacy of Persons." Not only does that phrase serve as the title of one of his books of essays, but it was what his philosophical and personal life was all about. But that title is even more provocative today than it was a few decades ago. Strong philosophical voices demand we give up purporting to identify persons at all, and for the most part the social and behavioral sciences have given in to that skepticism as well. But there are a number of modes of reasoning that cannot, without grave consequences, give up on identifying persons. I am thinking here particularly of the reasoning we do to reach grounds for making moral and legal judgments.

Poteat's approach to the problem of personal identity, particularly in his earlier writing and teaching, was often to direct our attention to what was unique about using "the first personal pronoun singular, nominative case." What he found remarkable was the "reflexivity" he saw in its use. "I" has two references, he wrote. It "does not just

name a person, such as does 'William H. Poteat.' It names the namer. It recoils on language and its user" (Poteat 1960, 413). "It is about, I will now call them, *acts*; but it is, *for me,* also about something more, namely, the actor" (Poteat 1960, 412).

Recall how subversive all this sounded back in the '60s. By framing the problem of identifying a person in terms of the active awareness of someone using the pronoun "I," Poteat bypassed the fruitless approach then standard among Anglo-American analytic philosophers of personal identity. They took on the challenge as one of finding the quality, attribute or other category membership that qualified a subject as a person. Though the dominant voices in that tradition have long since given up the notion of substantial selfhood, most of those who continued to speak of persons spoke of them as though they could be identified prior to and other than by what they did. For P. F. Strawson (1959) a person is an individual with both states of consciousness and corporeal characteristics; for Harry Frankfurt (1982), someone with second order desires; for Lynne Rudder Baker, someone with a continuing first-person perspective (2000). In contrast, when Poteat pointed out that in stating what I did or am doing, like "I shot the sheriff" or "I hope you're doing well," I refer both to my act and its agency. That philosophical move represented a radical departure from the usual assumptions about the challenge of identifying persons. It made the being of persons radically and irreducibly *actual.* It recognized that persons have intentional being. The form of their identity is that of a characterization of action.

There are, of course, a variety of reasons one might have for claiming to identify a person. My interest is in moral or legal ones, such as determining whether someone is personally responsible for some harm his action caused. This has led me to realize that, as indebted as I am to the ideas of Michael Polanyi, the distinctions called for are different from the ones he provided. His aim was to call attention to the overlooked participation of a person in *all* of his or her knowing and acting. Moral and legal judgments rely on discerning when to take someone's lame joke personally or hold him personally responsible for paying his brother's debts. That means the sphere of actions that we hold someone personally responsible for is a subset of his actions in general, not all of them as it is for Polanyi.

Poteat was primarily vested in the wider Polanyian concern for the personal coefficient of all our knowing and acting. But I would argue that in drawing our attention to the reflexive use of "I" he suggested a way to delimit that facet of personal coefficiency wherein a person is subject to moral and legal judgment in his agency. There is, I would argue, a coordination and comprehension among the actions for which we hold people personally responsible. They are resolved in a way akin to the way a narrative is resolved. The "I," or who the person is, is identified in a characterization whose meaning is disclosed in a narrative context. That means the person judged responsible has a significant form akin to that of a character in a story. Simply being active is not enough. To recall one of Poteat's favorite topics, Mozart's Don Juan was certainly active

(*in Ispagna son gia mille e tre!*) but he was only musically active, ever disappearing into the moment, never coming to himself as a narratively coordinated actor. He had no history and thus no identity as a person.

So, using the reflexive "I" means not only being aware of what one is doing in its immediacy but being aware of advancing a story. I am suggesting that in using the first personal pronoun "I" reflexively there is implicit in one's awareness both one's act and its narrative context.

As far as I know, Poteat never set out to develop a notion of reflexivity with moral and legal reasoning in mind. He too was more interested in engaging the reductionists of his day. But I think the path Poteat set us upon—by making reflexivity central to our grasp of what is distinctive about personal agency—is suggestive for identifying persons forensically.

First, that approach forces us to recognize that the logic governing personal identity is not categorical in the Aristotelian sense, which is to say that narratives do not identify persons by specifying category membership or exclusion. The patterns of inference available in what passes in this respect for standard reasoning cannot grasp the being of a person.

Let me briefly indicate two crucial differences between reasoning about persons with claims about *categories* of actions and reasoning about persons with claims about *characters* of action.[1] The two logics, category and character, relate acts and actors differently. To understand the difference, consider how the notion of reflexivity can be heard in the very word "character." It refers both to the significance of an action and to the identity of the person who intends it. A person *does* something we characterize as an action and a person *is* an identifiable character of action.

The first difference has to do with the inferential relationship between a person's character and the character of his action. It is, let me suggest, one of mutual implication. More formally, in ascriptions of personal responsibility if person P acts in a way that we characterize as C, C is implicit in P and P is implicit in C.[2]

That is to say, we cannot understand C without understanding who P is and we cannot understand P without understanding the narrative context that gives C its full meaning. C is implicit in P because P's personal story includes C: provided P is acting in accord with the resolution his story is projected to actualize, his resolution has his present action C as an ingredient. P is implicit in C because the narrative context for C is part of its significance. (To understand Sidney Carton's act of submitting to the guillotine as the courageous and self-sacrificing deed it was, we have to know how that act fit into his story, which is to say into his life.) That is the intuitive truth we bear witness to whenever we insist that to be personally responsible for some act someone must be *implicated* in that act, *enfolded* in the narrative context in which we understand what he did.

A second distinctive feature of reasoning with claims about characters of action has to do with how such reasoning relates actions and agents temporally. A character of action has its being in its moment, a moment with a duration that stretches from inception to completion. It turns out that the moment of a person's present action and the moment of his present character of resolve are mutually inclusive. Thus we understand ourselves to be present in our action and our action to be a window into who we are.

Recognizing these distinctive features of character logic opens up possibilities for reasoning not available in category logic. For example, reasoning about actions using categories invites one to account for them causally. That is because, without the conceptual capacity for grasping durational moment of an action, we have to treat it as the out-*come* of certain causal antecedents, an *e-vent* that takes place *at* a certain point in time. This is counter-intuitive. In our awareness, an act's moment is rarely, if ever, punctiliar; it moves through the time it takes to accomplish, making it variable in its duration since it includes all and only the moments of movement by which it is accomplished. Accordingly, we find it reasonable to think of some actions as "momentous" and others "of little moment."

Persons then are momentary beings without being ephemeral beings. In fact, as creatures of resolve we can be given to achievements whose projected accomplishment outlives our mortal lives by informing the character of the movement of others who come after us. Many (if not all) of us have followed in making some of the moves our teacher Poteat made philosophically, so our celebration of his historical legacy is not merely academic. It is our legacy, now part of what continues to inform our work and set our agenda. That makes what we celebrate as his life work truly momentous.

## ENDNOTES

[1]For a fuller exploration of these ideas see Prust 2004.

[2]"Imply" and "implicate" mean to "enfold" or "enwrap," and being "implicit in" means to be "enfolded in." Traditional category logic enfolds one category in another. In character logic, the implication of a person in an act is due to both being folded into a narrative wherein the part informs the meaning of the whole and the whole informs the meaning of the part.

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# REFLECTIONS OF A WHITE GHETTO PREACHER ON THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF DR. WILLIAM H. POTEAT

**Sam Mann**

**Keywords**: W. H. Poteat, Howard Thurman, Western culture, Descartes, idolatry, psychosis, African-Americans, European Americans

## ABSTRACT

*W.H. Poteat's critique is that the Western white way of knowing, "gone mad on Descartes," led to the corruption of Western culture. The author was inspired by his personal relationship with Poteat and the resonance of Poteat's teaching—"The whole thing must be rethought"—with Howard Thurman's corresponding account of a culture profaned by slavery in need of transformed relationships— "We are made for each other." Consequently, the author entered a 40-year career as a white minister and Preacher at the (Black) St. Mark Union congregation in Kansas City, Mo.*

In his book, *There Is a River*, Vincent Harding addresses the question of the struggle between the white abolitionist and the Black abolitionist:

The significance of the differences between the black and white antislavery workers became most apparent when members of the two groups faced each other in common tasks in the North. Many of the black abolitionists had been captives in the South, and had made the courageous inner break with the system of white domination, and now presented something other than the popular image of the humble, grateful slave. Because many of the white abolitionists

usually had no desire to know, in the best sense of the word a truly free black man or woman, tensions and conflicts inevitably developed between them. Since many white abolitionists assumed that they were to be the saviors of the American society and its black underclass, they often treated their black co-workers with patronizing disdain at worst (or was awestruck idolatry the worst?) or at best as almost equal but clearly subservient allies of their white-defined cause (Harding 1982, 127).

In order to get at the problem of "patronizing disdain" and "awestruck idolatry" white people must be in relationship with the people who can best recognize the sin when it arises. In order for this to happen Black folks must feel from white people a sense of mutual trust and not temporary alliance, which ultimately means white domination.

The lines of division still exist between African-Americans and liberal European-Americans. The power of domination and white superiority finds itself in the refusal of the possibility of relationship between equals. White progressives assume the role of savior because the savior is powerful and knows all, and in a society that worships rationality as the God of knowledge, they retain control because the majority of white culture still believes Black folks aren't educated. Overlooked is the vast body of knowledge that comes through intuition and feelings. Einstein, one of the most prominent symbols of European educated scientific genius, was aware of this (See Barrett 1950).

At Duke, I met my first real mentor: Dr. William H. Poteat. He still remains as close to me as a thought, and we used to communicate by phone several times a year. What he taught has stood the test of time. When so much that I was exposed to in academia was like building my house on sand, his teachings have been like the rock. Winds and storms have not eroded them. If anything they are stronger and clearer because of the storms. He represents one of the few times the word from a white academician was to me the truth.

His classes were filled with vitality as he allowed us to challenge and argue his positions. He reached out and touched you and what you knew and asked for it right there in class. He wasn't looking for abstractions of what you knew. He wanted you fully present as a person and he wanted to know how you knew.

I remember the final chapel meditation that he gave to the Duke Divinity School class of 1964. He tried to convey that truth is not some beatific vision that brings with it beauty and pleasure. No, on the contrary, for Poteat catastrophe always accompanied the discovery of truth: "A deeper human sensibility has known that truth is not only won at a price, but painful when won; that knowledge is always an ambiguous good, concealing a threat; that catastrophe is associated with loss of innocence" (Poteat 1966, 280).

He was giving voice to a new "Lord" I was experiencing. He was replacing the lies I had been told in my youth. He met difficulty head on and said it was a part of the equation, and not only a part but a necessary part. He didn't offer me the convenient out of conventional piety. He offered me himself and a willingness to relate. He knew about Calvary and "*Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani?*" He told me that even God hurt. Poteat was telling me about the "brooding presence" that Thurman would clarify for me later.

Even though I never met Howard Thurman, his writings are integral to the questions that Poteat raised for me. I came upon Howard Thurman through one of his students and my close friend, Dr. Mac Charles Jones. Dr. Thurman's input is equally as profound as Poteat's as he carried Poteat's questions into answers. These two souls, one the grandchild of slaves looking for his freedom, and the other the child of privilege looking for his soul; one coming from the heinous victimization of slavery and a resulting "amazing spiritual insight" (Thurman 1975, 36) and the other coming from his profound philosophical discoveries and fight for his soul; both desired fundamental and foundational transformation of the ground in Western culture. Both perceived that the foundations of the culture were so flawed that attempts to mend it were inadequate. Thurman stressed relationship, saying, "We are made for each other" (Thurman 1965, 112). Poteat declared, "This whole thing must be rethought" (Poteat 1990, 3). Thurman was coming from the life experiences of slavery and Poteat from the inward struggles of the mind to throw off the shackles of the sin of the "world gone mad on Descartes" (phrase recollected from a personal conversation with Poteat). Both in their own ways were about the dismantling of a profaned culture and the redemption of "the religion profaned" by that culture (Thurman 1965, 112).

Thurman posits a new reason for being that has relationship at its foundation. Poteat describes how a world gone mad on Descartes has so disembodied us as to make relationship impossible: "Cartesianism, tacit and explicit, invites us to embrace a view of ourselves in the universe which seduces us with the promise of Godlike power, and thereby separates us from our true ground and humanity?" (recollected from a conversation with Poteat, but a close paraphrase is in Poteat 1988, 3).

Without our humanity intact, there is no relationship. Armed with the highest form of abstraction, mathematical reasoning, as the "superordinate authority of the whole philosophical tradition" (recollected from a conversation with Poteat, but a close paraphrase is in Poteat 1990, 1), our medium of ultimate access to the physical universe, we can then rationalize anything and make anything good that serves, subordinates itself, and sacrifices itself for this authority. Such a stance makes slavery an acceptable possibility. Relationships and human discourse become alliances of power where we deal with each other as objects to be manipulated rather than people stamped with the image of God. The culture enables us to talk about others and not to others. Certainly, we don't see ourselves as made for each other.

Armed with this view of life, the solution to evil becomes some kind of program to be designed by the "children of light" (Poteat 1988, 4). There is a story about Thomas Jefferson that didn't make the history books, nor was it ever mentioned by Thomas Jefferson. Looked upon as the enlightened American philosopher par excellence, Thomas Jefferson not only owned slaves, but overlooked the evil madness of his immediate family. Two of his sister's sons "took a slave into the meat house, put his body on the block and dismembered it because he had accidentally broken a piece of crockery much beloved of their mother" (Poteat 1988, 4). When evil is extracted from the world of spirit, it becomes a problem to be solved by the mind; then evil has its most eternal grip on our lives—eternal, because we are spirit refusing to be spirit and thereby lose our ability to recognize evil.

The Western white way of knowing must be redone. The sense of superiority and domination now manifest in the arrogant sense of achievement felt by Western and American high-tech culture must be exchanged for Thurman's claim, "We are made for each other" (Thurman 1965, 112). Rather than having our destiny defined by a desire to be number one, it is better for us to focus on loving our neighbor, which after all, is the great commandment and the basis for all relationships.

In a world dominated by a culture in which rational knowledge is God and achievement the temple of worship, the opportunity is offered for all to see that Western culture is superior. Freedom is defined as joining this culture, recognizing its superiority, and bowing before it. The invitation is offered to all who would like to participate. The flip side is that if you don't, you will be destroyed.

However, when we look at the product of this self-ordained culture of achievement, the future looks dangerous. The very technology and knowledge deemed so supremely valuable threaten the whole planet. The destruction of the rain forests, the pollution of the air, water table, rivers, and oceans; the damage to the ozone layer and the disembodied language of technology and social media are only a few examples of the destructive force of this world "gone mad on Descartes." Add to this the daily destruction of the pinnacle of creation, people. Racism destroys millions and sexism millions more, and workers "bring home more than their pay checks to their loved ones and families."[1] Today, we have the ultimate madness; we can destroy ourselves many times over with our atomic weapons of war. Even by their own standards of management, the Western world has been a failure. But when one is mad, standards do not matter, only the preservation of the psychotic view of the world is important.

The European western mind set has created an imaginary picture of the world to which its proponents remain a prisoner. This picture can be changed with the advent of another view, or picture. Such an advent represents a kind of incarnational presence that lives in the midst of the old world without becoming a part of its sickness or evil. Dr. Poteat talked about this phenomenon in the commencement address, "Anxiety,

Courage and Truth," which he delivered to the Duke Divinity School class of 1961. He said, "This is what is meant by idolatry—the imprisonment of ourselves in any given picture of the world. It is God who invades this world, threatening us ultimately, but also setting us free" (Poteat 1990, 283).

When this is expanded to the analysis of a whole culture, the immensity of the problem emerges. We have not only a person in need of psychiatric care, we have a whole world in need of revolutionary change. Like the psychotic when the winds of change begin to blow, the culture feels threatened on every hand, and any challenge to its way of knowing is met with resistance and aggression. In a world fully armed to protect itself on every front, salvation becomes a dangerous endeavor. This is a dangerous world! It is a psychotic world that does not want to be healed, and, in short, a world "gone mad on Descartes."

Freedom from this dilemma must come from a quarter outside the domain of white Western culture. The present has gone awry. Both conservative and progressive white Western political models are incapable of getting us out of this madness because both are trapped in the "madness." The conservative solution is unabashedly tied to Western culture and is so threatened that any attempt at change is met with psychotic force and violence. The liberal progressive solution may be even more dangerous because it hides behind a sense of equality and freedom but does not recognize its own identity with the psychosis while maintaining a stance of patronizing disdain and awestruck idolatry.

I believe that one of the major avenues of redemption God offers white people and Western culture is the possibility of relationships with Black people. Just as the relationship with Jesus the Christ calls us to a new being so does this relationship call white people from the captivity of their old self of domination and control to a new being that shares in a relationship of equality and freedom. This is a new relationship that calls for new "wine skins" (Matthew 9:17). The old wineskins will not work.

Into this world God has sent the Black struggle for freedom and, with this struggle, that "vastly creative spiritual insight" (Thurman 1975, 36). When white people accept this presence and enter into the struggle, they will find relationship and life and find it more abundantly. However, once again the case seems to be that situation described in the Gospel of John, "The Word has become flesh and dwells among us, but the world receives it not" (John 1:14, NRSV).

# ENDNOTE

[1]See the lyrics to Ysaye M. Bamwell's "More than a Paycheck:"

We bring more than a paycheck to our loved ones and family.
We bring more than a paycheck to our loved ones and family.
We bring
asbestosis,
silicosis,
brown lung,
black lung disease.
And radiation hits the children before they've even been conceived.
I wanted more pay.
But what I've got today
is more than I bargained for
when I walked through that door…
Workers lend an ear.
It's important that you know.
With every job there is a fear
that disease will take its toll.
If not disease, then injury may befall your lot.
If not injury, then stress is going to tie you up in knots.

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# CRITICAL RECOLLECTION:
# POTEAT'S POLANYIAN EXERCISES

**Ronald L. Hall**

## ABSTRACT

*In this essay I explore two basic questions that arise from the fact that William H. Poteat subtitled his last book,* Recovering the Ground, "Exercises in Critical Recollection." *The first question is: why does he call these dated remarks recollections? The second question is: why does he call them "critical" instead of "post-critical?" I speculate on answers to both of these questions in ways that I think throw light on Polanyi's post-critical project. In answer to the first question, I suggest that Poteat is providing the "from" element in Polanyi's "from-to" distinction a much needed historical emphasis since what we attend "from" is always much more than the parts in an epistemic whole. In my answer to the second question, I offer a view of criticism that is post-critical insofar as it calls us to turn around (to be converted) from critical philosophy's neglect of history and its correlative loss of the world of the things. Poteat is trying to tell us that attention to memory and recollection is a way of subverting discarnate reflection, the best way to return us to the world.*

It may have occurred to you, as it has to me, to wonder why Bill Poteat subtitled his last book, "*Critical Exercises in Recollection.*" Perhaps you may have found it strange that he did not subtitle *Recovering the Ground* instead, "*Post-Critical Exercises in Recollection*," especially given the subtitles of two of his previous books, *Polanyian Meditations: In Search of a Post-Critical Logic*, and *A Philosophical Daybook: Post-Critical*

*Investigations.* But it is not only the question of why he used the term "critical" that deserves our thoughtful meditation, we might also wonder why he characterized these Polanyian-inspired (at least in part) exercises as "recollections." I have no definitive answers to these questions, but I have given them some thought. In the hope that my reflections might provoke further conversation on these matters, I have collected my mediations and herewith present them for your consideration. The order (or lack thereof) of these meditations reflects the "order" of my re-collection of them. I will start with my speculation regarding the importance that Poteat ascribed to recollection. I will then make some stabs as to what he might have meant by calling these exercises critical.

## Recollection and History

As I call back to mind my time with Poteat, as his student and as his friend, but more importantly, and in both cases, as an interlocutor in an ongoing conversation that lasted until his death, I realize just how deeply he shaped my point of view personally and philosophically. I treasure those conversations past; but given these present meditations on his written words, I think of our conversation as not quite over. And, even though his influence goes way deeper than I can explicitly recount, I find myself with a kind of mental album of many of the scenes of our conversations that struck me then (and still do) with Bill's uncanny grasp of what I might call the mystery and majesty of personal existence. My recollection of these scenes brings them back to life in the way that pictures in my vacation album bring back to life places I have visited in the past and loved. Turning the pages of this album is like returning to these places.

All of this suggests to me that recollection is bound up with a backward look, with something past, with something that suggests further, at least with a proper qualification, a sense of returning, or the possibility of it. Or as I might say, the concept of recollection strikes me as a deeply historical concept, like its conceptual cousin, memory.

But of course, recollection need not be a historical concept. It was not for Plato, who built a whole epistemology on its basis. For Plato, recollection (*anamnesis*) takes us back, but not back in our historical lives; rather this return is to a timeless eternity. While neither Poteat nor I are sympathetic to this doctrine, and its companion notion that embodiment is a kind of tragic fall into time, I think we would both gladly embrace the idea that Plato was right to connect recollection to an about face (a turn from darkness to light), or if you will, to conversion. More about this later.

Now I want to connect recollection to Michael Polanyi's notion that consciousness has a "from-to" structure of attention. (Of course, I can't say that Bill made this connection, at least explicitly.) In contrast to the usual focus on the "to" pole of this dialectic, I want to consider what I would call the historical meaning of the "from" pole. It is a

term that has gotten less attention than its dialectical partner "to." The attention that attending "from" has gotten has been mostly via a translation of it into the epistemological or perceptual terms "subsidiary" or "tacit." Something important may get lost in this translation, something that the backward look of recollection may disclose.

First a word about the "to" pole. When "attending to" is interpreted in temporal terms, it is usually the future that is discussed or implied—and rightfully so, because indeed Polanyi was a forward-looking thinker, indeed almost incorrigibly upbeat. He seemed always to be trying to move forward, towards an inexhaustible future, towards a post-critical philosophy. His emphasis was on discovery, something that led Richard Gelwick to entitle his book *The Way of Discovery* and Polanyi Society members to think of themselves as a society of explorers. And indeed, even though the title of this journal is *Tradition & Discovery*, it has focused largely on discovery more than tradition, at least in the sense of recovering the essential role of the historical background in the from-to structure of consciousness.

Gestalt psychology has pointed out that perception necessarily has a background, but it does not associate this with the historical past. Indeed, Polanyi himself tends to follow this perceptual/epistemic focus. But, I do not contend that he completely ignores this, but only that he may not have considered it fully enough. Perhaps Poteat's critical exercises in recollection are designed to restore this historical sense to the "from" element in the "from-to" dialectic of attention. Perhaps he thought that we do not pay enough attention to the fact that we always and necessarily arrive at the present *from* the past, a conceptual fact that inevitably figures in shaping what we come to, which includes what we come to know and what we come to do, and feel, and to value, and to embrace as our own.

## Amnesia and the Loss of the World

Recollection, like remembering, just may be the best remedy for the cultural and personal amnesia that Heidegger called forgetfulness. The etiology of this forgetfulness is varied. It may be born of boredom, and/or indifference, or it may reflect a fear that looking back will transform us into a pillar of salt, or that we will be paralyzed by regret, or drown in the pathos of loss. But at the same time, memory keeps us together, that is, keeps us from falling apart, just as recollection re-collects the pivotal scenes of our individual and common human biography that constitute our identity, something psychotherapy knows a lot about. We say that one needs time to collect his emotions, or thoughts or simply, herself, as though we are perpetually subject to falling apart. And while it may not work for Humpty Dumpty, recollection may offer a path to recovery, to recovering the ground, the very ground that has slipped out from under our feet and dis-integrated our lives. Or it seems that Bill Poteat thought so.

Well, what have we forgotten? What have we lost? And in what sense can we get it back? How can exercises in recollection return to us what we have lost? How can it put us back on our feet? Can recollection return us to ourselves? Here we must be very careful not to fall into the trap of nostalgia, that is, into the trap of idealizing a golden past—call this Camelot or Eden. In a moment, I will say more about how recollection, if critical, can avoid such a misconceived aim at recovery. But first, let me say how recollection may restore our souls.

What have we forgotten? Well, many things, but I will focus on what I take to be one such devastating loss. I will call this a loss of the scenes of our common human history. Recollection recalls the scenes of our common historical journey to the present. These are the scenes that remind us of the multitude of practices that have shaped our identity, our shared history, our common human story. Recollections of the scenes of our common history can unmask our pretensions of self-knowledge and overturn the narrow and distorted pictures of ourselves that our culture has imposed on us.

I think that Wittgenstein is a good guide in this process of recollection. In fact, we might take him at his word in thinking of the *Investigations* (1958, ix) as an album, a collection of scenes of our common human form of life. It is as though this album is calling us to an exercise in recollection, an exercise in recalling the shared practices that form our common history as human beings.

He begins the *Investigations* with a scene recounted by St. Augustine regarding how he acquired language. Augustine is recollecting a scene from his own childhood (1958, par. #1). But as he recounts this story he falls prey to a picture of language that reduces it to a collection of names that stand for things. Augustine's account shows how easily our recollections can be distorted. Nevertheless, the fact that Wittgenstein uses this recollection to open his own exercise in recollection about what language is, about how it is acquired, is the important point to emphasize. So in his oblique way, Wittgenstein is telling us that if we want to understand our human form of life, we must go back to trace its beginnings, to recover its contingent historical origins. And for him, the human form of life is defined by the fact that we human beings speak, a fact he describes as a key element in what he calls our "natural history" (Wittgenstein 1958, par. 25). For him, the fact that we speak is in important respects like the fact that we walk, stand upright, laugh, cry, find something funny, some things sad, and some things puzzling, perhaps mysterious.

As each of us developed we learned what it is to play, to be sincere, to be ironic, to find something out, to be surprised, etc. We learned that things have names, we learned to name things, to promise, to lie, and to tell the truth. We listened to stories, pretended to the villains and heroes, and along the way we learned how to use the word "know" and how it has a different grammar than "believe." I would say that these things and many others form the substrate of ordinary life. And I would quickly add:

the differences in the particular content of these scenes of the ordinary form the unique substance of my life and the unique substance of yours; this is where we come from—it is my (our) ground.

But how prone we all are to lose sight of the importance of the fact that each of us has a biography; that we all come *from* some place, *from* some family, *from* some particular culture. How prone we are to forgetting this, to forgetting that our participation in such ordinary practices is the ground of our personal existence. Perhaps one reason we are so often blind to this ground is because we tend to run off into abstraction rather than simply look back. Apart from the embrace of both our common and particular historical background we are in danger of losing our way, of not knowing how to go on. But if it is hard to accept the human form of life, it is perhaps even more difficult to accept the bearing of our common and particular past on all that we do and all that we are; this is especially difficult in a culture that treats the past as gone, as over and done, as though each day were utterly new, a blank slate of opportunity.

Clearly Polanyi would be sympathetic to Wittgenstein in assigning a priority to practice over theory. The crux of Polanyi's argument hinges on recollecting the concrete practices of scientists rather than on advancing second order theoretical accounts as to what really is involved in the employment of the scientific method, accounts that seduce even the scientists themselves into forgetfulness and encourage philosophers of science to continue to distort our picture of science. These accounts are seductive and threaten to blind us to the fact that science is grounded in nothing less than personal judgments, in much the same way that ordinary life is so grounded. Official accounts of the methods of science find such a reliance on the judgments of scientists to be much too fragile, as though science were not as fragile as ordinary life itself, or as art, or as religion. So Polanyi recalls particular examples from his recollections of his own practices as a scientist and recounts stories of discovery that force us to remember that scientists are human beings that share a common history with non-scientists, even philosophers.

Recollecting our practices seems to me more akin to exercises than to philosophical thought experiments. To call a recollection an exercise is to connect it to a bodily practice, somewhat like remembering the times and places I have walked, the people I have walked with, and so forth. An exercise in that respect is like retracing our steps, in the way that Polanyi called on scientists to retrace the steps in their actual practices. Recollection-as-retracing is more concrete than thought experiments insofar as it is an exercise that requires an imaginative bodily participation. An exercise existentially engages us in a way that passive hypothetical observation from the outside does not manage; it situates us existentially in a historical context, or more precisely, in our world. Philosophy is good at constructing such thought experiments, but literature might be better at engaging our participation in these life possibilities. Good stories invite us to walk with its characters and in doing so often provoke our imaginations to

recover our sense of connection to our fellow human beings, something that in turn may occasion the recollection of our own concrete journeys in the world.

## The Contingency of History and the Stability of Words

The importance of these last three words, "in the world" can easily be overlooked. In the opening of *Recovering the Ground*, Poteat says that despite the temptation to abstraction and its correlative amnesia, it cannot completely efface the commonplace fact that our lives as persons are inextricably grounded in our "sentient, motile and oriented mindbodies *in the world*" (1994, xii, italics added). If we miss these words "in the world" we might be misled into thinking that the mindbody is simply a metaphysical replacement for the absolute indubitable ground of certainty that Descartes was searching for and professed to find in the *cogito*.

But in fact, the mindbody for Poteat is not a metaphysical ground at all, at least in the sense of being a solid (eternal) ground beyond history, that is, beyond contingency, beyond time, beyond doubt, and immune to forgetfulness and repudiation. We can resist this abstracting tendency if we are vigilant in continually recollecting that the mindbody lives and moves and has its being *in the world*. As Heidegger has reminded us, we are all thrown into this world without our consent. What I take this to mean in part is that my particular mindbody, (as it is for each of us) is constituted within the radical historical contingency of time and place and within a myriad of relations to the others who by chance are the ones who call us forth as the persons we become.

I take it that Poteat is recollecting for us, for himself, this fact, so obvious as to be missed, that we human beings are, as a matter of contingent fact, born at a particular time and place, are called into being, learn to speak, have families, an ancestry, and finally die; in short he is asking us to recollect that we all have a history and that this history is itself rooted in a prehistory. As I might put this, while we need to be vigilant in recollecting that the "to" pole in consciousness is always and of necessity grounded in its "from" correlate, we must also be vigilant in acknowledging that the roots of the mindbody itself extend deeply into its own historical and prehistorical ground.

In modernity, critical philosophy, the scientific naturalism it has spawned, and even certain religious beliefs it has produced, have resisted the inherent instability of radical historical contingency. In some ways this is nothing new. Human beings have always found contingency unsettling. The ancients devised a way of blunting contingency by simply denying it reality and taking refuge in the eternally repeating cycles of nature or in some eternal logos. In modernity, the preferred way to deny contingency is a bit different. When we look more deeply into nature, as scientific naturalism tells us, we will see that there is no contingency to be found: and with a sigh of relief it tells us of its metaphysical discovery that everything is predictable in principle and hence controllable in principle because every event is causally determined. And there are even

religious versions of this metaphysics of determinism wherein God allows nothing to happen by chance.

If I am right that Poteat is urging us to embrace the radical historical contingency of our mindbody existence, how does he propose that we find our way? How can a contingent mindbody serve as a stable ground? How can it give us a place to stand? How can we embrace its inherent contingency without falling into chaos? In seeking to recover the ground, I think he is asking us to consider how the mindbody provides us a sense of stability *within* contingency. He is not suggesting that he has found a new way to achieve this stability *within* contingency, but that recollection will disclose to us that we have already found a way to do this. If we simply look at our ordinary practices we recollect a fact that is so obvious as to be missed in reflection: human mindbodies become persons by entering into the world of speech. For most, this is a matter of course; for others, like Helen Keller, it is nothing short of a miracle.

For Poteat, this historical world, my world, our world, appears in and with, and can only appear in and with the fact that we speak and understand speech. This is the mindbody's unique form of life. As Poteat puts it: "The pre-reflective ground of all meaning, meaning discernment, coherence, and value protends itself within our convivial mindbodily life, issues in language, and is manifest in our every authentic act of speech. The constant pretensive-retrotensive relation to this ground of our acts of speech, the most concrete of all realities, reveals this ground to be concrete…" (Poteat 1994, 4).

Poteat was fond of quoting W.H. Auden who said: "To utter a sentence is to make a world appear" (Poteat 1985, 116). In some ways this is a version of the biblical story of creation. In that story, God speaks the world into existence. How can language do this? We need look no further than to J.L. Austin and to his reminder that speaking can actually bring things into reality. A paradigm of such a creation is the promise. Clearly a promise makes no sense outside of contingency. In a world where so much is possible, we can find a measure of comfort and assurance in the promises we make to each other. We promise to be faithful to a spouse in sickness and in health, for richer or poorer, and so forth. In the giving and taking of one's word, the possibility of stability arises *within* contingency. Words form the connections we have to one another and to the world. With words we form and enter into covenants, contracts, and agreements; thanks to the fact that we speak, we can and do formulate rules, moral and civic, form traditions and practices that establish continuity in the midst of contingency. Without speech, contingency would be unbearable, even terrifying.

But for some, especially in modernity where skepticism abounds, even speech is not sufficient to establish the stability we crave. As these doubters point out, the process of acquiring speech and trusting it to establish continuity is such a risky business that it is hard to see how the speaking mindbody can offer ground enough to insure stability

in the midst of contingency. But perhaps some recollection is in order here. It might give us more confidence in the power of the mindbody alive in speech to serve as our stabilizing ground if we would simply look back (before reflection) to the concrete practices our words make possible, practices that have long since routinely engaged us and given our lives direction and sense. But again, the difficulty here is that for some this is simply not ground enough.

I think Poteat would agree that there is no deeper or more solid ground to recover than the historically situated speaking mindbody. For him, this is all we need to exist and flourish as persons, nothing more, and nothing less. Nothing else can provide the stability required for finding our way *within* historical contingency. If we would but recollect our pre-reflective practices we might remember this. We might remember that speech is at the very center of what Wittgenstein called our human *form of life*. We might see why Wittgenstein characterizes the elements of this form of life as common lines in the natural history of human beings.

For me, Stanley Cavell has perfectly captured the spirit of our common natural history as follows:

> We learn words in certain contexts, and then we are expected, and expect others, to be able to project them into further contexts. Nothing insures that this projection will take place (in particular, not the grasping of universals nor the grasping of books of rules), just as nothing insures that we will make, and understand the same projections. That on the whole we do is a matter of sharing routes of interest and feeling, modes of response, senses of humor and of significance and of fulfillment, of what is outrageous, what is similar to what else, what a rebuke, what forgiveness, of when an utterance is an assertion, when an appeal, when an explanation—all the whirl of organism Wittgenstein calls 'forms of life.' Human speech and activity, sanity and community, rest upon nothing more, but nothing less than this. It is a vision as simple as it is difficult, and as difficult as it is (and because it is) terrifying (Cavell 1976, 52).

## Returning Home

For both Wittgenstein and Poteat, if we are to exist and flourish as persons, it is our historically situated form of life that must be recollected and accepted. What both want us to recollect is that, as persons, our speaking-mindbody-in-the-world is our primordial home, a home we have never completely left, a home that always beckons us. As Poteat puts it, this primordial home "contains the objects and relations upon which I have left my personal stamp, expressed my idiosyncrasy, part of my unique history; it

is the place where all the goals I seek, all of the objects of my personal fulfillment, all the ends of my personal moral action are. It is the place where all my griefs have their habitation" (Poteat 1994, 79).

This brings to my mind a remark that Wittgenstein once made: "When philosophers use a word—'knowledge', 'being', 'object; 'I', 'proposition', 'name'—and try to grasp the *essence* of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language-game which is its original home?—What *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use" (1958, par. #116).

What I get from this is Wittgenstein's idea that philosophy, indeed the whole of modern culture shaped by it, has seduced us into a strange forgetfulness of the actual world we live in prior to the second order accounts available to us, pictures of it that hold us captive. We tend to lay down conditions in advance as to what our words must mean, or name, and forget the actual occasions of their use. So we need a good dose of recollection to bring us back to the way we actually speak, to the meanings that words bear in the specific contexts of their use. These occasions of use form the original home of these words. This original home is the actual historical context in which we came to be the speakers of these words.

What I like to think Wittgenstein is suggesting is that philosophy is, perhaps has always been, afflicted with a condition of homesickness, a condition that drives the search for a home completely safe from the ravages of contingency. And for Wittgenstein and Poteat, however, there is no such home. So if we are to find our home, it can only be found in accepting our embodied existence in the here and now of our actual world. But, if we can accept it, accept our human form of life as home, it can prove to be ground enough to support and sustain our lives together.

But alas for some, especially philosophers, such an exercise in recollection will not satisfy the persistent metaphysical craving for a firmer ground, a ground that transcends the concrete historical actuality. As Bill knew very well, it will take an enormous and sustained effort to find our way back to this home and accept it as such. Exercises in recollection may serve to show us the way, but it will not be easy. Recollection is not just a matter of looking back, it is a challenge to bring us back to it, to return its significance to our lives. It will require going against the grain of a culture prone to metaphysical flight and seduced by the pressure, especially from certain religious circles, to transcend the contingency of our historical actuality.

## Post-Critical Criticism

So at last, I turn to the question I raised at the beginning. Why did Poteat call these exercises in recollection "critical" rather than "post-critical"? Perhaps he was simply alerting us to the fact that being post-critical does not mean ceasing to be critical. Quite

the contrary! Indeed, we must not forget that Poteat, Polanyi, and Wittgenstein were all critics of modern culture in general and modern philosophy in particular.

The post-critical critic, however, operates on the basis of a logic that is different than the logic of the critical critic. Post-critical logic accepts the primordial fact that our human access to reality (things, others, ourselves, nature, God) is grounded in nothing more and nothing less than the conversations and activities of embodied persons existentially engaged in the world. Critical logic on the other hand aims to take persons out of the loop when it comes to our access to, and understanding of, reality.

This is the ironic position of Kant, that most critical of critical philosophers. In showing how human beings inevitably shape perception and thought and so construct reality, he erected a barrier between humans and way things really are, what he called things-in-themselves. And since then, critical philosophy, armed with its uncritical acceptance of Kant's presumption to place reality (things-in-themselves) off limits to human beings, has vacillated between searching for a way to get persons out of the way (scientific naturalism) and just resigning itself to skepticism, to our inevitable and unbridgeable separation from things as they really are (existential despair).

So then what makes an exercise in recollection critical? And why did Poteat think it important to keep our recollections critical in this process of recovering the ground? What Poteat might be warning against is a particular form of being un-critical in our recollections, what I would call nostalgia. As I think of it, nostalgia looks back in a mood of despair. I imagine for example, that no future or past person could ever find what I found in my unique past experience. In nostalgia, the pain of this backward look into my own past generates a pathos of loss that encloses me in my own private world, isolates me, and eclipses the important fact that my past experiences are open to others to understand and to share. As I might put it, nostalgia is un-critical of critical philosophy's presumption that we have no access to other "minds." Without denying my uniqueness, my separateness, post-critical criticism recollects our commonness, call this our shared human past. It is this recollection that reminds me not only of where I am from, my past, but where we all are from, our common form of life, our ancestral home. To return to this home in recollection is to acknowledge that we always carry its imprint in every step forward. (I wonder: did Plato know in some sense that our ancestors were cave dwellers?)

Critical recollection is also vigilant in keeping its look back from distorting the past into an idealized Eden. A moment's critical reflection will make it clear to us that life in that state of innocence is not a life to which we would like to return. Do we really want to return to ignorance, to a state of childhood in which we do not know we are naked, to a state prior to knowing the difference between good and evil, to a state in which we know nothing of our mortality? Critical recollection will have none of this;

rather, it stands ready to put away childish tendencies to imagine our prehistory as a state of paradise.

And yet, critical recollection does invite us to remember what we might call the spirit of childlike trust and acceptance, the spirit of excitement and joy in life itself. While this spirit of youth might be wasted on the young, it is not beyond our capacity to reconnect to it in our adult life. We often do this in our relation to the children we have or know, children we invite into our lives and who invite us into theirs. Without it, we are simply old; without it we are threatened with cynicism. Critical recollection is aware of the differences between childlikeness and childishness and invites us to renew our acceptance of the role that childlike faith and faithfulness as indispensable components required for the conduct of our ordinary lives. Wittgenstein is right, I think, that we could not have acquired language apart from the childhood scenes of instruction of the sort that Augustine recollected.

## The Need for Conversion

I want to say a word about conversion, about the importance of an about-face, a word about how turning back can provoke such a turning around. As is well known, Wittgenstein experienced such a turning around, as did Heidegger, and as did Poteat. As recorded in *Polanyian Meditations*, Poteat recounts what he calls his orphic dismemberment (Poteat 1985, 7). This happened in Athens and it was provoked by a sculptor Evangelos Moustatkas, or more precisely, by the things he sculptured. His encounter with this man and these things, produced Poteat's conversion, his radical turn around. It was preceded by a fall, or a falling apart, but it prepared the way for re-collecting his life, his life's project. In these moments Poteat seems to realize that he had to turn himself around because the categories that had guided him had become ineffectual and he had gotten lost in the very intellectual presumptions of modernity he was intent on overturning. Instead, he himself was overturned. How did this happen? How did this turn provoke Poteat's interest in recollection?

As I said earlier, it was Kant who put things, at least things in themselves, off limits to human understanding. I think that what happened to Poteat was that he underwent a change of heart, a radical conversion, a change provoked by the presence of the spirit that was present in the material things that were shaped into form by the hands of Moustakas. We might say it provoked a revised understanding of his relation to things, to the world, indeed to his own body. In these moments of conversion, these things that Moustakas had formed, these things in themselves, were not beyond Poteat's touch, his sight, his understanding. These things betokened for him the finitude of the world, his own finitude that he had forgotten.

And naturally he had to possess some of these things. He collected a number of them and placed them around him in the way that we all collect and keep things that

provoke our recollections, keep forgetfulness at bay, and bring the world near. Poteat had found a new way of gathering things together, including his own dismembered self. His exercises in recollection are, I believe, designed to invite a similar change of heart in his readers. I see these exercises as his invitation into a renewed relation to the world—a world which we have never fully left behind but too often have been seduced into forgetting.

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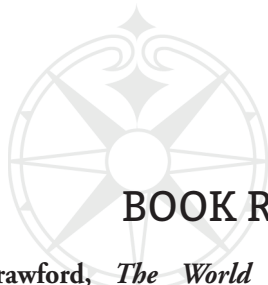
# BOOK REVIEW

**Matthew B. Crawford,** *The World Beyond Your Head: On Becoming an Individual in an Age of Distraction.* **New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015. Pp. 305. ISBN: 978-0-374-29298-0. $26.00 hb, $15.00 pb.**

Matthew Crawford has followed his fine first book, *Shop Class as Soulcraft*, with an even stronger, more provocative second book, *The World Outside Your Head.* In his more recent, more comprehensive book, Crawford investigates several types of social dysfunction characteristic of our society. These include confusion about what is of value, fragmentation of attention, being lost in representations of reality instead of attending to what is actually real, the leveling of judgment to the lowest common denominator, weariness at the unending project of finding one's true self, the stigma of performance failure, compulsive gambling and other addictive escapes from the demands of responsibility, and so forth. One might well wonder if such diverse concerns lend themselves to a coherent overall narrative. To his credit, Crawford does manage to integrate his various concerns into a unified picture backed by suggested remedies for our ailments.

The title and sub-title of the book already announce an apparent tension between a study of external objectivity and authentic subjectivity. But as is true of virtually all contemporary thinkers, Crawford does not settle for a dualistic subjectivity/objectivity contrast. Rather he seeks to overcome this potential dichotomy by arguing for a situated self whose embodied being is shaped by material context, meaning-laden traditions, and social relationships.

For Crawford, one of the causes of our societal problems is unquestioned allegiance to the ideal of autonomy in all its nakedness. Associated with this emphasis on personal sovereignty is the view that we are radically responsibility for all our actions. A person's anxious response to such daunting accountability often leads to one or more of the previously mentioned social and personal dysfunctionalities. In a brief but persuasive section on America's ideological attachment to the rhetoric of freedom and autonomy, Crawford locates its source in Locke's political project of liberation, especially freedom from monarchical tyranny. The imposition of authority that one has not consented to is viewed by Locke and then Enlightenment thinkers as abusive and unjust. The logic of freedom extends beyond the political realm to questions of personal knowledge for Descartes as well as Locke. Uncritical acceptance of knowledge claims is seen to lead to a kind of epistemological servitude.

What do the early modern and Enlightenment thinkers believe is the way to secure liberation from servitude? They think we need procedural rules to ensure that no ungrounded illusions lead us astray. This occurs when we turn away from the uncertain construal of actual objects in the world and turn to "our own processes of thinking and making *them* the object of scrutiny" (121). Consequently, truth becomes understood as a proper *representation* of the world, not as something directly known through our involvement with the objects of the world. Moreover, in contrasting the ideal of autonomy with heteronomy, Kant seeks to ground morality in the free choice of persons as rational beings, not in the heteronomous influence of factors outside our will. The abstract universality of Kantian morality displaces the messy contingencies of empirical particularity.

The question Crawford would place before Kant is what factors actually influence rational choice. Kant ignores actuality and replaces it with the ideal of always intending to follow the moral law as articulated in the categorical imperative. This requires that one abstain from any special pleading and treat both person and morality in abstract, legalistic terms. "Kant is after a general theory of morality, based on pure *a priori* reasoning—like arithmetic…In rejecting 'accidental circumstances' and 'the special constitution of human nature' as too parochial a basis for moral reasoning, Kant provides the clearest point of contrast to the idea of the situated self that animates this book" (266, n. 5). Crawford, like Polanyi, sees that our choices are based on many tacit factors: the cultural history we have often unconsciously indwelt, the lessons of personal experience, the biases built into language, etc. "How we act is not determined in an isolated moment of choice; it is powerfully ordered by how we perceive the situation, how we are attuned to it, and this is very much a function of our previous history of shaping ourselves to the world in a particular way" (75).

Not only do our history and culture influence how we choose, so also does our biological makeup. The Kant-influenced demand that we be autonomous, responsible persons can abstract us from our life experience, for sure, but it also places heavy demands upon choosing well. "Self-regulation, like attention, is a resource of which we have a finite amount" (16). And in our world, there are many forces—advertising, the Internet, demands of work—competing for our attention and concomitantly eroding our self-regulation. Crawford notes that "as autonomous individuals, we often find ourselves isolated in a fog of choice" (6; see also 162). And behind the choices is a confusing medley of purported reasons for accepting this choice rather than that choice.

Where can one find resources for overcoming our weariness at being assaulted with options? Where can one participate in situations that are rewarding and not simply exhausting? How might one find respite from the irritating demands on our attention? Crawford

offers advice related both to momentary attention and ongoing social practice.

The novelist David Foster Wallace felt afflicted by the tediousness of much modern life. He recommended controlling boredom and distaste by choosing what he pays attention to and imbuing it with meaning. Crawford affirms the importance of shifting attention away from what is frustrating or annoying one, but he questions Wallace's strategy of relying on choice and of trying to imagine something positive in its place. Irritants do not vanish through imaginative acts. Rather, Crawford opts for an erotics of attending to what attracts one in the world rather than a willful shift of imagination and belief, because "new energies come from real objects that one becomes interested in" (174).

With respect to long term social practice, Crawford believes the good life requires finding situations that allow for meaningful agency, situations that foster the development of skillful competence. One needs to get out of one's head and into the world. One needs to become subject to the demands of some worldly practice rather than stew in the broth of arbitrary personal choice. Crawford's title for one of his sections sums up the remedy well: "empowerment through submission" (128). One needs to submit to the reality of the world in one of its guises—a craft like organ building; one of the arts, like becoming a musician; one of the scientific disciplines, like chemistry; or, in reference to Crawford's earlier book, a trade, like being a motorcycle mechanic.

In such disciplines, the objects and their proper uses (often traditionally defined), not simply a contextless choice, set the standards for what one does. However, there is still room for some creative expression within the limits endemic to the practice. That is, there is room for the personal sense of accomplishment and pride that comes from developing greater competence and better outcome.

Crawford takes the literal meaning of education, "to lead out," and applies it to being led out of one's mind into the world and its practices. In describing his remedies for the ills of our time, Crawford makes good use of Polanyi's thought. He cites Polanyi's discussion of extending one's perception through a probe as an example of how embodiment and tacit factors are crucially involved in understanding empirical reality (47). Crawford appreciates "Polanyi's argument about the role of unspecifiable, tacit knowledge in expertise; his elaboration of personal commitment as the core of intellectual inquiry, understood as a craft skill; his demonstration that scientific competence is transmitted through apprenticeship to authoritative teachers" (139), and so on.

Rorty and others (including recently Hubert Dreyfus and Charles Taylor) have argued that viewing cognition in terms of mental representation gives rise to unwarranted skepticism and relativism. It can be seen that Crawford subscribes to the retrieval of reality advocated by Dreyfus and Taylor, but he spells out the benefits of such retrieval more fully than they do.

Crawford is also sympathetic to the warnings about the disengaging role of virtual reality offered by Albert Borgmann. However, he offers his own take on the potential dangers of the electronically mediated world. Crawford observes that when a problem crops up on *Mickey Mouse Club*, magical technology is at hand to solve the problem. "To pursue the fantasy of escaping heteronomy through abstraction is to give up on skill, and therefore to substitute technology-as-magic for the possibility of real agency" (72). The electronic navigation screen on a Mercedes displaces skillful driving by the seat of one's pants. This idiot-proofing abstraction "does not reflect fuzzy, subtle variations. Nor is it sensitive to changes that haven't been anticipated and coded for ahead of time" (80). Electronic representation can become addictive; in that role it can become a refuge for the narcissist, one who has difficulty relating to other people and objects. Sherry Turkle, he notes, "locates the narcissism of the e-personality not in the grandiosity of our *self*-representations, but in the simple fact that we increasingly deal with others through representations of *them* that we have…In this domain we have a frictionless array of weak ties to other people who can be summoned according to our own needs" (176). Such a covering over of the challenges of experience obviously eviscerates the possibility of community, but it also undermines the possibility of potent individuality. For "it is by bumping up against other people, in conflict and cooperation, that we acquire a sharpened picture of the world and of ourselves, and can begin to achieve an earned independence of judgment" (250).

Matthew Crawford's eclectic book resists easy classification. Its title suggests it is a treatise on ontology and epistemology, but as it unfolds it becomes clear that Crawford's primary concern is with ethics, ethics with a political veneer. As he says, his aim is to "reclaim certain possibilities of human flourishing" (x), which is the ultimate topic of ethics. It is a rich book. I have barely mentioned his powerful chapter on gambling, "Autism as a Design Principle," or his longest chapter that deals with the organ makers' shop, which brilliantly lays out the necessary interplay between traditional technology and contemporary technology if musical excellence is to be accomplished. I note that he makes good use of Polanyian epistemology. I think there is an inherent complementarity between the thought worlds of Crawford and Polanyi. Crawford could further develop his thought by attending to such features of Polanyian philosophy as spontaneous order in contrast to corporate order, the importance of public liberty, and the stratified nature of reality. But these suggestions for further work should in no way be taken to indicate anything other than my great respect for the work Crawford has in fact produced. It is a first rate achievement.

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The Polanyi Society web site (www.polanyisociety.org) provides information about Polanyi Society membership and meetings. The site also contains the following: (1) digital archives containing all issues of *Tradition & Discovery* and its predecessor publications going back to 1972; (2) indices listing *Tradition & Discovery* authors, reviews, and reviewers; (3) the history of Polanyi Society publications; (4) information on *Appraisal* and *Polanyiana*, two sister journals with special interest in Michael Polanyi's thought; (5) a link to the "Guide to the Papers of Michael Polanyi," which provides an orientation to archival material housed in the Special Collections Research Center of the University of Chicago Library, Chicago, IL 60637; (6) photographs of Polanyi; and 7) links to a large selection of primary material, including (a) Collected Articles and Papers of Michael Polanyi (the 1963 Gelwick microfilm collection of more than 100 items); (b) Polanyi's 1940 film, "Unemployment and Money;" (c) unpublished texts of Polanyi's Gifford Lectures (1951-1952), Duke Lectures (1964) and Wesleyan Lectures (1965); (d) audio files for Polanyi's McEnerney Lectures (1962), Ray Wilken's 1966 interview of Polanyi (audio and text), and Polanyi's 1966 conversation with Carl Rogers (audio and text).

# ELECTRONIC DISCUSSION LIST

The Polanyi Society supports an electronic discussion group that explores implications of the thought of Michael Polanyi. Anyone interested can join. To join yourself, go to the following address: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/polanyi_list/join. If you have difficulty, send an e-mail to James van Pelt (james.vanpelt@yale.edu) and someone will see that you are added to the list.

# IN SUPPORT OF THE POLANYI SOCIETY

Support the work of the Polanyi Society by (1) regularly paying **annual dues** ($35 for individuals, $25 for libraries, and $15 students), and (2) contributing to the **Travel Assistance Fund** and/or the **Endowment Fund**. Those living in the United States can either do so via the PayPal option on the Polanyi Society membership web page (http://polanyisociety.org/register/join-renew.php) or by sending a check with the fund designated in the memo line to Charles Lowney, Polanyi Society, 10 Jordan Street, Lexington, VA 24450. Those living outside of the U.S. should use PayPal.

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## *THE PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF WILLIAM H. POTEAT*

⬥⬥⬥

### EDITED BY DALE W. CANNON AND RONALD L. HALL

#### ABOUT THE BOOK

The modern conception of ourselves and the associated way of reflection known as modern critical thinking have spawned a reductionist view of persons and have tainted "the personal" with connotations of bias, and partiality, and privacy, leaving us with the presumption that, if we seek to be objective, we must expunge the personal from the stage of intellectual respectability.

Poteat's work in philosophical anthropology has confronted this concern head on. He undertakes a radical critique of the various forms of mind-body dualism and materialist monism that have dominated Western intellectual concepts of the person. In a unique style that Poteat calls post-critical, he uncovers the staggering incoherencies of these dualisms and shows how they have resulted in a loss of the personal in the modern age. He also formulates a way out of this modern cultural insanity. This constructive dimension of his thought is centered on his signature concept of the mindbody, the pre-reflective ground of personal existence.

This book will be of interest to a broad range of intellectual readers, with interests in philosophy, psychology, theology, and the humanities.

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