

INDWELLING AS A METHOD OF FAMILY
RESEARCH AND THERAPY: A PERSPECTIVE ON
THE HUMAN SUGGESTED BY THE THOUGHT OF
MICHAEL POLANYI

by Paul F. Wilczak

The thought of Michael Polanyi has fascinated me since 1968 when I first began reading his works. Through them I became interested enough to enroll in a seminar he was teaching that year at the University of Chicago. I later deepened my interest into a dissertation project on the relation of his philosophical psychology of motivation to his philosophy of religion.¹ The root of my fascination with Polanyi's thought, I believe, is its seminal quality. The goal of the man was unusually far reaching. He sought to formulate a philosophy of knowledge which revealed personal faith as the intrinsic, necessary foundation of human understanding. His project has evoked a broad spectrum of responses. Some individuals dismissed his position as obscurantism or a glorification of the trivial. Others saw him as an epistemological savior and flocked to join societies of explorers formed in reverent discipleship to the man. At present my own assessment of his work falls somewhere between these two poles. His general approach to the basis and growth of human knowledge strikes me as a coherent, significant contribution to contemporary philosophy. Its prime value, however, may lie in the implications it holds for more specialized investigations. Reading and rereading Polanyi can give rise to new questions about one's own area of research interest. I shall attempt an example of such questioning in this paper.

The general area of my interest is human development, especially within the context of the family. I have taught courses on the family and worked in the field of family counseling for the last two years.

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These endeavors have proven to be a most interesting and satisfying approach to human reality and development.

Many roads lead to consideration of the family. Hundreds of novels, short stories, plays, and films have plotted family foibles, joys, and tragedies. Sociologists have described family patterns in intricate detail. And family researchers and therapists are currently correlating and consolidating their disciplines. There has thus been considerable concern paid the family both in the humanities and in the social sciences. What implications does the thought of Polanyi hold for the further development of this concern? And what specific questions can his thought evoke regarding the family as a matrix of the human? These will be my present inquiries.

SCIENCE AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE HUMAN

Before proceeding along these particular lines, I shall briefly state Polanyi's model of science as an aspect of human knowing. He is somewhat of a maverick here, and it would be better to note this at the start. He does not distinguish separate methods of knowing which can characterize the sciences and the humanities as two sources or approaches to understanding. On the contrary, he argues for "a continuous transition from the natural sciences to the study of the humanities."² Let us examine the argument and model he presents.

Polanyi's point of departure is the fact that within our current culture two significant assumptions regarding the objectifiability of knowledge are influential. The first is that science can become a reality completely detached from the human beings who formed and practice it.³ The second is that science can be rendered into an entirely explicit expression of knowledge.⁴ If these assumptions were true, there would be a considerable separation between science and the humanities. It could be noted crudely by calling the former "objective" and "designative," the latter "subjective" and "symbolic" or "metaphorical." The general impression thus created would be one of comparing a precise, factual approach with a vague, imaginative one. The gross bias of this type of classification is the connotation of lack of discipline or even of reason on the side of the humanities. Polanyi attempts to avoid such bias by demonstrating that both science and the humanities make intrinsic use of what he calls "indwelling." And, furthermore, indwelling is a process which contradicts the above two cultural assumptions. Indwelling then is the common denominator between science and the humanities. And, according to Polanyi, the difference between them "is only a matter of degree: indwelling is less deep when observing a star than when understanding men or works of art."⁵

What results from this emphasis on indwelling is the assertion that science, rather than being “impersonal” knowledge, is fundamentally *personal*, that is, *an art* able to be transmitted only “by the affiliation of apprentices to a master.”⁶ To Polanyi a completely detached, impersonal science would be as nonnegotiable as an unsigned check.⁷ In brief, science is not merely *the truth* but *the truth as personally comprehended*. Therefore, for Polanyi science rests upon a personal commitment to true comprehension. Eliminate the commitment and science becomes merely signs about the art of knowing, signs which do not speak. Explicit propositions take on value because they are personally asserted by a scientist. They depend on that person’s voice or language of gesture. Explicit, asserted propositions also depend upon tacit, unasserted interpretive frameworks for their full meaning. This is similar to saying that no proposition can be reduced to a description of observables. In other words, theory guides observation toward the comprehension of facts and even to their discovery. Thus, propositions derive their comprehensive meaning from theories and traditions of theories.⁸ Polanyi goes further, however, by asserting that specific propositions are criticized from broader plausible frameworks which are held acritically. If the basic propositions of the interpretive framework itself are criticized, this in turn is done from a new position in another framework still acritically accepted. To Polanyi this is an inescapable pattern. Critical reason has an acritical backside upon which every thinker must come to rest.⁹ My metaphor is intended to avoid a misleading abstractness in these comments on indwelling. A knower’s indwelling means first of all a personal living in his or her own body. To Polanyi all knowledge is rooted in bodily existence.¹⁰ In a word, the truth of an asserted proposition is based on a personal faith in the soundness of a judgment of coherence in bodily experience.

In order to follow Polanyi’s argument here we must be aware of three key notions in his thought. They are the notions of tacit and explicit knowledge, of subsidiary and focal awareness, and of indwelling as existential knowing. The first is expressed in Polanyi’s maxim that “*we can know more than we can tell.*”¹¹ What we can tell is explicit knowledge or comprehension that can be designated directly. An example would be any quantitative or factual statement, such as a man’s medical test reports or the fact that he is the father of three sons by a certain woman. What we know beyond that which we can tell is an overall differentiation by which we recognize a given entity. For example, we identify a man in a holistic fashion rather than by detailing and adding up the thousands of particulars which guide our comprehension. In fact, after a few minutes of exposure to another

person face to face, we can pick that person out of a vast crowd—a faculty which Polanyi compares with Kant's so-called mother-wit.¹² Yet we would be hard pressed to express in meaningful detail what it was we recognized about that person. This kind of knowledge is *tacit* in the sense of not needing or, in significant instances, not being open to detailed explication. In brief, we cannot exhaustively communicate in linear fashion what enables us to recognize a given entity.

This brings us to the second notion, that of subsidiary and focal awareness. This distinction goes a long way to explain why some knowledge really exceeds telling. In the awareness of any complicated pattern a knower attains a focus, which is the pattern as a whole. But at a distinctly different logical level the knower is also consciously aware of a range of particulars which combine to form the total pattern. The knower is aware of them as subsidiaries to the focus. Each of them is significant only insofar as it points toward and contributes to the focus. For example, consider Bach's Prelude in C Major from the first book of the *Well-tempered Clavier*. It could be transposed by a skilled performer into the eleven other major keys without losing its focal character. In every case the particular tones serving as subsidiaries to the music would be different. Yet the performer would be guided by his awareness of the focal whole in his choice of the correct subsidiaries. And if the musician were good enough, he could accomplish this impromptu and without a laborious note-by-note transposition.

In this example of the Bach Prelude many of the subsidiaries would fall within a specifiable range and be available to focal awareness. A one-to-one correspondence could be detailed, note for note, through every transposition. In a word, the transpositions could all be written out. Even for a patterned structure as relatively simple as this, however, there would be subsidiaries tending to fall outside the range of focal availability. Individual notes can be focused on even though they tend to lose their melodic and harmonic coherence in the process. But other subsidiaries in music escape similar specification. They are comprehensible only through an act of connoisseurship. For instance, at the level of professional competence differentiations are possible between performances of the same music by, say, a young graduate of a conservatory and an artist such as Sviatoslav Richter. The overall artistic result would be different, and some crude gestures of communication might be made to express this appreciation. But the subsidiaries of tone, touch, rhythmic pulse, rubato, and so on, which we *know* are different, would escape explication. Such a distinction has a broad relevance within human life and culture which can be explored in many contexts.

The radical aspect of this distinction between focal and subsidiary awareness, however, is revealed by Polanyi's analysis of perception. The above description was concerned with logical levels of an objective, that is, performed, musical composition. The same logical levels also apply to the bodily presence of the listener. Awareness of the objectivity of the musical performance, as differentiated from the states of the listener's own body, reveals focal and subsidiary aspects. The subsidiary roots of all comprehension are, according to Polanyi, found in myriad, unspecifiable bodily particulars.¹³ Most of these we are aware of only in their focal coherence or meaning, which we project as an object of knowledge differentiated from ourselves. Focus on those bodily particulars, even if possible, would not be helpful in itself. During a recital a pianist would be greatly distracted by focal awareness of his muscular states or visceral changes rather than of the music these subsidiaries were instrumental in effecting. A limited focus on them during rehearsals would only be of value when they were again in performance allowed to function as subsidiaries.

The third notion, which directly follows from the other two, is that of indwelling as existential knowing. Polanyi's model of human understanding is, in fact, his model of human existence. It is a generalized model of human *being*. The metaphor of the act of dwelling controls the model. Through the long apprenticeship of human learning and development, the knower grows in the ability to dwell in his own body. He learns to differentiate and schematize its competencies. Human dwelling places can be thought of as the extensions of the bodies of those who dwell there. Taking the metaphor yet further, Polanyi states that a scientist must learn to dwell in his science as he does in his own body.¹⁴ The expression "body of knowledge" is thus given a living, symbolic meaning. All of the trappings of a science, its apparatus, instruments, books, and experiments, are simply the tools of the scientist. And all tools are artificial extensions of the body of their user.¹⁵ As impersonal objects they are absurd—mute, subsidiary structures caught in a focus which deprives them of their meaning. Through indwelling they again become subsidiaries to the focus of personal knowledge.

POLANYI AND FAMILY RESEARCH

An approach to understanding the human can be derived from Polanyi's thought by combining his key notions and model with the currently growing interest in research on the family. This is an important possibility because, in a factual and a symbolic sense, families contain and are the matrix of the human. Families or their surrogates provide the biopsychological context of all human life and develop-

ment. They also form the roots or lay the groundwork for adult motivation, including the motivation to become a scientist. This would make sense from a psychoanalytic perspective, such as Freud's study of sublimation in Leonardo da Vinci. But it also does so from the behaviorist view of the family as a group reinforcing certain values in its members. Consequently, the family can be variously approached as a microcosm of the human world. A basic question concerns the means of approach to be used. At this point Polanyi's thought can be helpful. His notion of indwelling can yield a method of family research with implications for family therapy. The current "family movement" includes both research workers and therapists employing a variety of methods.¹⁶ It dates from the early fifties when several studies appeared which investigated the involvement of families in psychopathology.¹⁷ The medical model which limited the pathology to the designated or diagnosed patient began to be bracketed in these studies. And a new perspective which comprehended the disorder as spread across the designated patient's entire family system began to be articulated. What Polanyi can contribute to this movement and its perspective is a method of analysis applicable to family dysfunction. But more significantly, his thought suggests a model which can point toward the comprehension of family health. The latter area is found today at the far boundaries of family research and therapy.¹⁸

In recent family theory the family has been characterized as a homeostatic system. As a *system* the family is understood as a number of elements located together in such a way as to interact necessarily with one another.¹⁹ Thus an action on any single element in the system implies an effect, however mediated or transformed, on every other element. A theoretical contribution which Polanyi can make at this point is his distinction between systems of spontaneous order and those of corporate order. This distinction can form the basis for a model of family function and dysfunction. I shall attempt to describe such a model later in this paper. For now let it be said that the action upon the system member can originate either within or outside the system. Examples germane to family systems would be the birth and development of children and the impact of an economic depression or other external crisis on the family. The family is *homeostatic* if it is characterized by a tendency to maintain a certain balanced interaction within itself as a system. This can be thought of as maintaining a steady state or status quo of interaction.²⁰ It can be conceived as a controlled development of interaction. But it can also be viewed as a control on deviations from a certain range of change within the system. The key point which Polanyi adds to the notion of homeostasis is that it is "purposive action."²¹ Here again Polanyi plays the maverick

by differentiating his position in a very fundamental way from that of many neurologists and psychologists who eschew all "teleological explanations." For Polanyi, however, all machine operations are "defined by operational principles which achieve an acknowledged purpose."²² The purposiveness in question characterizes machines as oriented toward certain chosen achievements attained through homeostatic means. Accordingly, the "result is a system of rightness" understandable in terms of the success or failure of the means to attain the chosen goals.²³ And this leads us directly into a system model derived from Polanyi's thought which is applicable to family research.

The family model I shall attempt to outline will correlate Polanyi's analysis of machines with his notions of systems of corporate order and those of polycentric spontaneous order. First let us consider the meaning of these terms. Then let us explore their possible relevance to the family.

A machine system is an arrangement of elements which reveals several distinct levels. To avoid unnecessary complexity let us take a grand piano as an example. The lower levels of the piano can be comprehended in terms of physics and chemistry as manifesting specifiable boundary conditions.²⁴ They have certain weights, shapes, tensile strengths, acoustic properties, etc. And piano firms maintain staffs of physicists who research the properties of the basic materials and their combinations. On a distinct, higher level beyond physics and chemistry the piano would reveal certain operational principles selective of the lower boundary conditions.²⁵ For example, the piano is characterized by a mechanism which strikes the piano wires with hammers rather than plucks them. Then there is the determination of the size and number of the wires, which results in the range of the instrument. The instrument is thus structured by selecting and arranging a narrow range of boundary conditions from those characteristic of the materials out of which it could be constructed. This structuring specifies it as a machine. Such selectivity can be quite subtle. The mass of a hammer or of a piano wire and the thickness of a piece of felt can be significant. Physics and chemistry enable us to do the measuring but cannot help us select from the large number of measured items those which will improve the operations of the instrument. The latter judgments define the distinct realm of piano technology. And the successes in that realm influence virtuosi to favor certain fine instruments over others of lesser quality. These performers then take us to a third higher level of the piano as a system. Here it can be comprehended as an aspect of an organizing field which further selects from and patterns the boundary conditions specified

by patented operational principles. From the wide range of sounds possible to an instrument the musician selects those which contribute to the coherence we call music. And if the music is a major composition, such as the Brahms Piano Concerto in D Minor, the pianist forms but one aspect of a systematically organized field which is a polycentered, mutually adjusting reality. It would be an example of creativity going beyond technology, technique, and the achievements of single individuals.²⁶

This type of analysis of a machine and of machinelike processes can be analogously applied to the family system. But a family, in spite of certain machinelike functions which can be discerned in it,²⁷ is not simply a given mechanism. A family is a developing, organic system which evolves its own operational principles and organizing field. This fact renders Polanyi's notions of corporate and of spontaneous, polycentric order especially significant. Their meanings are as follows. A social system of corporate order is one in which a pyramid of authority exists which organizes subordinates under one superior so as to result in "centrally directed or centrally planned" actions. An example would be a seven-person system arranged in three tiers: four people at the bottom, two in the middle, and "one man at the top."²⁸ A social system of spontaneous, polycentric order is one "in which persons mutually adjust their full-time activities over a prolonged period, resulting in a complex and yet highly adaptable co-ordination of these actions."²⁹ Polanyi uses the model of a hexagonal framework built of rods connecting every point with every other point. The framework is hung from one point with a weight attached to the point "just opposite." Polanyi describes this as follows: "The mutual displacement of the pin-points in the loaded framework possesses 'polycentricity', i.e. the pinpoints are so displaced that the displacement of each in respect to every other is related in a prescribed manner to the displacement of every one of these to each of the others—and so on indefinitely. I shall say that the totality of these displacements represents a case of *polycentric order*. The task of ordering a number of elements polycentrically will be called a *polycentric task*."³⁰

A social example illustrating this model would be a research team consisting of six members, two of whom are senior supervisors. One supervisor could maintain the critical function of contact with the scientific tradition which defines the background to their project. The second could bear the creative brunt of the stress involved in searching for a crucial unknown. The others could be research assistants contributing special data for interpretation from the polar values expressed by both supervisors. Although this is a very hypothetical ex-

ample, it shows how Polanyi's mechanical model could have a social meaning. The significant similarities are: (1) Every member maintains contact with every other member. (2) Action at every center in the system influences the system as a whole. (3) The system is flexible enough to shift "weight" to any center, if necessary or beneficial.

Now that the basic meanings have been presented, how are they helpful to family research and therapy? Polanyi's hierarchical model and notions of system can be applied to the family as follows. The three logical levels touched upon in the above analysis of the piano as a machine will provide the outline. Families will accordingly be seen to reveal boundary conditions, operational principles, and organizing fields.

Lower levels in the family can be conceived as boundary conditions necessary for the functioning of the family. These would include the physical and the biological conditions of each member. Hereditary factors and any physical traumas would be included at this level. As Polanyi has noted regarding machines, their operational principles cannot be derived from the sciences of physics and chemistry. But the breakdown of components upon which these operational principles depend can be explained by those sciences, for such failures occur at the distinct level of the boundary conditions.³¹ An analogous situation also holds for a class of family dysfunction. Physical illness would be an obvious example, but included in that category would be types of schizophrenia likely to fit the medical model regarding etiology and diagnosis. In these instances the family compares to an ensemble of biological machines. Unlike machines, however, breakdowns in families can be originated at the next higher level. In brief, the breakdowns can be functional in distinction to biological or medical.

According to Polanyi, a family as a homeostatic system is characterized by purposive action. This action revealing the family's goals, ends, or purposes would specify its operational principles or family rules. The rules would differ from family to family and in their tacit or explicit qualities. They would also differ from the operational principles of a machine insofar as the family is a system of developing personal centers. The elements of a machine function but do not develop. They operate to serve a given, unified purpose. In the more complex family, goals can operate at cross-purposes with dysfunctional results. Polanyi's distinction between corporate and spontaneous polycentric orders is especially germane here. The highly dysfunctional family can be seen as an example of a system of corporate order. It operates in pyramid fashion as a group with subgroups. One parent would occupy a position at the top with the other displaced to a lower tier with the children. This can result in a classical kind of

paternalism or matriarchy. But it can also turn into an alliance against the person at the top rendering that parent peripheral.³² The most dysfunctional example of this general system would be the interdependent triad found in families with a schizophrenic child.³³ Here the triad of father, mother, and child is characterized by a fusion of mother and child which excludes the father. Murray Bowen's research with eleven families who had schizophrenic children indicated that the pattern was typical. A mother with considerable feelings of inadequacy would deal with them by projection upon an infant. She could then try to care for her own inadequacy by caring for the child.³⁴ The potential and growing adequacy of the child, however, becomes a severe threat to the pseudoadequacy of the mother.³⁵ This is countered by the mother through placing the child in a double bind. The bind occurs when the explicit communication which the parent conveys is *become a mature adult* but the tacit or nonverbal message contradicts the former with *remain an inadequate, helpless child*.³⁶ From Polanyi's systems perspective what results from this ego fusion of mother and child is the relegating of both of them to the lower tier of the family pyramid below the father. Both mother and child form the subsystem labeled "inadequate child." They freeze their relationship at a certain level of gratification and thereby exclude further development.³⁷ In effect they systematize a status quo of corporate order with one man at the top by relegating the father to that lonely position.³⁸ Such a dysfunctional system of corporate order is contradictory to a spontaneous, polycentric system. The ego fusion, of course, makes it impossible for the polycentricity to develop.³⁹ But Bowen's research indicates that effective therapeutic intervention counters the fusion by opening the potentialities of the husband-wife relationship.⁴⁰ What this suggests is the establishment of a new subsystem within the corporate order of the family, one incompatible with that order and oriented toward changing it. The new subsystem is, by Polanyi's definition, a spontaneous order of two centers. The model of healthy family development which this suggests is one of three stages. First, there is the spontaneous order of a man and a woman in a personal relationship. As children are born or adopted, a family system is formed which has some characteristics of a system of corporate order. Unlike a "pure" corporate order, a spouse system of spontaneous order substitutes for the one man at the top. But the unified parental function of setting down rules for the children does develop a temporary pyramid system. The persons on the lower tiers, however, move up as they develop more adequate selves. The purposive action implied in this escalator process is the gradual joining of the spontaneous system at the top. Finally, all adult members of the fam-

ily form a spontaneous, polycentric order which is the third stage of the model.

Such a systems-sequential model of the family implies a primary goal or operational principle. That goal would be the transformation of the family from a quasi-corporate to a spontaneous, polycentric order. The means for this would be the escalator of self-differentiation which allows family members to ride up the pyramid to join the spontaneous system at the top. Then again, membership in the adult, self-differentiated order may be considered a means to the establishment of new generations in the extended family. In this sense the system transformation would be prerequisite for the family to function as a healthy family of origin for the families of generation of its adult offspring. Thus the primary goal of the healthy family can also be viewed as sufficient self-differentiation of its children for them to marry and form the spontaneous order which pyramids down, extending the family another generation.

The next higher level of the family in this analysis is that of its organizing field. This is not simply the field of the family itself but the larger one beyond its boundaries. At this level the family opens up into or at least touches upon the society at large which forms its environment. Consequently, here is where it contacts the family researcher or therapist. Here also the methodological question of approach again becomes germane. I suggested that "indwelling" might serve as a means of approach to comprehending the human reality of families. But how does an outsider begin to dwell within a family order? By means of a submethod analogous to a computation technique Polanyi proposes as appropriate to polycentric tasks. This procedure is termed the "relaxation method" or "dealing with *one center at a time while supposing the others to be fixed in relation to the rest, for that time.*"⁴¹ In effect the analogous application of the relaxation method as an entry to dwelling in the family will result in a paradoxical procedure. It will suppose "the others to be fixed" while specifically presuming or intending them to be not fixed.⁴² In this way indwelling through the relaxation method can serve in both research and therapy with families. Let us consider this approach in more detail.

INDWELLING AS A METHOD

Family process becomes psychohistorical when the family deals with the ideals of the larger society in which it lives.⁴³ These ideals, what the given, historical society deems valuable in itself, form the foundation of that society.⁴⁴ What Polanyi asserts is that a society lives out of its ideals. By implication, a family as a subsystem of the larger society also lives from the power of those ideals or suffers their weakness or

inherent contradictions. By way of simplifying a very complex process, let me say that social ideals inform the process of cultural nurturance. The family system of corporate order with one man at the top can be seen in this light. The system lives out a paternalistic, monarchical ideal that it is valuable in itself for the father to be the sole head of the household. Family members nurtured on this ideal tend to make it a foundation of their own families. The ideal then operates as a rule, standard, or operational principle of the family system. This process can be and ordinarily is carried on by the parents, but, quite often, and in some cases most decisively, the nurturance is done by different significant others. These could be formal and informal teachers, respected peers, etc. What Polanyi adds is that culture is transmitted through apprenticeship to persons who embody aspects of the culture.⁴⁵ These persons or "masters" motivate their apprentices by evoking from them a striving for masterful competence. Such striving is based first on an identification with the master and then on a commitment to his ideals.⁴⁶ Sometimes the masters are the parents of their apprentices. This can be seen in professions which unite the generations within a family, for example, medicine, law, music, and the ministry. More often the masters are found outside the family. Even in the above examples outside masters would join those in the family. And by doing so the outsiders would provide the children with an important means of self-differentiation from their parents.

Family research, thus, should pay attention to the lines of apprenticeship operating within a family network. The existence of master-apprentice relationships could, in fact, even be used to define the limits of the network. It is generally recognized that the operational family includes or can include people who are not blood relations.⁴⁷ Apprenticeships can help specify some members of this class. The notion of apprenticeship is a significant theoretical model because it can unify certain facts or even bring new ones to light. This is needed because many of the apprenticeships in operation would likely be informal and consequently less than obvious. To use Polanyi's words, they would be more tacit than explicit in meaning. The relaxation method can help the tacit pattern emerge. As mentioned before, this method focuses on one center, in this case a family member, and regards the others as static for the time being. For example, altercations between a father and his son over the latter's habits of dress and grooming could be viewed as a *quid pro quo* interaction.⁴⁸ But if the father is regarded as fixed for the moment and the image of the son understood as a differentiated coherence, this could lead outside the immediate family to the son's symbolic, sartorial apprenticeship to an

older "chum." The filial rebellion thus would take on additional significant detail by way of the son's identification with the older friend. The method could also be shifted to the father with the possible discovery of his apprenticeship under his own father's intransigent paternalism. Through interviews at family or individual sessions the researcher could dwell within the coherences at each personal center and move around the family. What could be sought in each instance would be an indwelling in each perspective, while methodologically prescinding from the others for a limited time. After each perspective is taken seriously in its coherence, the polycentric whole could be returned to a richer focus.

Family therapy can make use of the same approach but with a difference in emphasis. Not only understanding would be sought but also therapeutic change. The indwelling in this case involves dwelling in the family as a model of change, that is, as the object of an apprenticeship in healthy relating. The therapist begins to teach the family, largely by tacit means, new ways of relating. He or she undertakes the responsibility for needed cultural nurturance by establishing within the family a culture of caring.⁴⁹ This can be accomplished through the method of relaxation by giving each personal center in the family system the opportunity to experience a spontaneous order. This is offered directly as each person is differentiated from the family system and related to personally, that is, without the necessity of linking in a third person.⁵⁰ It is also offered indirectly as each person observes the person-to-person relationship of the therapist with other members of the family. As noted previously, there is a paradoxical character to this adaptation of the relaxation method. It appears in regarding other centers as fixed while relating to one. In a healthy family this is false because the personal centers are open to a spontaneous polycentricity. Their health is expressed by their flexibility and adaptability to change. In a dysfunctional family this is true because there is a certain freezing of the status quo and a resistance to painful change. But, paradoxically, by considering the other personal centers as fixed, the therapist renders them more likely to change. In the focal personal relationship the therapist offers a self-differentiating, caring encounter to one person in view of that person's family system. The other persons are thus tacitly allowed and invited to choose self-differentiating, caring modes of relating, even though they habitually use static or rigid ones. This method presupposes their capacity to learn to choose more spontaneous alternatives but does not involve *telling* them to do so. It symbolically points at the alternatives and participates in what it points at but implies an offering of this symbol to the family through faith in them. Such faith in

the power of the symbolic intervention to evoke or motivate change would be a therapeutic intangible. In order to justify such an intangible the therapist would have to be a master in the art of caring for others through self-differentiating encounter. In a word, the therapist would have to be able to live this faith personally.

INDWELLING AS AN APPRENTICESHIP IN HEALTHY
SELF-DIFFERENTIATION

Polanyi's perspective thus suggests that families operate purposefully and that apprenticeships can function as a prime means to achieve their purposes. Purposive or homeostatic action would in this sense be characteristic of both dysfunctional and healthy families. Even in the family triad including a schizophrenic child there exists a kind of apprenticeship. The identified patient undertakes an apprenticeship in being and behaving in an inadequate and undifferentiated manner. The work of Murray Bowen suggests that in healthy families the purpose allowed and attained through apprenticeships within and outside the family is specifically self-differentiation.⁵¹ This value is implied by Polanyi's notion of the spontaneous, polycentric social system and, in fact, by his general understanding of knowledge as intrinsically personal. In contrast, it would seem that the dysfunctional family is marked by cross-purposes or collisions of purposes.⁵² The double bind would be an example of this on the level of communication, and the result is frustration of self-differentiation.

In the instances of family dysfunction the encouragement or the establishment of apprenticeships in self-differentiation can be the general model of therapeutic intervention. It would seem that this normally occurs in healthy or moderately dysfunctional families when the children attend school or begin work. For the dysfunctionally trapped family the therapist can take over these unmet needs and help free the family from its own cross-purposes. He or she can do this by indwelling within the family's life space. In this process the model of the transforming system presented earlier also applies. The therapist establishes a spontaneous order, possibly with the most self-differentiated family member, in view of the rest of the members of the frozen family. In effect this is building a home for self-differentiation within a house ordered against it. If the home stands, it can be enlarged into a dwelling for the entire family. This is an ideal, of course, but a very human one. And, I would add, a realistic one, too.

It is my conviction that the thought of Michael Polanyi can yield many other perspectives on the human. For reasons of space limitation, I sought to develop only one in this paper. But more

significantly, I chose the family focus for its intrinsic interest and importance. In the end we find that families provide subsidiaries to every human focus. They can and do make the human more familiar.

NOTES

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3. Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-critical Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1964), p. xiii.
4. *Ibid.*, p. x.
5. Polanyi, *Knowing and Being*, p. 160.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 66.
7. Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, p. 256.
8. Polanyi, *Knowing and Being*, p. 41.
9. Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, pp. 264-68.
10. Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Anchor Books, 1967), p. 15.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
12. Polanyi, *Knowing and Being*, pp. 105-6, 123-24.
13. Polanyi, *Tacit Dimension*, pp. 13-15.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
16. For an example of this variety, see James L. Framo, ed., *Family Interaction: A Dialogue between Family Researchers and Family Therapists* (New York: Springer Publishing Co., 1972).
17. Murray Bowen, "The Use of Family Theory in Clinical Practice," in *Changing Families: A Family Therapy Reader*, ed. Jay Haley (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1971), pp. 160-62.
18. For comment on the difficulties involved in reorienting toward a concept of health, see Gordon Shipman, *Developing the Concept of Family Health*, Behavioral Sciences Tape Library (Fort Lee, N.J.: Sigma Information, Inc., 1973).
19. Cf. Murray Bowen, "The Family Concept of Schizophrenia," in *The Etiology of Schizophrenia*, ed. Don D. Jackson (New York: Basic Books, 1960), p. 352; Bowen, "Use of Family Theory," p. 166; "Discussion" of Lyman C. Wynne, "Selection of Problems to Be Investigated in Family Interaction Research," in *Family Interaction*, pp. 94, 97.
20. Don D. Jackson and John H. Weakland, "Conjoint Family Therapy: Some Considerations on Theory, Technique, and Results," in *Changing Families*, p. 16.
21. Michael Polanyi, *The Logic of Liberty: Reflections and Rejoinders* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 176.
22. For the purposes of this paper every system will be viewed as exhibiting certain machinelike functions, e.g., coordination of components, energy-transfer means.
23. Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, p. 369.
24. Cf. Michael Polanyi, "The Body-Mind Relation," in *Man and the Science of Man*, Studies of the Person, ed. William R. Coulson and Carl R. Rogers (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1968), pp. 94-95.
25. Cf. Polanyi, *Knowing and Being*, pp. 153-54.
26. Here I am adapting Polanyi's notions of biological hierarchies and of organizing fields to an aesthetic example; cf. "Body-Mind Relation," p. 97, and *Knowing and Being*, p. 233.
27. Machinelike functions in the family would be discernible in aspects of biological process, logistics, economics, space distribution and management, etc.
28. Polanyi, *Logic of Liberty*, pp. 112-13.

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29. Ibid., p. 115.
30. Ibid., p. 171.
31. Polanyi, *Knowing and Being*, pp. 217–18; *Tacit Dimension*, p. 39.
32. Salvador Minuchin, *Families and Family Therapy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 94.
33. Bowen, "Family Concept of Schizophrenia," pp. 360–64.
34. Ibid., p. 361.
35. Ibid., p. 366.
36. Ibid., p. 359; cf. Jackson and Weakland, "Conjoint Family Therapy," p. 16.
37. Bowen, "Family Concept of Schizophrenia," p. 366.
38. Bowen speaks of a characteristic "emotional divorce" between the spouses; cf. ibid., p. 354.
39. Ibid., p. 365.
40. Ibid., pp. 363, 370.
41. Polanyi, *Logic of Liberty*, p. 173.
42. Healthy families could be presumed flexible and adaptive, i.e., not fixed, while fixedness could be expected to increase with family dysfunction.
43. This family process is related to the psychohistorian Robert Jay Lifton's methodological focus, which is "upon themes, forms, and images that are in significant ways shared. . . ." My meaning of *ideals* involves all three but as *values*; cf. his *History and Human Survival* (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 8, and Bowen, "Use of Family Theory," p. 174.
44. Michael Polanyi, *The Study of Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Books, 1959), pp. 86, 96–97.
45. Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, p. 207.
46. I examine this motivational process at length in "Faith, Motive, and Community."
47. Paul Franklin and Phoebe Prosky, "A Standard Initial Interview," in *Techniques of Family Psychotherapy: A Primer*, ed. Donald A. Bloch (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1973), p. 31.
48. Don D. Jackson speaks of the *quid pro quo* as a regularly occurring pattern of interaction which is often unconscious to the participants; see his and William J. Lederer's *The Mirages of Marriage* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1968), p. 178.
49. Cf. Augustus Y. Napier and Carl Whitaker, "Problems of the Beginning Family Therapist," in *Techniques of Family Psychotherapy*, pp. 119–21.
50. This description of a person-to-person relationship as nontriangulating was presented by Murray Bowen at a conference sponsored by the Family Institute of Chicago, February 23, 1974, at the University of Chicago.
51. Bowen specifically describes this as the purpose of family psychotherapy. He also says there is generally a family opposition to each member's self-differentiation, the successful confrontation of which "the family later applauds" ("Use of Family Theory," pp. 162, 185).
52. The culture of families with schizophrenic members has been interpreted elsewhere as oriented toward the experience of "meaninglessness." Polanyi is specifically cited as a resource and family orientation spoken of as a "cultural imperative." Following my interpretation of Polanyi, the family's avoidance of meaning can be called a "purposive action" (cf. Leslie Schaffer et al., "On the Nature and Sources of the Psychiatrist's Experience with the Family of the Schizophrenic," in *Changing Families*, pp. 45–64).