

FROM THE POLANYI ARCHIVES
THE LECTURE SERIES: MEANING,
LOST AND REGAINED

This new section of POLANYIANA is meant to publish shorter texts from Michael Polanyi's bequest. An invaluable source of his manuscripts and correspondence is the collection of the Library of the University of Chicago*. With the generous support of the Soros Foundation, researchers have access to these documents – consisting of some ten thousand pages – on microfilms in the Microfilm Archive at the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences since 1994 in Hungary too. The Department of Philosophy and the History of Science, Budapest University of Technology and Economics together with Michael Polanyi Liberal Philosophical Association digitalized these documents and created an indexed electronic library for them.** This digital library supplemented with other manuscripts, letters, and copies of publications of Polanyi constitute the archive, from which the publications come from.

The editors launched this section in order to accommodate unpublished manuscripts and letters of Polanyi as well as to republish some of his earlier papers hardly available by now.

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INTRODUCTION

In April and May of 1969 Polanyi gave a series of seminars of 6 parts with the title *Meaning, Lost and Regained* at the University of Chicago for the Committee on Social Thought under the Sara H. Schaffner lecturership.¹ This series was followed, summarised and closed up by the series of public lectures which is usually referred to with the title *Meaning, A project*, and which we publish hereafter together with some supplementary materials. At that time it had been suggested that these lectures should be published as a book², but only later, in 1975, was this material compiled into a volume called *Meaning*³ in an unidentifiable way, together with other earlier published articles by Polanyi and bridging texts written by Prosch.

In 1969, when these lectures were produced, Polanyi wrote the following to J.W. Grove: “I have been thinking and speaking ... for some time on the question „Why we destroyed Europe”. Strangely enough this great question is hardly recognised today, and even less are recognised the possible answers to it.”⁴ This series of lectures offers a possible answer to this – even today pressing – question, mainly in supplement 3 and 4. The lectures, however, give a wider frame of interpretation and in the more elaborated parts of the lectures we may discover the change of emphasis in Polanyi’s thinking, namely the “fascinating business” – as he put it – “applying the structure of tacit knowledge to painting, metaphors, myths, rituals, and symbols”⁵ These topics are discussed in the first four lectures.

The whole material consists of 4 lectures and 5 supplements. The texts are not finalised, they are marked as ‘private-draft’, and can be found in The Joseph Regenstein Library, Department of Special Collections of the University of Chicago. 3 variations of the most important texts exist in Box 39 and 40. The texts of the first variation are typewritten, can be found in Box 39, Folder 6-11, and do not contain corrections. The two other texts are its variations containing handwritten corrections. The second variation is also in Box 39, Folder 6-11, and it is adjusted to

¹ Polanyi held the same seminars in February and March as well at the University of Texas at Austin.

In the following the Box-Folder marks refer to The Michael Polanyi Papers, in the University of Chicago. The Joseph Regenstein Library, Department of Special Collections.

² See for example: Polanyi–H. Osborne, July 9, 1969 (Box 7, Folder 13); R. Gelwick–Polanyi June 6, 1969 (Box 7, Folder 11); H. Prosch–Polanyi, Oct. 7, 1969 (Box 16, Folder 10).

³ Michael Polanyi and Harry Prosch, *Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975)

⁴ Polanyi–J. W. Grove, July 9, 1969 (Box 7, Folder 13).

⁵ Polanyi–H. Zeisel, Sept 9, 1968 (Box 7, Folder 4).

the requirements of an orally given lecture. The third variation can be found in Box 40, Folder 9 as a bound copy, its corrections dissolve the lecture-style of the text, it can be regarded as preparation for printing. The corrections in each variation are exclusively grammatical and stylistic, they do not modify the content. We have chosen to publish the second variation, the differences of the text-variations are not marked. We did not take into consideration those cuts which were made by Polanyi on the texts of the second variation due to length issues, so these are left in the texts. Out of the 5 supplements, the third and the fourth closely belong to the four lectures, on some variations Polanyi mark them as Lecture 5 and 6. Therefore here they are also published as continuation to the lectures. More detailed information of the texts can be found before each text.