

Insights From the Philosophical Reception of Michael Polanyi in Italy

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Is there a national philosophy? It is hard to answer the question definitively, beyond mainstream philosophical currents and a supposed particular tradition. Beyond an invisible boundary, today, academic research is also defined by its international and interdisciplinary dimension. Although it is possible to argue about certain specificities, the interaction between different national traditions and distant scientific areas can be fruitful (and these parameters are also required in the case of research funding). One can take an example of the reception of Michael Polanyi's epistemology in Italy, starting from a brief reference to the Italian tradition and its renewed interest thanks to the Italian Thought. Therefore, in this paper, I will try to consider Polanyi's epistemology through his relations with Italian intellectuals and the dissemination of his writings in Italy. In the end, I will verify the potential contribution of Polanyian personal epistemology in three philosophical and social issues addressed in Italy.

Keywords: Italian thought, tacit knowledge, Michael Polanyi, personal knowledge

Introduction

In the last decade, the interest in Italian philosophy has greatly increased, so as to make it the subject of national and international debates. The starting points of this renewed discussion are the publication of *Living Thought* by Roberto Esposito in 2010 and the diffusion of the expression Italian thought, with the indication of a specificity of the national philosophical tradition.

At the end of the Eighties, philosophers such as Lucio Colletti, Norberto Bobbio, and Carlo Augusto Viano recorded the tendency of Italian philosophy to show itself as an appendix or collateral development of other European philosophies, in particular the German one. After more than 30 years, it seems that Italian philosophy has found its place, although it is not driving in relation to other philosophical traditions. Beyond any investigation into the specificity of a philosophical tradition, today the internationalization of research is also a determining factor in humanistic disciplines. This way of thinking does not debase a specificity but tends to test it on other disciplines and traditions in a potentially fertile context.

Taking into the background of these considerations, in this paper, I propose a reflection on the reception of the thought of an eclectic intellectual who was Michael Polanyi in Italy in order to show the contribution that tradition also external to the supposed national specificity, and different disciplines could give to contemporary issues. I will outline the reception of Polanyi's writings along with the mutual connection between his political and epistemological thoughts. I first briefly describe tacit knowledge, then Polanyi's relationship with Italian

thinkers through the translation of his works in Italian. From this picture, I will move on to the relationship between some of the current philosophical issues in Italian thought¹ and Polanyi's epistemology.

Epistemological Roots of Tacit Knowing

Objective and impersonal knowledge has represented the prevailing paradigm of 20th century epistemology. The mainstream thought can be summarized by Popper's expression "epistemology without a knowing subject" (Popper, 1968). However, the history of epistemology has shown that there were philosophers who did not endorse this view: They are called the *new* philosophers of science and adhere to a post-neopositivistic current, which is best represented by, among others, Lakatos, Kuhn, Toulmin, Feyerabend and Michael Polanyi. While the thought of Lakatos, Kuhn, Toulmin, and Feyerabend has been recognized by the community of philosophers of science, the epistemology of Michael Polanyi is almost completely neglected.

Polanyi's epistemology is characterized by the refusal of some "classical" aspects of the philosophy of science (e.g., reductionism, scientific neutrality, impersonality, and objectivity) as a reaction to Positivism. The core of Polanyi's epistemological proposal is the overcoming of the concepts of subjectivity and objectivity with the personal dimension of human and scientific knowledge. His main idea is that the roots of human knowledge are the tacit, non-formalized, features of knowledge:

What is usually described as knowledge, as set out in written words or maps, or mathematical formulae, is only one kind of knowledge; while unformulated knowledge, such as we have something we are in the act of doing, is another form of knowledge. If we call the first kind explicit knowledge, and the second, tacit knowledge, we may say that *weal ways know tacitly that we are holding our explicit knowledge to be true* [...]. Tacit knowing appears to be a doing of our own, lacking the public, objective, character of explicit knowledge. It may appear therefore to lack the essential quality of knowledge. [...] The essential *logical* difference between the two kinds of knowledge lies in the fact that we can critically reflect on something explicitly stated, in a way in which we cannot reflect on our tacit awareness of an experience. (Polanyi, 1958/1973/2018, pp. 12-14)

The idea of tacit knowledge is part of the project of a general theory of human understanding, modeled from the act of understanding. To explain the act of understanding, Polanyi has used the structure of the perceptual process as intended by the Gestalt psychologists: The knowledge shall be understood as a global entity that reassembles from the parties without being the sum of the latter. In Polanyi's writings, particularly in *Personal Knowledge*, the example that clarifies the value of tacit knowledge concerns maxims for the performance of a practice, such as wine taster. The rules of art can only be taught and learned through practice and apprenticeship. Unlike a codified rule, the rule of art leaves a certain margin for personal action, which is not manifested as an automatic procedure, but is incorporated into development and tradition.

Polanyi's Intellectual Network

Michael Polanyi (1891-1976) was a medical doctor, a researcher in physical chemistry, an economist and a philosopher. After obtaining his Ph.D. from the University of Budapest, he worked in Karlsruhe and from 1920 in Berlin at the Institute of Fibre Chemistry. In 1923, he moved to the Institute of Physical Chemistry. In 1933, he accepted a position at the Victoria University in Manchester, UK. Two years later, his research interests started to turn to politics and economics. In 1935, he travelled to Moscow with his colleague Horiuti to present their work on the proton-transfer reaction. Here Polanyi met Bukharin, the theorist of the Soviet regime

¹ See *Rue Descartes*, No. 87, 2015/4, devoted to *Philosopher en Italie aujourd'hui*, <http://www.ruedescartes.org/>.

who drew a new relationship between science and society. Polanyi and Bukharin discussed pure and applied science. This topic prompted Polanyi to direct his research towards the autonomy of science. In opposition to the central and planned economy imposed by the Soviet political system, Polanyi proposes the theory of the polycentric system that converges in the theory of spontaneous order, a notion that is developed by F. Hayek. Some years later, Polanyi joined the Society for Freedom in Science, the Mont Pelerin Society, and the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Opposed to totalitarianism and the planning of science, he supports a form of liberalism. His political and sociological thought turned to epistemological research with the publication of *Science, Faith and Society* (1946/2007), in which Polanyi presents his ideas about pure science, the autonomy of the scientist and academic freedom: the *fil rouge* of this thought is knowledge and its transmission.

In 1948, his university established a chair in Social Sciences to allow him to continue his studies.

In the 1940s, Polanyi was involved in academic relationships with his colleagues Turing and Emmet whom he met in Manchester. From the 1950s, Polanyi's research began to fuel the epistemological debate: He was invited to speak at conferences, he lectured at important American universities and he had scientific relationships with respected scholars in different fields, like Rogers, Maslow, Erikson, Chomsky, Bar-Hillel and Merton.

Nowadays, the relevant debate on Polanyi's thought involves mainly non-European scholars with the foundation of *The Polanyi Society*², so it is sufficient to provide an overview of the most recent books on that theme (Congdon, 2014; Jaeger, 2012; Long, 2011; Nye, 2013).

While Scott and Moleski's official biography of Polanyi shows his relationship with British and American scholars, the connection with Italian scientists and thinkers is very poor, although he has been awarded with membership to one of the most prestigious scientific academies in Italy, the *Accademia di Scienze Naturali della Società Nazionale di Scienze, Lettere, Arti* in Naples.

Polanyi's Relationship With Italian Scientists and Thinkers

The intellectual ferment that surrounded Polanyi's thought and heritage in other countries, like the USA and Hungary, did not affect Italian thinkers, because of the political situation after the fall of Fascist totalitarianism, the rise of the Republic, and the influence of Communism on thinkers of different fields. Following the Italian thought (Esposito, 2010/2012), there is no main current in Italian philosophy which is not Italian due to the geographical dimension. A brief but incomplete overview of contemporary Italian philosophy should include: In the first decade, the great ferment that highlights the relationship between philosophy and science with the institutions of the first university discipline in psychology and the rise of the first experimental laboratories; the domain of the Idealistic philosophy embodied by the well-known Croce and Gentile; the influence of the political and ethical commitment during and after the Second World War; the movement of Christian philosophers (such as Stefanini, Padovani, etc.) that tried to rebuild Italian society after the Second World War and Idealism in philosophy; and the heritage of Antonio Gramsci's philosophy of praxis, and the recent interest in psychoanalysis. Nowadays, the reflection on Italian philosophy is represented by the so-called Italian Thought, of which one of the main exponents, Roberto Esposito, in his *Living Thought: The Origins and Actuality of Italian Philosophy* (2010/2012), characterizes Italian philosophy as thought in action that should

² See the list of contributors and the table of contents of the following journals: *Appraisal*, *Polanyiana* and *Tradition and Discovery*.

allow a kind of bio-political thought, which refers to a sort of philosophy that differs from the three main currents of 20th century philosophy: the Anglo-Saxon analytic tradition, critical theory and French deconstructionism.

The first evidence of the presence of Polanyi in Italy dates back to 11 February 1933, when he was elected as a foreign fellow of the *Accademia di Scienze Naturali della Società Nazionale di Scienze, Lettere, Arti* in Naples. From 1933, a foreign fellow named Michele Polanyi is present in the list of members, but without any reference to the reasons for neither the election nor his possible introduction by other members. In the last yearbook of the *Accademia di Scienze Naturali della Società Nazionale di Scienze, Lettere, Arti* in Naples published in 2013, the member Michele Polanyi is still listed with no other personal details except for the election date. It has to be noted that the other members of the society are recorded with more details, such as the place and date of birth and, where applicable, the date and place of death. But Polanyi's details are incomplete: The entry even lacks the place and date of death³. In the same way, on the issues on which the works of the fellows are presented, any references to the works of Polanyi are missing.

During the 1950s, Polanyi's liberalism echoed in Italy as well. As a member of the *Congress for Cultural Freedom*, Polanyi took part in the conference held in Milan in 1955. He was in touch with well-known thinkers and politicians, like Silone and Chiaromonte, who opposed the Fascist regime and fought against social injustices.

In 1956, Silone and Chiaromonte started the periodical *Tempo Presente*⁴, last published in 1967. The periodical welcomed articles by leading Italian thinkers, such as Italo Calvino and Vasco Pratolini. *Tempo Presente* was the Italian instrument which the Congress for Cultural Freedom deployed in order to fuel the cultural Cold War and, at the same time, a place in which intellectuals of the progressive and non-communist Left could debate together, setting ultra-communist ideas firmly aside. In 1956, Italian translations of Michael Polanyi's "From Copernicus to Einstein" and "Beyond nihilism" were published in *Tempo Presente*.

In a letter dated 4 January 1965 (Box 6, folder 7)⁵, Chiaromonte showed appreciation for the paper "On the modern mind", which would be published in *Encounter* (May, 1965), and asked for permission to translate and publish it in his journal. Polanyi wrote a letter to Chiaromonte dated 21 January 1965 stating that he gave permission for the translation and publication of his paper. Unfortunately, after this epistolary exchange, there were no more hints about the cultural relationship between Polanyi and the Italian thinkers. Also, there were no hints about the publication of the article. Neither Chiaromonte nor Silone wrote to Polanyi from 1965 until 1967, when *Tempo Presente* ceased publication⁶.

The Dissemination of Polanyi's Works in Italy

Even if the connections between Polanyi and Italian thinkers in different research fields are not relevant, his major works have been translated into Italian from the 1970s. In 1973, the publisher Morcelliana in Brescia

³ I provided the secretariat of the *Accademia di Scienze Naturali della Società Nazionale di Scienze, Lettere, Arti* in Naples with the missing details on Polanyi.

⁴ *Tempo Presente* is an independent political and cultural periodical founded by the Italian thinkers Silone and Chiaromonte and is published from 1956 until 1967. The title of the periodical recalls Sartre's periodical *Les temps modernes*. Recently, the historian Francis Stonor Saunders has discovered that in reality *Tempo Presente* was founded by the members of the *Congress for Cultural Freedom* (of which Polanyi was a member) and funded by the CIA.

⁵ Michael Polanyi Papers, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

⁶ Polanyi's biography mentions a journey to Italy in 1955, when the family visited Milan on the occasion of the *International Congress on the Future of Freedom*. In the same biography, there are no references to the meeting with Chiaromonte and Silone.

published the first Italian translation of a book written by Michael Polanyi, *Study of Man*, under the title of *Studio dell'uomo. Individuo e processo conoscitivo*. The translation was edited by Antonino Cascino. Cascino's introduction to the translation has highlighted the dialectics between explicit and tacit knowledge, but there were no suggestions on the reasons for choosing to translate neither the volume nor the possible links to Italian philosophy⁷.

A few years later, Italian scholars had the opportunity to read *The Tacit Dimension* (1966) in its translation *La Conoscenza Inespressa*, published by Armando Editore in 1979 and translated by Franco Voltaggio, a well-known Italian philosopher who taught at La Sapienza University in Rome and at the University of Macerata. The foreword, besides disclosing the main topics discussed in the book, provides a judgement:

But *The Tacit Dimension* (1966), which is surely an anti-Marxist or more simply anti-communist book, has a value that exceeds the contingent moment of the controversy and links the intention to hide to the neo humanistic unrest of the great intellectuals between the two wars, from Bergson to Popper to Adorno, and similarly Maritain.⁸

If you are arguing along those lines, reading *The Tacit Dimension* (1966) can mislead, giving the impression that the effort of systematizing the theory of tacit knowledge is the reflection of a given political account. It is necessary to take into consideration that this book is the unique moment of synthesis and explanation of the tacit dimension of knowledge by Polanyi himself. However, in the preface to his book, Polanyi does not give any clues, which let us think exclusively of an anti-Marxist thought about culture. One cannot forget that Polanyi has taken an interest in the theme of the autonomy of science, passing by the issue of pure and applied science, with reference to his meeting with Bukharin, but the space devoted to this event in this book is very limited: We find the word "Marxism" twice in the book (in the Italian translation, see page 79).

Between the 1980s and 1990s, Arcangelo Rossi, full professor of History of Science at the University of Salento in Lecce, was interested in Polanyian epistemology, publishing various papers in collective books. He was the translator of *Knowing and Being* (1969), published by Armando Editore in 1988. The preface, written by Rossi, focused on the main Polanyian themes and the relationship between Polanyi and Kuhn's paradigm, addressed the question about the limited success of Polanyi in Italy, without giving an answer but pointing out that *Knowing and Being* was a collection in which the epistemological proposal of Polanyi is clearly stated, including the creative perspective about reality and human responsibility on knowledge.

La Conoscenza Personale. Verso una Filosofia Post-critica is the translation of *Personal Knowledge* (1958), and it was published in 1990. In his preface to the Italian translation, philosopher Emanuele Rivero, expressed the breadth and depth of Polanyi's thought and grasps its complexity. The translation first comes with a wide-ranging introduction that highlights various aspects of the Polanyian philosophical thought: Polanyi's move from chemistry into philosophy, issues such as the concept of the person and personal knowledge and their relationship with the philosophy of language. In particular, on language, Rivero stresses the way Polanyi understands the emerging of words and language similarly to Piaget but opposed to the "second" Wittgenstein. Moreover, the book includes the bibliography of Michael Polanyi's works grouped by year of publication (1910-1975).

In addition to Rossi's works and Monica Quirico's book, *Collettivismo e Totalitarismo in Hayek e Polanyi* (2004), the Italian scholar who writes extensively on Polanyi is Carlo Vinti, full professor of History of

⁷ In 2018 Morcelliana published a new translation by Carlo Vinti.

⁸ The translation is mine. The original text: Voltaggio (1979, p. 13).

Philosophy at the University of Perugia, now retired. In 2002, Vinti edited the Italian translation of *The Logic of Liberty* (1951) and wrote the preface in which he clarifies the relationships between Polanyi, the Austrian School and liberal thought. Italian scholars who are interested in Polanyi's thought can also read the translation of *Science, Faith and Society*, published in 2007, and *The Creative Imagination* (1966), published in 1999, both edited by Vinti. Talking of the latter, Vinti's introduction characterizes the main points of the thought of the Hungarian thinker and—this is a very relevant aspect—provides various hints for future in-depth studies, for instance, the relationship between personal knowledge and objectivism, the role of perception, ontology and the mind-body problem. They are due to the work of Carlo Vinti, even the translations of *Meaning* (1976) and the aforementioned *Study of Man* (1958).

The intellectual work of Carlo Vinti on Michael Polanyi, in addition to translations, includes papers and essays. Among these, we mention *Epistemologia e Persona* (2009), in which Vinti reviews the epistemology of Michael Polanyi and Gaston Bachelard, investigating the core features of the concept of the person, starting from these two thinkers and their (different) concerns about personal commitment. It is clear that the works of Vinti are the most relevant in the Italian overview.

Following, the seminal work of Vinti, a few years later, *Dall'economia Alla Semiologia. Saggio Sulla Conoscenza*⁹ had shed new light on “tacit knowing” from a semiological perspective, analysing the connections between tacit knowing and linguistic practice, namely the intersections between epistemology and the theory of signs and language. In order to achieve this goal, the Italian reader follows the development of this notion of “tacit knowing” in the thought of Polanyi, from “The value of the inexact” (1936) to “Sense-giving and sense-reading” (1967), where the author refers to Peirce's semiotics. However, the book follows Luis Prieto's semiological perspective, in order to work on the analogy between tacit knowing and linguistic practice, highlighting the role that semiology plays in epistemology. This particular reference to semiology leads to a philosophy of linguistic practice, that is, at the core of one perspective of the Italian philosophy of language by Tullio De Mauro and Lia Formigari, members of the so-called School of Philosophers of Language of Rome.

Polanyian Epistemology and Italian Thought

Despite the translations of Polanyi's epistemological and sociological works, there are at least two reasons that lead to the controversy surrounding the reception of tacit and personal knowledge in Italy.

First, Italian philosophers of science from the 1960s, as Rossi (1988) pointed out, were interested in neopositivistic theories and less in the so-called *new* philosophers of science (e.g., Thomas Kuhn, Paul Feyerabend, and Stephen Toulmin) and historical epistemology (for instance, Bachelard), so that Polanyi's personalist epistemology lies beyond the horizon of academic research, probably more interesting for philosophers of Catholic inspiration, because of his deep reflection on the concept of person.

Second, between the 1960s and the 1970s, some Italian philosophers labelled themselves with the adjective *impegnati* (engaged or committed in English). But the word *impegno* had a strong political and public connotation in Italian culture due to the fight against Fascism, whilst the words “engagement” and “commitment” call for a private involvement in the subject above all. Instead, the Polanyian use of the word “commitment” is strictly connected to his epistemological perspective. In fact, personal knowledge is as

⁹ Allow me to refer to my book, which is the result of the research carried out to obtain a PhD in Philosophy of Language at the University of Calabria (Italy), with the thesis “Tacit knowing and linguistic practice in Michael Polanyi”.

objective as impersonal knowledge but is grounded on the passionate commitment of the knowing subject: “commitment is a personal choice, seeking, and eventually accepting, something believed [...] to be impersonally given, while the subjective is altogether in the nature of a condition to which the person is question about subject” (Polanyi, 1958/1990, p. 302).

If we assume that the main theme in Polanyian thought is tacit personal knowledge, then the meaning of the adjective “tacit” plays an important role in the heritage left by Polanyi, also in Italian culture, in order to assign an epistemic value. As opposed to interpretations that conceive knowledge polarized between objective and subjective, Polanyi claims that tacit personal knowledge is not subjective.

However, in Italian, the adjective *personale* which stands for the adjective personal is somewhat subjective; the meaning of tacit is unclear as it is translated with the adjective *implicito* which stands for implicit or unspoken.

Considered in the context of Italian research, the analysis of tacit knowledge from a philosophical, sociological and economic point of view includes several misunderstandings and inaccuracies because of the Italian language for which the meanings of the adjectives tacit (*tacito*) and implicit (*implicito*) are very close. This vagueness of the Italian language makes comprehension of the tacit knowledge world obscure, supporting the idea that tacit simply means unspoken.

Zmyślony (2010) carried out a linguistic analysis of “tacit knowledge” in German and Polish; following this example, Gallo (2013) carried out a linguistic analysis of “tacit” in Italian. First, Gallo tries to draw a complete picture of the synonyms of “tacit” (*tacito*) and the difference between them in Italian, considering the adjectives “tacit” (*tacito*), “implicit” (*implicito*), “unspoken” (*inespresso*), and “ineffable” (*ineffabile*). The adjective implicit (*implicito*) is often used in place of the adjective tacit (*tacito*): In Italian, *tacito* (tacit) is the opposite of *esplicito* (explicit), and very often “tacit knowledge” is opposed to “explicit knowledge” when Polanyian thought is misunderstood.

The official Italian translation of “tacit knowledge” as “*conoscenza inespressa*” (unspoken knowledge) pushes the domain of the tacit to the corner of the unspoken that easily becomes uttered, without paying attention to the wide range of meanings that the adjective “tacit” carries.

Therefore, one can argue that the reasons for the poor reception of Polanyi’s thought in Italy are based on philosophical and philological difficulties, but also on the nature of the Italian cultural debate in which the ideas of Polanyian liberalism were marginal.

Beyond a fragmentary reception and the effort of a few Italian scholars, just in the wake of the latter, I would like to indicate three places where the epistemology of Polanyi seems to find fertile ground for further developments.

First, is there the chance to understand the person by means of the category of impersonal dimension, as pointed out by Roberto Esposito, according to tacit knowing? Today, the community of worldwide philosophers has a great interest in Italian thought: In fact, Italian Institutes of Culture located outside Italy are still organizing debates, workshops and other events; many foreign universities are broadening their activities with subjects devoted to Italian thought. This expansion began with the so-called Italian thought. One of the fathers of this main current of thought regarding the meaning of Italian culture is the philosopher Roberto Esposito, whose books are translated into English. In *Third Person* (2012), Esposito maintains that to know what a person is means to reflect on the category of the impersonal, which makes the development of the person possible, avoiding its becoming a thing—an alteration that Esposito finds several times in the history of

philosophy. According to Esposito, the person is not an individual or a subject but the “living” person, a combination of *bios* and *zoé*. One of the ways to understand the range of this cornerstone of Italian contemporary renaissance studies is to set aside the leading paradigm of 20th century epistemology, that is the impersonal dimension of knowledge, and evaluate its personal dimension in the Polanyian sense. In fact, it would be useful to follow a research path that shows the Polanyian personal dimension and Esposito’s impersonal playing the same role in the context of bio-politics, recalling the *Naissance of the Biopolitique* (2004) in which Foucault mentions Polanyi.

Second, the technological developments of recent years offer us the chance to have new kinds of interactions which call for a deep reflection on the mind-body problem, so that philosophers keep returning to that debate, being conscious to consider the new aspects of our human but naturally born cyborgs’ (Clark, 2003) lives. Philosophers interested in language and cognition, also in Italy, are trying to analyse this issue, which involves not only metaphysical reflections on human nature but also an ontological stance on what technology offers to us in terms of artefacts. In the last decades, the theory of the extended mind, which relies on active externalism (Clark & Chalmers, 1998) to explain the relationship between the human mind and the rest of the world, is one of the most intriguing perspectives on mind and body, including a perspective on technological artefacts. The crucial point lies in the way such artifacts and the human mind-body system are integrated. A proposal for investigation is to consider the notion of tacit integrations of elements as a model to understand the complexity of the relationship between body, artefacts and practices, with a glance at Polanyi and his debt to Gestalt Psychology.

Third, there is a need for putting at the center of the organizational model of academic research and teaching duties the sense of the autonomy of science and the commitment of the researcher from a Polanyian perspective. Italian Universities are experiencing a time of great difficulty: The Ministry for Universities and Research keeps changing the rules for recruitment and evaluation of researchers, in particular regarding early stage career. It is not surprising that the Italian government, in the name of the economic crisis before and the pandemic after, has invested fewer resources in higher education, allocating fewer funds to basic research. The gap between humanities and hard sciences seems to be increasing, and the issue of the “two cultures” is still at stake. In fact, if hard science research studies are often supported by private companies and are more successful in gaining European resources than humanities, the latter risks becoming even more difficult to achieve. However, we cannot forget that universities are not only the place in which research is carried out but are also where future generations are educated. Since it might be useful to rethink the value of education and training and the structure of research, it would be interesting to focus on the reasons for academic freedom. Italian academics could benefit from a new season of cooperative thinking on their work and on the status of their research. Despite Polanyi’s political thought, following his epistemology, the first step should be to recollect the nature of academic freedom and how it could be relevant to the organizational form that scientific communities assume.

Conclusion

The ongoing debate on the specificity of the Italian philosophical and cultural tradition will probably continue for a long time to come. If one tries to insert this discussion into contemporary academic research, he will find a new edition of the debate on the two cultures, not far from the way it was modelled by Snow and reconsidered by Polanyi. Despite having contacts with Italian intellectuals and having been translated into

Italian, Michael Polanyi's thought has not been adequately developed and his contribution to various philosophical debates is limited. Since, instead, I consider his personalist epistemology interesting, starting from the idea of tacit knowledge as a human practice, I have pointed out three places that are an example of the role that Polanyi's thought could have in philosophic and social issues in Italy.

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