



MICHAEL POLANYI

Hungarian-British Polymath [1891-1976]



Michael Polanyi (1966) introduces his notion of tacit or silent knowledge with the oft quoted phrase, “we can know more than we can tell.” For Polanyi “tacit knowledge” is part of an innovative view of the nature of knowledge which preceded, and influenced, Kuhn and Feyerebend. Polanyi embraces the quest for objective knowledge, but acknowledges human fallibility. He recognizes inescapably subjective and context-bound elements in the process of knowing informed, not least, by an individual knower’s personal commitment and affective motivations.

For Polanyi, explicit knowledge, the fragment that can be articulated, always rests on a much larger, hidden foundation of tacit knowledge. Polanyi (1958: 50) illustrates this point by contrasting the arcane technical algorithm for riding a bicycle with the experience of actually riding. Polanyi explains in formulae that

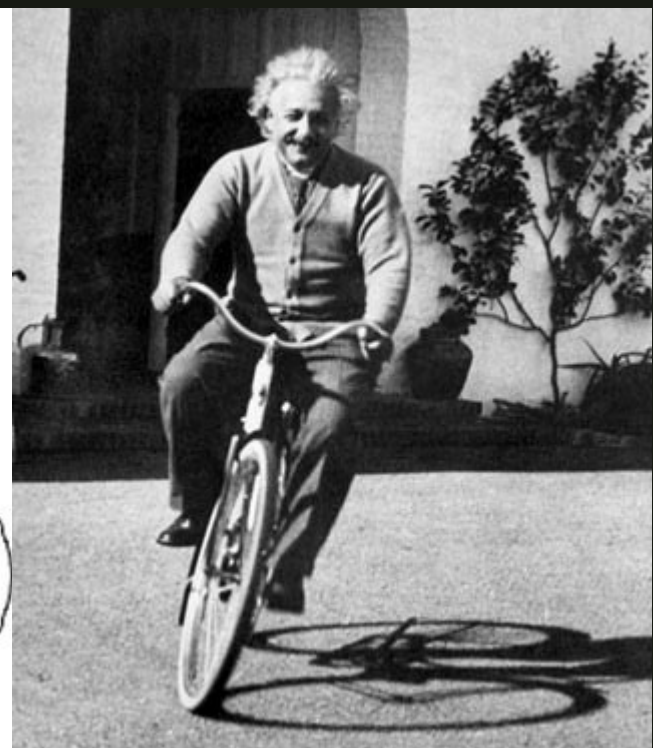
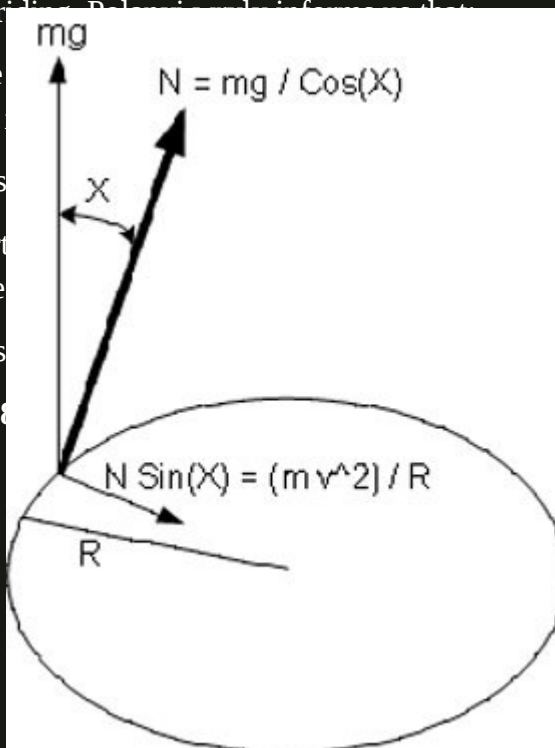
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Polanyi, Michael (1958)



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