

APPRAISAL

The Journal of the British Personalist Forum

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practice of contemporary science*

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*The meaning of randomness:
The Laplacian faults of neo-Darwinians
according to Michael Polanyi*



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P *Appraisal* seeks to develop and promote constructive ways of thinking, from within personalist perspectives, in philosophy and other intellectual disciplines.

P *Appraisal* believes that philosophy should not be a narrow, academic and technical specialism, but should address itself to the general public and to the intellectual and practical issues of the present.

P From time to time *Appraisal* will include *Re-Appraisals*, articles or collections of articles upon 20th C. thinkers whose work deserves to be more widely known.

P *Appraisal* takes a particular, but by no means exclusive, interest in the works of Austin Farrer, John Macmurray, and Michael Polanyi.

Format:

P The maximum length of articles is 10,000 words, although longer articles can be split into 2 parts for publication in successive issues.

P All contributions should be in good, clear English, without jargon, and with end-notes and frequent sub-headings (at approx. every 700 wds).

P Please see inside rear cover regarding references to the works of Michael Polanyi.

P **Please ask for the Style Sheet or save or print it from our web site:**

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NB All submissions must be composed, or rewritten after acceptance, in accordance with the Style Sheet.

Please send all submissions for *Appraisal* to the Secretary, and all corresponding regarding membership and subscriptions to the Treasurer.

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Notes on this issues contributors:

Dr. Karl Simms is Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Liverpool. His most recent book is Hans-Georg Gadamer (Routledge, 2015).

Dr. Charles Conti, scion of popes and anti-popes, poet, pianist, and stonemason (like Socrates) is best known as editor of Austin Farrer's posthumous books, along with the first major study of Farrer's thought. At Sussex, he began a unique postgraduate programme in Literature, Religion, and Philosophy. An increasingly well-rounded person, *homo rotundus*, he has also designed a house in Italy and coached American football in England.

Ms. Abigail Klassen is currently a Ph.D. Candidate in Philosophy at York University in Toronto. She has an MA in Philosophy from Concordia University (Montreal). Her main areas of research include social metaphysics, personal identity, and feminist philosophy.

Dr. James Beauregard is a clinical neuropsychologist whose clinical work involves adult and geriatric patients, including patients dealing with progressive neurologic diseases. He is a Lecturer in the PsyD. program at Rivier University, Nashua, New Hampshire, USA, where he teaches Biological Bases of Behaviour, Neuropsychology, and the Psychology of Ageing. His research interests include Personalist philosophy, and a Personalist approach to the ethical issues that arise in neuroscience, neurology and psychiatry, and in the discipline of Neuroethics.

Dr. Daniel Paksi received his PhD in 2010 from Budapest University of Technology and Economics. His thesis was on 'The Meaning of the Concepts of Evolution and Emergence in the Philosophy of Michael Polanyi'. His main fields of interest are the different theories of emergence and evolution. He recently published his first monograph in Hungarian on Polanyi's post-critical philosophy and emergent ontology with the title of "Personal Reality".

EDITORIAL

Spirits of trees leap greenly all about beneath the 'blue true dream' above; and there is more than a hint of illimitability about the 'gay great happening' of the earth today. The sun's birthday may be awhile yet but we hyperborean souls are already looking forward to a summer of nice warm rain.

Now, if the 'ears of your ears' are awake and the 'eyes of your eyes are open', as cummings would doubtless entreat, let the current issue of *Appraisal* commence. As anyone familiar with the Very Special Anthropic Principle knows, this is what the unfolding cosmos has been leading up to; and it is no coincidence.

If, on the other hand, it was *not* this intellectually explosive organ which the Big Bang was designed to bring about, then it must have been our BPF conference in Oxford last month. The conference, hosted by Oriel and supported by the British Society for the History of Philosophy was an enormous success; largely thanks, as usual, to the Herculean efforts of our founder, Richard Allen. A very long and very detailed report is winging its way to the BFP Blog as I type. Meanwhile, readers might like to know that we gained several new and exciting members. Dr. Anna Castriota has not only joined the Forum, but agreed to take over as Secretary. Dr. Benjamin Bacle arrived a spectator, innocent bystander, only to take the 'King's Shilling' and join the committee. He cannot complain; he was warned. Dr. David Treanor, who once again flew in from Tasmania expressly for the conference (yes, I believe his arms *were* tired) has likewise joined the committee.

We are also pleased to announce our first president. Thanks to our persuasive chairman, Dr. Alan Ford, Professor Tallis taken up the challenge. If all goes to plan, there will be giant posters of him on Britain's Town Halls and tanks in the streets by Christmas. ¡Viva El Presidente! ¡Viva La Revolución!

While awaiting the dawn of our Glorious New Republic, please enjoy the superlative selection herein. In this issue we have those long-awaited articles by Drs Karl Simms and Charles Conti from the 2014 Workshop. Late, they may be; but are they worth waiting for? They are. Dr. Simms, of Liverpool University fame, turns his attention to the "intersubjective truth" of hermetic poetry while Dr. Conti's death-defying feats of linguistic dexterity weave a radically new understanding of Wittgenstein.

Simms and Conti are followed by the only person I know with an arch enemy: Ms. Abigail Klassen. For our edification, Ms. Klassen dilates upon Galen Strawson's phenomenology of the 'self'.

Our final two contributions return us to our Polanyian roots; one in the company of neuroscientist Stanley Prusiner; the other with a host of Neo-Darwinists in tow. The former, by Dr. James Beauregard, is the sequel to a paper which appeared in issue 10 vol. 1 and uses Prusiner's Nobel Prize winning research to exemplify and elucidate the practice of science. The latter finds Dr. Daniel Paksi taking a Polanyian perspective on matters evolutionary and the "Laplacian faults" which riddle Neo-Darwinism to the core.

You will doubtless have noticed the obituary for Professor Norman Sheppard below: long time member and contributor, valued colleague, and great friend to many in what is now the BPF. I only met Professor Sheppard once, at the 2009 ICP in Nottingham, when he listened patiently while I delivered my first conference paper. He struck me then as a kind and decent man. We offer our condolences to his family.

Simon Smith, Nobber

OBITUARY

Professor Norman Sheppard -- a dear friend and valued colleague of many in the British Personalist Forum, and formerly the Society for Post-Critical and Personalist Studies -- passed away on 10th April 2015 at the age of 93.

His academic career began at Cambridge where he read chemistry, becoming Director of the Cavendish Laboratories and FRS. He would later move to Norwich and the University of East Anglia, where he established the chemistry department; after his retirement, he remained in Norwich.

Professor Sheppard was a member of the old Convivium group which dissolved in 1994. He became a subscriber and Editorial Advisor to *Appraisal*, attending a number of our conferences. Over the years, *Appraisal* published several of Professor Sheppard's book reviews and articles. He presented the last of these, on 'Polanyi's Philosophy of Science from the perspective of a practising scientist', in Nottingham at the 10th International Conference on Persons, August 2009. A number of us attended that conference; it was the last time we met him.

On behalf of the committee and membership of the British Personalist Forum, we extend our sympathies to Professor Sheppard's family. He will be sadly missed.

13th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PERSONS

Aug. 3rd to Aug. 7th, 2015

Boston University, Boston, MA, USA

CALL FOR PAPERS

Papers in any area or discipline are welcome, so long as their themes are of concern to the ideas and concepts of persons, personhood, and personality as a philosophical, theological, psychological, social, political, historical, creative or linguistic concern.

Papers must not exceed a length of 3000 words and should be prepared for blind review. In the e-mail sent with the submission, we require the following eight items:

1. word count -3000 words maximum
2. author's name
3. academic status (professor, unaffiliated, graduate student)
4. institutional affiliation (if any)
5. mailing address
6. e-mail address
7. the paper's title
8. an abstract -200 words maximum

Submission deadline **for abstracts** is MAY 25th, 2015. Abstracts will be accepted on that date, with full texts of paper due by July 1.

Submissions which do not include items 2-8 (if only abstract is being submitted) will be disqualified. Word count is due when full paper is submitted. No more than one submission by the same author will be considered.

Email as an attachment a copy of your paper and/or abstract in rich text format to: PersonsConference2015@gmail.com

Papers and/or abstracts will be reviewed by a committee. Notification of acceptance will be made via email in early June.

COMMENTATORS: Each paper will have a commentator. Those interested in commenting should send a note to PersonsConference2015@gmail.com by May 25th detailing availability and areas of interest. Persons whose papers are accepted will be expected to serve as commentators, if asked.

Copies of papers will be available by July 1st. Emails of authors will also be available for purposes of sending your commentary in advance of the conference.

CONFERENCE WEBSITE: For updates and information, visit our website: <http://bostonicp2015.com/>.

REGISTRATION: from noon on Mon. August 3rd. Further details about meals, schedules, and conference fees will be provided as they become available.

CONFERENCE HOUSING

1) **The Boston Common Hotel:** Conference Rate: \$169 per night (plus tax). This is within easy reach of Boston University. To book call 617-933-7700 and mention the International Conference on Persons to get the conference rate. Alternatively, visit the hotel website: <http://bostoncommonhotel.com/> and click 'BOOK NOW' on the main page. When asked for dates, please put August 3-7 (even if you plan to stay longer), Then choose the room that fits your needs. The next page will be for advance payment. This is non-refundable. In the "Special Requests" box, put that you are attending the International Conference on Persons and if you need additional days. You will be contacted for further adjustment of the reservation. **Space is limited, so book early.**

2) **Boston University:** Suites of 4 single-bed rooms with common area and limited kitchen facilities. Rate: \$67 per person per night. To book, email PersonsConference2015@gmail.com with the word "accommodations" in the subject line.

3) **The Boxer Hotel:** Rate: starting at about \$216 per night (no special Conference Rate available). This is located on the Green Line of the Boston T and is a straight and easy ride to Boston University. Bookings via the hotel website: <http://theboxerboston.com/>.

HERMETIC POETRY AND THE SECOND PERSON

Karl Simms

Abstract: Hermetic poetry, by eliding its contextual referents, makes problematic the hermeneutical concept of understanding one another through dialogue. This is particularly pronounced in such poetry's use of personal pronouns. This paper addresses this problem through a reading of selected hermetic poems against the background of Gadamer's literary aesthetics, especially his essay 'Who Am I and Who Are You?', to suggest that successful hermetic poetry reveals a particular kind of intersubjective truth, that the 'I' and 'You' can inhabit one another's positions.

Key words: Celan, Gadamer, hermeneutics, hermetic poetry, interpretation, intersubjectivity, pronouns, second person, truth, Yeats.

1. Introduction

We typically express our own personhood through first-person pronouns, and address other persons through second-person pronouns. Such pronouns therefore play an instrumental role in the conversation, or spoken dialogue, that Gadamer characterises as central to the process of reaching an understanding, through and because of which each person recognises the other's personhood. But in writing – as a consequence of writing's distancing effect (the writer is usually *de facto*, and always *de jure*, distanced in space and time from the person addressed by the writing) – the case is quite different: there is always an *assumption* on the writer's part, which may or may not turn out to be correct, of the identity of the addressee, and likewise the addressee, especially when receiving a written message from a stranger, can only form hypotheses as to the character of the writer and their true intentions, without the benefit of the confirmations of sincerity or authenticity that face-to-face encounters bring. These obstacles to understanding are more pronounced in the case of literature, where it is a defining characteristic of the genre for the writer to adopt a persona, and moreover to write for an imagined 'ideal reader', so that the status of the 'I' and the 'you' immediately becomes problematical. And in the case of hermetic poetry (poetry which deliberately obscures its 'aboutness', usually by elision of contextual references) these problems are intensified. The typical grammarian's definition of a pronoun is that it stands for a noun or noun phrase: the equally typical

technique of hermetic poetry is to leave unsaid *what* noun or noun phrase the pronoun stands for. Thus the pronoun becomes an originary replacement, replacing a noun or noun phrase that has never existed, or at least, not in instantiated form. In this paper I intend to tease out the implications of this for a philosophy of personhood, by tracing Gadamer's route through his general literary aesthetics as expressed in *Truth and Method* and 'Text and Interpretation', to the specific attempt at understanding Celan's hermetic poems he undertakes in 'Who Am I and Who Are You?'.¹

2. Hermeneutics of speech and writing

Hermetic poetry poses a double challenge for hermeneutics. Firstly, it challenges the very act of interpretation itself: faced with a hermetic poem, the reader's first question is: What does it mean? – and the answer, as a result of what the poem leaves unsaid, does not come easily. But secondly, hermetic poetry challenges the theoretical basis of contemporary hermeneutics as developed in the wake of Gadamer's *Truth and Method*. In contradistinction to Schleiermacher,² recourse to the biography, or presumed intentions, of the author are to have no place in the interpretation of a literary text, specifically, in determining what such a text *means*. For Gadamer, as he explains in his later essay 'Text and Interpretation', there are distinctions to be made between the interpretation of speech, the interpretation of texts in general, and the interpretation of specifically *literary* texts. In speech – say, a conversation – 'one tries to reach understanding through the give-and-take of discussion, which means that one searches for those words – and accompanies them with intonation and gesture – that one thinks will get through to the other' (Gadamer, 'Text', 172). Conversation has an 'openness' that allows, or is constituted by, a dialectics of dialogue, whereby each party makes themselves understood to the other and understands what the other means. All speech, one might say, is motivated by an underlying intention to be understood, and Gadamer praises ordinary language philosophy's concept of the 'speech act': that speech carries with it an illocutionary force, which is the linguistic manifestation of the intentions of the speaker (to inform, praise, blame, etc.).

Writing, meanwhile, makes the give-and-take of dialogue problematic, since those paralinguistic features are absent, as is the possibility of the

interlocutor asking for clarification or re-wording in order to get the meaning across. A *writer* has a difficult task: as Gadamer puts it, ‘as a writer one knows all of the problems of putting words into writing, and one is always steered by the advance picture one has of the recipient with whom one tries to reach a similar understanding’ (172). This of necessity requires some idealisation: my imagined interlocutors at the ‘now’ of this writing (Wednesday 5th March 2014) may not quite correspond to their (your, our) realisation at the ‘now’ of the delivery of this message (Saturday 8th March 2014).³ Further, it is the task of the reader ‘to attain the correct understanding of the tidings in the document’; ‘reading and understanding mean that the document is led back to its original authenticity’ (173) – a task made difficult if the writer has not been sufficiently clear. This is particularly important in the case of, for example, legal documents: a judge must always make a judgement that is consistent with the intended meaning of the documented law that is applicable to the case in hand. Gadamer characterises the accomplishment of this task as a ‘fusion of horizons’ (Gadamer, *Truth*, 305). The writer has an assumed understanding of an assumed reader in mind when writing, while the reader has an assumed intention of an assumed writer in mind when reading: each of these horizons is limited and radically separated from the other by the fact of the text’s being written, which is to say, by the distance in time and space that writing opens up (of which both Ricoeur and Derrida have much to say, of course).⁴ Understanding is constituted by a fusion of these horizons, but such an understanding cannot be complete or definitive, owing to the distanciation that is structural to the being-written of writing. This is why, in the case of legal discourse, there will be interminable interpretations of the law, and why a mediator between the two horizons (a judge) is necessary. In making a judgement, a judge does not merely weigh the respective merits of the case, but also the respective claims of what the assumed intention of the law is, against its readings by the respective parties.

3. Poetry and truth

‘But not in the case of *literature!*’, exclaims Gadamer (‘Text’, 180). When Gadamer writes of literature, he tends to slip seamlessly into writing of poetry (unlike Ricoeur, who slips seamlessly from ‘literature’ to ‘narrative’ to ‘fiction’). In *Truth and Method* Gadamer explicitly takes his cue for an ‘ontological’ conception of hermeneutics (by which I mean, a hermeneutics not determined by a recovery of the psychology of the other, *pace* Dilthey) from ¶32 of *Being and Time*,⁵ where Heidegger makes

the point that ‘Meaning is an *existentiale* of Dasein, not a property attaching to entities, lying “behind” them, or floating somewhere as an intermediate “domain”’ (193). Understanding, therefore, is ‘the expression of the existential *fore-structure* of Dasein itself’ (195), which leads to the virtuous circle of hermeneutics: in interpreting what something means, I return to (make explicit) that understanding which I must already have had in order to be able to venture such an interpretation. So long as I don’t allow myself to be waylaid by popular conceptions or my own fancy, and stay focussed on the things themselves as they are presented to my interpretation, this circle is virtuous, since in traversing it I fulfil the potential of my own Being: Dasein is the being capable of interpreting its own Being. But – notwithstanding his characterisation of man as the interpreting animal in the ‘Letter on Humanism’⁶ – Heidegger never returns to hermeneutics after *Being and Time*, unlike Gadamer, who built his career on it. The suspicion is that hermeneutics in Gadamer becomes mere assertion, asserting things *about* things from a position of presumed detachment, a slipping back into Kantian proposition-alising about facts rather than understanding things themselves. In short, Gadamer’s hermeneutics becomes “Heidegger-lite”, using the notion of the hermeneutic circle to counter both Schleiermacher’s assertion of authorial *Geist* as a key to understanding, and Dilthey’s scientific understanding, while still adhering to *description* as a mediation between what is meant by the producer of a discourse and what is meant by the receiver. And this gets to the nub of the scandal of Gadamer’s title for his *magnum opus*: of course Gadamer’s hermeneutics is a method! And of course science reveals a *certain kind* of truth, as Heidegger himself concedes.

But this characterisation does not do Gadamer full justice. What is less noticed about Gadamer is that the notion of truth – as unconcealment – that informs Gadamer’s title is derived from the later Heidegger, for whom the poem is what most purely speaks to us. By this Heidegger means that the poem is pure language, in that it is language that discloses truth, rather than language which makes (true or false) statements about things. For Heidegger, ‘who the author [of a poem] is remains unimportant’, precisely because the mastery of a masterful poem ‘consists precisely in this, that the poem can deny the poet’s person and name’.⁷ This is a more satisfying reason for not wishing to reconstruct the author’s intention than those given by Wimsatt and Beardsley, for example (the author’s intention is neither available nor desirable), or by

Barthes and Foucault (the author is an enlightenment construct for which a science of writing has no need), and which E. D. Hirsch assumes to be Gadamer's reason for denying authorial intention in the process of meaning-interpretation.⁸ It is more satisfying, because it is ontological rather than rational, by which I mean that it understands language not as merely something man uses in order to say things, but rather as something constitutive of the human, which we are likely to forget until poetry brings back our remembrance.

And so when Gadamer writes that *literature* (poetry) is different from other kinds of writing, it is because it does 'not disappear in our act of understanding [it], but instead stand[s] there confronting our normative claims, and stand[s] before every new way the text can speak' (Gadamer. 'Text', 180). And, Gadamer goes on, literary texts

are only authentically there when they come back into themselves. And when they do, they are *texts* in the original and authentic sense. The words of such texts are authentically there only in coming back to themselves. They fulfil the true meaning of the text, so to speak, from out of themselves: they speak (181).

This is what Gadamer calls the 'self-presentation of words' of literature, which, he says, 'is not easy to grasp correctly', since 'words in literary texts obviously still maintain their discursive meaning and carry the sense of a discourse that means something' (181), alongside their authentic being-there, which we must bear in mind when discussing Gadamer's essay on Celan, 'Who Am I and Who Are You?'

4. Yeats and the first person

In his Epilogue to the Revised Edition of his essay, Gadamer asks 'What must a reader know?' in order to interpret a poem (Gadamer, 'Who?', 164). This seems to me to be the most pressing question raised by the Heidegger-Gadamer approach to language – the approach to language *itself* – and the concomitant problem of how we are to interpret literature without recourse to what Gadamer calls 'special knowledge' about the life and times of the author. Of course, in this respect hermetic poetry is a heightened form of poetry, and poetry a heightened form of literature, in that it closes off the openness we discerned in the discourse of speech, such as a conversation. Poetry entails concentration of meaning; hermetic poetry in particular entails a concentration achieved by excluding the contextual semantic clues that words habitually carry with them. It is all very well for Heidegger to say that each word of Trakl's poem 'A Winter's Evening' is

comprehensible, insofar as we can look up each word of its composition in a dictionary and discover its respective meaning – but meaning resides in the whole, which is greater than the sum of its parts. It is the condensation-in-combination that makes hermetic poetry difficult – *hermetic*, precisely. And a particular way in which it achieves this is through the use of pronouns. People tend to think of hermetic poetry and minimalism, or at least brevity, as going hand in hand, but this is not necessarily so. Take this well-known poem by Yeats:⁹

NO SECOND TROY

Why should I blame her that she filled my days
With misery, or that she would of late
Have taught to men most violent ways,
Or hurled the little streets upon the great,
Had they but courage equal to desire?
What could have made her peaceful with a mind
That nobleness made simple as a fire,
With beauty like a tightened bow, a kind
That is not natural in an age like this,
Being high and solitary and most stern?
Why, what could she have done, being what she is?
Was there another Troy for her to burn?

This used to be an A-Level set text, and at school we were duly issued with the selection edited by A. Norman Jeffares,¹⁰ which explains that 'she' refers to Maud Gonne, with whom Yeats was unrequitedly in love, and who was a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, to which Yeats was not sympathetic. And so the poem 'means' that because Maud Gonne's essential being consists in her being a transcendently historical figure, she has no choice but to be what she is and act as she does, and so blaming her for (the consequences of) those actions would be futile on Yeats' part. But does this really get to the essence of the poem, what is essential to its meaning? I would like to suggest that it does not, and that what is essential to the poem can be gleaned by someone without the benefit of Jeffares' notes, or without knowing that the poem was written by W. B. Yeats. Surely the essential point here is the general point, that *someone* who has a noble mind that sets them apart from 'an age like this' is blameless for their actions, precisely because they transcend the historical contingencies that ordinary folks (the poetic 'I' included) are subjected to. Note that grasping this is aided by (although it is not strictly speaking necessary) a knowledge of what Troy was, thus facilitating a comparison with Helen, and a recognition of 'nobleness' as an allusion to 'the noble' in Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morals*.¹¹ But these two examples are of knowing the meanings of the words of the poem, both their denotations and connotations. It is quite otherwise with the pronouns 'I' and 'my' and 'she' and 'her'.

Here, we need only know their general meaning (i.e., whoever is speaking in the case of 'I'); knowledge of the particular meaning (that 'I' refers to Yeats and 'she' refers to Maud Gonne) is irrelevant. In fact, we can go further: it positively distorts the meaning of the poem to ascribe 'I' and 'she' to Yeats and Gonne respectively. The poem is only trivially about W. B. Yeats and Maud Gonne; it is really about historical forces being determined by a noble who is nevertheless detached from them. It is in this way that this poem, as Gadamer says of poems generally, 'speaks to us all'.

But the Yeats poem is written in the first person and addressed to a third person. This leads to a certain intrusion of the particular meaning into the general, even if we do not know, internal to the poem itself, to whom the 'I' refers. It is still a poetic 'I' writing about *himself* (and only secondarily about 'her'): if the poem speaks to us all by being about the noble transcendence of the contingencies of history, we can only appreciate this through an identification with the 'I'. Implicitly we are invited to share the judgement that 'she' is blameless; 'she' is not 'I', is other than 'I', and 'I' have an attitude towards 'her'. And once we implicitly share this judgement, we implicitly share in the self-pity that underlies the poem: the blamelessness of 'her' is an inverted pity towards 'I'. But I don't feel self-pity! – Or at least, self-pity here arises out of this situation, the situation of the poem. The poem does not reveal self-pity to be an essential part of the human condition, but rather as being consequent on having one's days filled with misery by a particular person, a circumstance not necessarily endured by everyone. So there is one crucial aspect in which the poem does not speak to us all, after all. Or, as Gadamer puts it:

No reader can understand without specialties, and yet every reader understands only when the specialty of the occasion is sublated by the universality of occasionality. This means that the poem does not bring to language a specific, unique occurrence known only to witnesses or those enlightened by the poet directly. It means that every reader can respond to what the language gesture conjures up, as if it were an offer (134).¹²

5. Celan and the second person

In order really to approach a 'speaking to us all' in poetry, the second person, the 'you', is required. This accounts for Gadamer's special interest in Celan. Gadamer eschews the approach of Peter Szondi, Celan's friend and literary executor, who uses Celan's correspondence and other papers, including working drafts of his poems, as well as what Szondi knew of Celan's life generally, to reconstruct the

'meanings' of Celan's poems, which is to say, to fill in all of the details that the hermetic curtailments of Celan's poetry excluded. Szondi de-hermeticises Celan's work, but in so doing we might say he de-hermeneuticises it (the common root of 'hermetic' and 'hermeneutic' is a clue here): in making Celan's text open again, interpretation is closed off. The result is Jeffares' notes to Yeats writ large, and no longer *poetry* according to the Heidegger-Gadamer definition.

Thus it is that in reading Celan's poem sequence 'Breath-Crystal', Gadamer does 'not know at the outset, on the basis of any distanced overview or preview, what I or You means here, or whether I is the I of the poet referring to himself, or the I that is each of us. That is what we must learn' (70). But 'Breath-Crystal' comprises a constant interplay of 'I' and 'You'; so that a reading of the sequence in and of itself reveals that the poetic 'I' is included in the 'You', and conversely whoever 'You' is is invited to take the place of the 'I'.¹³ Take, for example, the following poem:

IN THE STREAMS north of the future
I cast the net, which you
hesitantly load
with stone-written
shadows

(Celan, cited in Gadamer, 'Who?', 83).

As throughout, Gadamer asks, 'Who am I? And who are you?'. Gadamer answers the first question first:

The I is a fisherman who casts the net. Casting the net is an act of pure expectation. Whoever has cast the net has done everything he can do, and he must wait and see if something is caught.... This is apparently a statement about an I with very special expectations. It expects what is to come at a point where no expectation from experience extends (83-84).

But here is Gadamer's telling remark, which has the effect of sublating the particular meaning of the 'I' here beneath the general, 'whoever is using the word 'I':

But doesn't every I have such expectations? Is there not something in every I which reaches out into a future that lies beyond what can be counted on in advance? This I, so different from the others, is precisely the I of any individual (84).

I repeat Gadamer's word 'sublated' advisedly, since Gadamer's reading shows that Celan's use of the word 'I' here, while being applicable to any reader in terms of the description of experience of which it is metonymic, *through* that description nonetheless shows that any I refers to an individual. The sense of an individual is retained in the general meaning of the 'I'. Thus when we speak of a

'personal pronoun' in hermetic poetry, or at least in the poetry of Celan, it is not merely in the trivial sense that the pronoun stands for a particular person, but rather also that the pronoun names personhood, signals what it is to be a person in the sense of being an individual who participates in the shared experience of the 'I'.

But we have still not got around to the 'you'. As Gadamer points out, 'The artfully drawn arc of this poem ... rests on the fact that the I is not alone and cannot haul the catch in by itself. It needs the You' (84). Answering his question, Who is the You?, Gadamer writes:

It almost sounds as if someone here knows just how much the I can be loaded, just how much the aspiring heart of human beings can endure without permitting hope to recede.... What is really present in these verses, and what lends reality to the I, is the interplay between I and you that promises a catch (85).

Seen in this way, Gadamer has managed to turn the hermeneutic circle, since the interplay between I and you suggests that the 'catch' is poetic understanding itself. Casting the net is a metaphor for seeking the right poetic word. Thus Celan's poem is really about what we initially suspected it was really about, namely itself or, more particularly (perhaps we should say more generally) about what constitutes poetic understanding, or the truth of poetry. But in arriving at this interpretation, Gadamer's, and our, understanding have been enhanced. As a result of reading the poem, we now know that, in Gadamer's words, 'the right word, immortalised by the poet, is not his special artistic achievement, but more generally, a symbol of the possibilities of human experience, one that permits the reader to be the I, that is, the poet' (86). The poet surrenders here any claim to genius after the Romantic model, and reading the poet must concomitantly surrender any claim to understanding his meaning by reconstructing that genius after the manner of Schleiermacher. The truth of the poem is that the I of the poet and the You of the reader are interchangeable, or at least can inhabit one another's positions. The meaning of the poem is arrived at by poet and reader working in communion, and that is what the poem means. In Gadamer's own words, 'The poem provides its own answer to [the] question [of Who am I and who are you?] by keeping it open' (86).

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Notes

1. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, London: 2nd rev. edn. 2004; 'Text and Interpretation', trans. Richard E. Palmer and Dennis Schmidt, in *The Gadamer*

- Reader: a bouquet of the later writings*, ed. Richard E. Palmer, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007, 156-91; 'Who Am I and Who Are You?', in *Gadamer on Celan: 'who am I and who are you?' and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. Richard Heinemann and Bruce Krajewski, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997, 61-165.
2. Cf., e.g., Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and criticism*, in *Hermeneutics and criticism and other writings*, trans. and ed. Andrew Bowie, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998: 1-224; 144.
 3. As read at the 2014 Annual Personalist Workshop, Oxford.
 4. Cf., e.g., Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation theory: discourse and the surplus of meaning*, Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976, 37-44; *The conflict of interpretations: essays in hermeneutics*, London: Athlone, 1989, 61-76; *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*, London: Athlone, 1991, 101-63; Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2nd edn. 1997.
 5. Martin Heidegger, *Being and time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Oxford: Blackwell, 1962, 188-95 ('Understanding and Interpretation').
 6. Martin Heidegger, 'Letter on "Humanism"', trans. Frank A. Capuzzi, in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 239-68.
 7. Martin Heidegger, 'Language', in *Poetry, Language, thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, New York: Harper, 1971, 187-210; 195.
 8. Cf. William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, 'The intentional fallacy', in W. K. Wimsatt, *The verbal icon: studies in the meaning of poetry*, Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954, 3-20; Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image, music, text*, trans. and ed. Stephen Heath, London: Fontana 1977, 142-48; Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?', in *Language, counter-memory, practice: selected essays and interviews*, trans. and ed. Donald F. Bouchard, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977, 113-38; E. D. Hirsch Jr., 'Appendix I: Objective Interpretation', and 'Appendix II: Gadamer's Theory of Interpretation', in *Validity in interpretation*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967, 209-44 and 245-64.
 9. W. B. Yeats, 'No Second Troy', in *The collected poems of W. B. Yeats*, London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2nd edn. 1950, 101.
 10. W. B. Yeats, *Selected Poetry*, ed. A. Norman Jeffares, London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1964.
 11. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The genealogy of morals*, trans. Horace B. Samuel, ed. T. N. R. Rogers, New York: Dover, 2003.
 12. Cf. the discussion by Donatella Ester di Cesare, 'The Dialogue of Poetry', in *Utopia of understanding: between Babel and Auschwitz*, trans. Niall Keane, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012, 125-36.
 13. According to Chris Lawn, this reveals language at its most playful, a characteristic of language that is present even in everyday conversation, precisely at

the points at which it negotiates between 'I' and 'you'. This would appear to be confirmed by an empirical study by Katie Wales, who writes of the pronoun 'you' in present-day English that it is 'strongly egocentric in its orientation', and lists various examples where 'you' could easily be replaced by *I*. Thus, says Lawn, 'with the usual semantic reference points [located by *I* and *you*] distorted and dislocated in [a] poem[,] the hermeneutical task is more demanding'. See Chris Lawn, *Wittgenstein and Gadamer: towards a post-analytic philosophy of language* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 130, and Katie Wales, *Personal pronouns in present-day English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 79.

WITTGENSTEIN'S VITAL LIE

Charles Conti

Abstract: Feuerbach and Wittgenstein were ethicists of the highest order: what Wittgenstein discovered in his troubled soul was that 'acrostic of consciousness' Feuerbach located in species-affiliations. Both men shared a psychologically informed hermeneutic and a philosophically enlightened methodology. They found 'otherness' as intrinsic to religion and the development of human personality; also, the 'guiding light' to philosophical reflection. Wittgenstein thus illustrates Feuerbach's symbiosis of anthropo- theology; Feuerbach confirms the psycho-spiritual nature of Wittgenstein's life and work.

Key words: Wittgenstein, Feuerbach, creative ambivalence, logic of intending, morality, narrative selfhood, personal identity, religion, social identity.

'... every advance in religion is therefore a deeper self-knowledge.'

(Ludwig Feuerbach,
The Essence of Christianity, 13)

1. Preface

As anyone who has tried to write quickly learns, a book is a living organism and often seems to have a mind of its own. Writing compels us. In the writerly mode, Farrer described it 'like trying to tear a bone away from a dog'. Montaigne confessed: 'I have no more made my book, than my book has made me'.¹

Postmodernists have run hard-and-fast with this, the supposed 'truth' of authorship where the writing feels almost on 'automatic-pilot'. Of course, this is only a half-truth. As with any art-form, inspiration is 90% perspiration.

Known as the 'no-ownership view of the self', literary theorists have used the book's alleged autonomy to correct the 'intentionalist fallacy'. This mouthful assumes that the private or 'hidden intentions' of the writer are crucial to unlocking the meaning of any text, so belong somewhat exclusively to the author; in consequence, the reader is effectively locked-out who then has to search long-and-hard for what the author *really* meant, only to be gratified when the private trapdoor springs open and grants that 'Eureka' moment.

There is, of course, a fallacy within this fallacy. *Private* intentions are never what intentions are about. Certainly not what they are *all* about. Only in part. Opening the author's mouth wider, to size-up

the ferocity of his bite – and, in light of that image, I'm sure women won't mind the gender-bender – intentions are not mealy-mouthed actions: rather, they are designed to be performed in the wonderful wide amphitheatre of a world; never the inner stage of the mind; 'out there' in the real world, where categories of public and private overlap, and issues of what is 'public' and what is 'private' struggle for access or prefer to stay hidden, against the trend of social identity.

2. Public versus private: a false dichotomy

The 'fact' of public identity raises an even more complex matter, against the grain of the 'intentionalist fallacy'. 'How do I understand my own complexity unless I am willing to share it with others?'² Apparently, such a question troubled Wittgenstein. Rush Rhees recalls the 'Vienna sage' avidly hunting for that passage in Plato's *Phaedrus* where Socrates says he doesn't so much investigate *things*, but himself *in relation to things*. Plato raises this question in order to allow Socrates, his 'mouthpiece', to decide 'whether I am a monster more complicated and more furious than Typhon or a gentler and simpler creature.'³ Non-plussed (in the English sense of unsure how to react), Rhees recorded: 'Wittgenstein said that he wondered this about himself.'⁴

This startled me, or should I say caught my attention, almost as much as when I read the candid words of Martin Buber who confessed: 'Strictly speaking I do not love myself; rather, I love *her*, the world, who comes and offers me a pair of fingers.' What honesty, I thought; and doesn't it ring true. It certainly describes the chasm in my soul; that heavy burden of consciousness I have felt ever since childhood, divided as between acts of spontaneity like love and indignation and righteous vendettas I feel for this 'place', supposed home of the gods of spires and men-urettes whose Mensa-rating entitles them to full humanity, they think.

Let me draw a curtain o'er my troubled past with a public confession.

Between passion and spontaneity lies the curfew of moral surveillance which increasingly tolls the knell of departing days in my case; and clearly, I feel the need to 'be myself' and eructate before I die and become a dead, deceased, or demised parrot merely mouthing other's 'truths', Farrer's dummy. And before I came across that passage from Witt-

genstein, I thought I was unique in deliberately cultivating 'a non-essentialist identity' – as I eventually learnt to call it – in order to maximise social mobility and facilitate greater flexibility. Or so I told myself to the extent I thought I knew what I was doing, but ever since Freud, 'to think' and 'to know', are not quite the same.

I *thought* I knew what I was doing in undoing myself, but didn't know I *couldn't* know such things. Not entirely.

Enter, the unconscious.

But long before I read Freud and wrestled with the overgrowth of my underworld, I was aware that, recognising my own 'splitness' enabled me to live more readily with myself. For at a very early age it occurred to me that if I learned to cope with ambivalence, even actively cultivated it – as properly brought-up sinners were taught to think in the tradition in which I was raised; doctrines which even then I found morally repugnant, especially the contrast between the *guilt* which comes from self-love and the loathing which comes from being *unaware* of the sin of self-love which supposedly lay behind the guilt we *all* inherited from Adam, who blamed Eve, who blamed the snake, who, if only that silly serpent read Freud, might have blamed it all on a rather unfortunate phallic shape. And then what would poor men have to wrestle with? The hole is their soul or how to tuck pork sausages in blankets?

If, thought I to myself, self-love and self-loathing were natural to the child I already was given the surveillance of that kind of God who seemed far worse than just a disapproving Daddy, I would simply 'go with the flow' and cultivate a tension between good and bad in order to escape vicious theological determination which was levied on me from without. Thus began my flirtation with disorderly thoughts. Besides, did not one of adopted sisters had tight curly red hair, and act the role of the devil; while the other, had straight, blond hair, and played the part of the angel; 'goody two-shoes' to her other 'Sis'. Whereas I went both ways. And that is not a Freudian slip or a closet disclosure!

Disorderly thoughts for overly slick logic. Given *that* sort of a corrupt 'DNA' inherited from Adam and the fact that I was a down-and-outer one minute whilst a choir-boy the next, inserting a polite 't' in my Americana, I thought I wouldn't then have to appease my Church's need to be a shining witness to the Truth of things which embarrassed me way back then, never being naïve enough to be conned by the shocking simplicities which proceeded out of the mouth of the 'preacher-man' who swished up the aisle like Mom but bellowed like Dad the moment he stepped into the pulpit. I secretly hoped my doubts

would disqualify me from becoming 'a woe-man of the cloth' since I obviously felt the heavy hands of 'divine calling' from an early age. After all, hadn't I been a near-miraculous conception, after five years of careful planning. And then afterwards, when the war finally subsided and urgency increased my Mother's desire 'to be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth' – with Italian *bambini* of course – it stymied all natural processes.

And so, it was, that after much prayer and a tiny placebo administered by Dr. Altrudo, my Father's cousin, I became an 'I'; a wickedly sinful ego; all unbeknownst to me. But I would quickly learn the 'truth' of the human condition and just as quickly rebelled. Known as one of the 'three worst kids in Sunday School' – to my Father's dismay – I reckoned that if I inhabited a darker soul, I hoped I wouldn't qualify for all those prescribed roles sincere Christians lay on children with such heavy hands; including the bleeding hands of Jesus.

No wonder I regarded it a stroke of genius for Buber to love *her*, the world; she who comes and offers a pair of fingers. Here was a man in touch with a gentler soul! And later, when I began to teach literature as the disguised language of the gods, Buber's 'I/Thou' would remind me of Dion's words in 'The Great God Brown that 'only his Mother and prostitute Cybil could touch him with clawing'.

Imagine giving the redemptive role to a woman; a Redemptress! Right on, Dion! You must have had a Mother like mine.

And so, under the banner of 'If any person would gain their life, they must learn to give it up', I took on the heavy burden of converting religious doctrines which I *still* find absurd into an agapeistic love-code – 'she who comes and offers me a pair of fingers' – which I *wanted* to be worthy of because such identity is surely guided by a nurturant love-model than a punitive, authoritarian, insensitive, phallic, sombre, overbearing ethos.

Like St. Paul, I suppose I was learning to 'kick against the pricks'. And when eventually I read Feuerbach and Farrer, who pretty much did the same thing with their own pietistical legacy, I felt I had always been on the right track. And in light of that retrospect, I realise why I approve so much Wittgenstein's appreciation of Lessing's remark:

If God held closed in his right hand all truth, and in his left, the single and untiring striving after truth... and said to me: Choose! I should fall humbly before his left hand and say: Father grant me! The pure truth is for you alone.⁵

In fact, as I hope to show, that's not strong enough for how or why Wittgenstein did philosophy.

3. *Public versus Private: a False Dichotomy*⁶

Apparently, one source of Wittgenstein's despair or melancholy was his alleged 'Jewishness'; a sense of alienation which confuses the anomie *within* with the enemy *without*. 'Anomie'? Social scientists – who are really quite unsociable, reducing man and society to a 'science', seven succinct categories if memory serves me – such pseudo-scientists define 'anomie' as 'rootlessness' – a condition of individuals characterised by a breakdown or absence of conventional social norms, especially as in the case of 'uprooted people'. As another Jew, Gillian Rose, an altogether different kind of sociologist, one with an open soul, put it: anomie as a sense of 'longing to belong'. And what I sense, after many pages of working at this – about forty – all eliminated in the interests of space and time, is that Wittgenstein was certainly an un-integrated person; an identity at odds with itself, who constantly sought re-integration with himself in terms of interpolated religion; but this is best understood in Feuerbachian terms as the reclamative potential of the transformative grammars of God and grace. And that means, the impact certain words have on the soul which incorporate religious sensibilities into everyday use.

There you have my Wittgensteinian thesis in a nutshell: how language-use transforms the language-user.

In Wittgenstein's case, any alleged Jewishness represents a divided soul – something we all have, but which only certain types have built into a religion, race, creed, ethos, and nation. *The Divided Self* (as R. D. Laing recognised) is *not* alien to itself, but an intangible dynamic which is 'for the good' when creative disequilibrium is allowed freer reign to influence the achievements of a Wittgenstein or a Kierkegaard, his nearest psycho-twin; both of whom used a sense of psychological incompleteness to introduce change and dynamism in their life and their work. And that's the Wittgensteinian gem inside Feuerbach's outer shell and where the kernel of personalist truth lies.

Am I being insensitive for raising the issue of non-assimilation as *possibly* responsible for the split in Wittgenstein's soul; an accusation of anti-Semitism which, to my mind, is too readily seized by those whose own skull-cap is no crowning glory but more like a head-dress gone slightly askew. Besides, have I not admitted my own 'rented soul', putting my estimable worth in your hands by delivery of this rather unusual paper? And have I not quoted the Jewish existentialist Buber to similar effect? And has not the *entire* school of postmodern thought reminded us we are *all* radically divided?

Is it not the case – and it's a rhetorical question which you avoid at your own risk – a divided soul is *the* human condition?

But if you think I am being indelicate here, citing the use of Wittgenstein's alleged 'Jewishness' as an analogue for his lack of self-integration, you would do well to read Julia Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves*; a brilliant treatise on reflexive psychology where, on the very first page of her compelling analysis, she reminds us that if we don't acknowledge 'the enemy within', we have a tendency to vilify 'the "other" without'; using projection as a form of compensation for our own lack of unity; just where individual or national paranoia sets in. We do this (she surmises) to gloss or paste-over the cracks of our own essential disharmony. Rather than acknowledge the simple truth of the adage, 'Man is broken; we live by mending; the grace of others is glue', unhealthy souls tend to think the solution to personal ambiguity lies in some form of self-love or social isolation, so come to love a 'self' which *isn't* really one and, even in our most fundamental signs or experience of unification, fails to recognise 'The sex which is not one' is, in fact, *all* of us.

I reckon that to the extent Wittgenstein used any alleged 'Jewishness' to express a lack of wholeness, it was to convey a sense of lack of integration he couldn't articulate any other way. So, let's soldier on – and not as Christian soldiers marching as to flaming wars upon rumours of wars.

Whether an iconic Jew, one in name only, or an ironic one, by virtue of some deep sense of alienation Wittgenstein carried with him for reasons about which we can only speculate, Wittgenstein habitually described his own life as 'living a lie',⁷ which far too many have associated with Jewishness (to make things easy for themselves). What is undoubtedly the case is that, for Wittgenstein, *not* 'living a lie' took on a religious aura basic to what Feuerbach might describe as the transfiguration of flesh into spirit or the weakness of flesh into the transcendence of Spirit. And I use 'case' wittingly as relevant to a person who knew all about not putting things 'in their case' or proper boxes.

To put it short and sweet – *unsweetened* by a sacrificial ram caught in the bushes – I am convinced Wittgenstein's need for love and recognition could not be met or assuaged by his superior intellect, and, if anything, his 'genius' actually got in the way of his quest for full humanity, so that Wittgenstein constantly strove to dismantle a powerful ego which could be insolent, intimidating, and downright insufferable at times.

Unlike most philosophers who fail to see the connection between life and work, a reader of his

work simply cannot ignore this correlation if one is to understand Wittgenstein, and, if anything, whose work was an attempt to mirror his life in its more transcendental zones; a thoughtful mind in search for a that unity of apperception which tends to *unite* the language of psychology and philosophy.

Well in advance of the postmodern project of deconstructing 'the self, Wittgenstein described his consciousness as in the process of needing 'dissembling'. Commenting on the way of 'the little ease', Rhees writes: 'In 1931 Wittgenstein was interested in the idea of writing an autobiography as a way of trying to recognise the truth about oneself – or of dissembling.'⁸ The question is: Is 'dissembling' 'a stepping back in order to leap the better'; or an acquiescence unto radical dissolution; the recognition that, strangely, we live a life unto death, as Heidegger embalmed the *Angst* of phenomenology before the body was not yet cold)? Hegel's 'dialectic' is a better 'read'. Much as deconstruction is the prolegomenon to constructive thought, 'dissembling' as a form of creative *reassembling*. How I would love to launch into Freud at this point, to work out the tension between the death-instinct and the life-force better than he did, but suffice it to say the greater the need to 'dissemble', the greater the fear of death as its principle agent and so the more passionate the need to recreate while one has time.

I suspect it was something like this creative disequilibrium which drove Wittgenstein's life and fuelled his work.

As to the source of the schism, I like Plato's mythology. We once had four arms and four legs and, despite the extensive pseudopodia all akimbo, rolled round the earth great delight much to the jealousy of the gods who whacked us in half, whereupon we spend the rest of our life looking for that missing other of us. This might answer Dr. Anderson's question posed to me some time ago. 'Just who is the other Charles?' Obviously something, or better, *somebody* I feel to be a missing part of me; who is 'not me', nor entirely *other* than me, but who I'd rather not live without.

Ray Monk recognised Wittgenstein's alleged 'Jewishness' was better described as lack of psychic wholeness, and, bless him, even had the courage to present it as a *spiritual* struggle.

It seems, then, that interest in Wittgenstein, great though it is, suffers from an unfortunate polarity between those who study his work in isolation from his life, and those who find his life fascinating but his work unintelligible.... The aim of this book is to bridge that gap. By describing the life and the work in the one narrative, I hope to make it clear how this work came from this man, to show – what many who read Wittgenstein's work instinctively feel – the unity of

his philosophical concerns with his emotional and spiritual life.⁹

Here we see the 'reinforcement' between life and work as a sort of creative 'reassembling'.

Now it seems almost a profanation to challenge Monk's clarity of vision, but if anything seems obvious to me (after reading numerous recollections of family and friends) it was the *disharmony* of Wittgenstein's emotional and spiritual life which strangely motivated him; and it is here where the link with Feuerbach becomes interesting. And the reason I say this is *not* because Wittgenstein always seemed right on the edge of a nervous breakdown, but because he was always right on the verge of realising but never quite fulfilling, the transformative potential which his own 'theory' of the *praxis* of language should have released. It's as if, in his heart of hearts, Wittgenstein *understood* the inner dynamic of religious language, but could not *access* it for himself, caught up in logic as he was.

Let's drop down a level to see if we get at this.

4. *Ethicality as to 'the glorification of gods'*

It is surely significant that Wittgenstein claimed *all he wrote was for the glory of God*. Or he would have wished it so. On the verge of his trip to visit Norman Malcolm in Cornell, Wittgenstein said to Drury:

I have had a letter from an old friend in Austria, a priest. In it he says he hopes my work will go well, if it should be God's will. Now that is all I want: if it should be God's will. Bach wrote on the title page of his *Orgelbuchlein*, 'To the glory of the most high God, and that my neighbour may be benefited thereby.' That is what I should have liked to say about my work.¹⁰

And while you are sitting there struggling to catch your breath – 'suckin wind' as Americans prefer to say – let me highlight the *ethical* dimension of Wittgenstein's tribute to God expressed as, 'To the glory of God *so my neighbour may benefit thereby*'.

To Monk and others, ethicality was by far the more important aspect of philosophy to Wittgenstein, and why I suggest Wittgenstein and Feuerbach were or are on the same page metaphysically speaking. You don't judge a book by its cover but by the contents 'brooked' by putting the book's philosophy to practice; especially if your name stands for 'fierybrook' or a 'witty stein' or the 'full-measure of words. Which Wittgenstein wasn't; his family considered him 'slow'; the laughing-stock of the family taken for a 'genius' by Cambridge *intelligentsia*.

Given the blockage intelligence seemed to put in the way of his socio-spiritual development, Wittgenstein seemed unable to direct his vital life-energies *away from* disputatious logic; that which seemed to want to ensnare him. Yet it strikes me that the need for self-transcendence was always there, as a latent, driving force. He constantly spoke of change: – to his character, demeanour, deportment, and very self; so remarked, ‘in doing philosophy you have got to be ready constantly to change the direction in which you are moving.’¹¹ In the introduction to the *Philosophical Remarks*, he wrote:

I would like to say, “This book is written to the glory of God”, but nowadays this would be the trick of a cheat, i.e., it would not be correctly understood. It means the book was written in good will [or in good faith], and so far as it was not, but was written from vanity, etc., the author would wish to see it condemned. He [Wittgenstein, himself] cannot make it more free of these impurities than he is himself.¹²

But, of course, the gods just might help, as Wittgenstein recognised and Feuerbach cleansed of impurities or prepared the way for in *The Essence of Christianity*. In this passage, Wittgenstein admits his life reflects itself in the work and *vice versa*; that work shows itself in the quality of life. That is how both Feuerbach and Gregory of Nyssa interwove them, as I learned from one of my doctoral students, Dr. Wendy Nicholson. Here’s how Drury evaluated it:

Now these remarks at once raise for me the question as to whether there are not dimensions in Wittgenstein’s thought that are still largely being ignored.¹³

What is possibly ‘ignored’ is that the *limits* of language fail to point to an *ethical* dimension because the limitations of language get stuck in logical minutiae which are unable to convey the beauty of non-propositional truths such as ‘the sublime’ or ‘the ethicality of “the Good”’, or the ‘ecstasy of art’; all of those things that mean so much to humans and the topics Logical Positivism banned from the agenda back then; ethics, aesthetics, and religion. And don’t forget the sensuousness of poetry (which I’ve had to eliminate from this paper whose linguistic lace is certainly better than the tropes or popery of logical puzzles).

But, let’s begin with the beginnings of the seedlings of spirituality in Wittgenstein.

5. *Selective versus Agoraphobic Jewry*

Perhaps the best way of gaining access to his spiritual sensuality or sensitivities, is give you an analogy from Gillian Rose, another cosmopolitan Jew who, like Wittgenstein, benefited in direct proportion

to *not* feeling completely at home with herself. Fascinatingly, Gillian’s book was described for as ‘a love song and a work song’, the same combination Wittgenstein strove for. *Love’s Work* (wrote one reviewer on the coverleaf) is as ‘deeply lyrical’ as it is ‘mystical’ and both Wittgenstein and Gillian certainly possessed a haunting personality. If you haven’t read this extraordinary autobiography, start with Gillian’s experience of fragmentation when she spied a Protestant wedding in the middle of Stoke Newington, a bleak, pallid, repressive Jewish orthodox community.

I did not realise how deeply I had become accustomed to this neighbourhood iconography of the holy community, living in the midst of that peculiarly dense piety of popular Kabbalah, which enjoins the men – and only the men – to return the divine sparks to the creator in ritual song and dance, until one day, looking out of the window of the flat, I saw a wedding party arrive at the block of flats on the opposite side of the road. Not an Hasidic wedding, an ordinary English wedding. What struck me at once was the lightness of the vision: slender, young bridesmaids in short, white, muslin dresses with loose, bare limbs, the adults attired in the pastel hues of matrimonial finery, and the commingling of the sexes in easy, high spirits, all on their way from the church ceremony to the jollifications of the reception. My disinterested perception of this happy procession was brusquely interrupted by the loud irruption of a sub-human howling, the source of which was unlocatable. It was howling as if from a dark, dank cave, where some deformed brute had been chained and tempted since time immemorial. The howling did not cease even after the last of the wedding party had disappeared from view.

It was I who was howling, in utter dissociation from myself, the paroxysm provoked by the vivacious contrast between the enviroing Judaism and the epiphany of Protestants, the customary, laborious everydayness broken by the moment of marriage, the cloaks of the clandestine pious cleaved by the costumes of those weightless, redeemed beings. To this day, I cannot go to family weddings.¹⁴

How many of us could be so honest with our broken souls?

This sense of negotiating an identity *for oneself* is, talking like an academic now, crucial to understanding Wittgenstein’s disquiet and/or urgency to ‘dissemble’. And, to repeat, negotiating an identity with others is *not* the result of merely being an alienated or isolated Jew, but is fundamental to persons in general. Mutual interconstitutivity is *the* human condition – if you can get your tongue around it, and that *is*, I’m afraid, a cunning Freudian slip, since there’s many a nip between chalice and lips, whether on the cusp of labia majora or wayside temples of minora. In the psychic sense in which we

are *all* disjointed subjects, Wittgenstein needed to settle with himself in order to live with himself; even if only to accept himself as 'riven', 'driven', or an occupant of a 'striven' soul.

Kristeva's corrective to disjointed self-love – if that is what we are dealing with here and not a Wittgenstein keen on out-Englishing the English in eccentricity – is that if we fail to acknowledge our most *fundamental drive* is for self-overcoming in lieu of some form of alliance with others – dalliance does even better – it is only natural or to be expected that we will locate the enemy 'out there', someone who is *not* kith or kin; who is beyond our ken: an 'alien-other' who threatens us from 'outside' whether 'the stranger' emanates from Jackdaw Nazism or that dark, dank underground cave known as 'the unconscious', including those who live in condemned ghettos for whatever reason, by design or default, and are therefore an unknown other, so easy to vilify. This includes those who live in a religious enclave as well as academic hothouses, all threatened by the unknown other 'outside' or 'beyond'; the very thing which drove them into seclusion in the first place as in Dostoevsky's 'Underground Man', lack of social accord.

Perhaps 'the unconscious' *is* the source of 'the demonic' after all. But if so, it is not by direct means but by refusing to give hospitality to 'angels unawares' (if you know the Bible story).

This is how Kristeva epitomises the issue of non-assimilation for *all* broke-back psychic types such as you and I, a self 'experiencing hatred', with or without the hyphen. Or is it you and me? Or me and Thee? Certainly not misanthropic Jewry.

The point I'm making using Julia Kristeva's strangers to ourselves has another twist in the tail. If Wittgenstein did use the alleged villainy of his *own* anti-Semitism – which ran strong in his family after they converted to Christianity – it was not to forefend himself but to *amend* himself. That is to say, he used Semitism as a convenient scapegoat to keep alive the tension he found no other way of polarising which allowed him to play judge and jury to itself – certainly could not be resolved in terms of binary logic or bigotry, whether 'pro-Semitic' or anti-Gentilic, or the other way 'round. Nor is such 'rough justice' administered to oneself entirely bad. Wittgenstein used Jewishness as a *psychological* commentary on a certain 'state of mind' which did not want to feel entirely integrated. It is reminiscent of the pleasure I used to take when I signed in at the local police station annually as a 'Registered Alien' which irony doubled when my passport was finally stamped, 'landing conditions removed'. I could now come and go from Mars at will.

So goes Wittgenstein's protestations. I am not whole; you cannot put me in that box or 'case'; in any simple category. I do not *wish* to be known; don't pigeon-hole me. Do *not* take my soma! Rather like the African natives reaction to the camera; 'casements' might steal one's soul.

Perhaps that's why Wittgenstein was so taken with the story of Rumpelstiltskin. Imagine, someone whose name and identity was *unknown*. I suspect that's the way he wanted it, thinking it worked best for him. It didn't.

According to Rhees, Wittgenstein wrestled with a perennial need for forgiveness in an attempt to rid himself of 'self-deception regarding his own failings'. *Apropos* the above, most friends assumed Wittgenstein was three-quarters Gentile and only one quarter Jewish, when the proportions were actually the other way around and, according to Rhees, Wittgenstein made no effort to correct the misapprehension whenever it was mentioned.

Rhees doesn't speculate on what Wittgenstein felt he was hiding by such an insidious even invidious misapprehension which is actually a mathematical distortion even on Maternal bloodlines; worsened if 'Jewishness' is a mindset or culture, not its own biological pogrom for ethnic selectivity which was set in place by overly-circumcised policies of non-assimilation originating 'from day one', especially since Wittgenstein was brought up a second-generation Catholic who learnt much from another enlightened Vienna Jew, Otto Weininger, and he was himself as antipathetic to pro-religion or conventional religion, as he was intensely sympathetic to using religion *ethically*, constructively.

I will ask one simple question of present-day Jewry who might prickle here? At what cost are ancient religions worth preserving? And I will make one moral comment: On the current mathematics of Zionist 'morality', an 'eye-for-an-eye-ethic' – never again! – it will leave us all spiritually blind, as well as take with it two thousand Semitic Palestinian neighbours on a regular basis, mostly innocent women and children, where the current killing ratio is 2000 to 1. And when we reach the expiation of six million Jews, will there be a sudden change of morality noticeable in the State of Israel? Or must we then start on the nine million Russians and twenty-one million casualties of the second world-war in general? Isn't it time Jewishness challenges religious rites of purification made into an intolerable State religion?

Let's avoid this bear-trap – conveniently baited as moral blackmail – that paranoiac pro-Semitism which is as much anti-Gentilic as 'anti-other' as anti-Semitism is undoubtedly evil, horrendously so,

and transpose religious ideology into practical *morality* since that is precisely what Wittgenstein wanted to do with philosophy and what Feuerbach succeeded at doing with his 'species-oriented' religion.

As intimated, Wittgenstein *might* have found in Judaism a symbol for lack of integration; one will never know. If so, the risk of which is loss of love and thenceforth loss of self. In Kristeva's estimation, it is too easy to vilify 'the other' when he or she is 'not one of us'; when you don't live alongside 'the other' in peace and harmony but in fear of 'otherness', so regard 'the other' as 'overagainst' you in a polarised, threatening sense.

I will tell you a story, at my own expense; designed to draw the same moral Feuerbach warned against and which I believe Wittgenstein was after, where the *philosophy* or idea of what it means to be a person shows itself in the twin co-ordinates of live and love together.

Soon after Ralph Abernathy assumed the 'headship' of the NAACP – 'National Advancement for the Association of Coloured People' for you youngsters – he came to Princeton 'to give a talk' (as we called it back then). Here we were all buttoned up in our Prince-of-Wales plaids, box-cut jackets, button-down Gant shirts, rep ties, brogues, the lot – the very picture of sartorial elegance – and there he stood before us in a faded Levi jacket; no satyr; all substance. He was ugly, black, and obviously proud of it. His body-language exuded confidence. We were foppish by comparison; ivy-leaguers, clinging to beautiful buildings for a precarious sense of self-esteem, the same effect Oxford noticeably has on its privileged primates.

Abernathy praised Lyndon Baines Johnson for getting civil rights laws passed which Kennedy would have likely failed, because he, Johnson, knew all the ghosts in the closets of politicians and wasn't afraid to twist their arms into – call it – a compliant hypocrisy.

In the discussion period which followed, I raised my hand and quibbled, 'But *can* you legislate morality?' I'm sure I didn't add 'Sir', as the English are so good at doing when they want to keep you at arms' length and a safe, comfortable distance. I call it 'quibbling' because I can't find the word disingenuous enough for the philosophical game I was learning to play in a mockery of earnestness. What I meant was, Can you use the *law* to regulate ethical behaviour? Surely morality requires a *higher* code?

Abernathy didn't hesitate for a moment. If I can get laws passed which prevent you from not living alongside me, which allow me to ride in the same

bus, and not only in the back, washing my clothes at the same launder-mat as you, eating in the same diner, you might realise I bleed too, and am human just like yourself. (I'm sure he didn't say, peeing in the same urinal, but he could have.) You might learn that not only *God* is wiser to look on the heart; you might decide to follow suit and ignore the *outward* appearances of things and conclude I am your 'blood brother'.

There was no comeback. I was suitably rebuked.

In retrospect, I consoled myself for having elicited so strong a response which has stuck with me ever since. I, who had been brought up in an integrated neighbourhood in Garfield, New Jersey, who thought LeRoy Watson and I were cousins. My Mother, bless her, didn't even blink an eye when I proudly announced one day: 'Mom, LeRoy and I must be cousins 'cause our Uncle lives up 'First Street Hill.'

Same hill; same Uncle! Right?

Obviously my powers of deduction were not what they should have been at that age; but would you say, *dare* you say, I had been *corrupted* by family-values for citing the bloodlines of aunts and uncles into overlooking the true colour of LeRoy's skin, glistening black, a handsome devil, while I was only a whitey or an olive-tanned pinko, half-way on the way to gorgeous brown, finally found? Would you accuse me of being *insensitive* to important socio-cultural or 'racial' differences because I somehow *disrespected* LeRoy for *not* allowing him to be *other* than me, a Negro, a black, Negroid; an outstanding artist (to this day, for I caught up with him a few years ago, 50 years later) with a hip-hop step that floated when he walked past my house every day *en route* to school each day, same class, same teacher, shared drawings of Dick Tracy and Joe Palooka. Wrong for not allowing LeRoy to belong *exclusively* 'to his own kind', that tribe of ghettoised blacks who lived at the end of our street because they couldn't afford middle-class housing where I lived; hence my desire as a child for *any* affinity I could find, as between aunts and uncles? (And I didn't pronounce it the English way either you will notice, all decently de-nasal; 'Onunts' and Unkles' knuckle dusters.)

I wonder if you saw David Frost's interview of Muhammed Ali a long, long time ago? Frost asked, Now that you're a Black Muslim, what about mixed marriages? Ali replied, 'Elephants don't marry birds; and rhinos don't do it with chickens; each to his own (or something like that).' Frost replied sheepishly, 'That sounds like a philosophy of despair.' Deflated for the moment and beaten on this rare occasion, the

lip de-flipped. Ali tore off his microphone and stormed off.

Of course, it wasn't strictly a philosophy of despair, but it certainly *was* a philosophy of inequality and therefore ultimately disrespectful of that Feuerbachian principle of love among the chickens, a P. G. Wodehouse novel, or children of God, a Jewish novel, I am keen to both defend and disapprove of; critical of disrespecting anything *other than* what is not *the same* as yourself.

And whatever does 'the same' mean here! Under Jewish law, the Jews are prevented from marrying their half-brother's descendants, another tribe of Semites. Ishmael and Isaac, you will remember, came from the same bosom of Abraham; when Abraham didn't quite trust the promise of descendants as numerous as 'the sands of the sea' so took Hagar, Sarah's handmaiden, to lend God a helping hand. What kind of a State is built on only allowing natural citizenship to Orthodox marriages?

Countries have religions; religions don't 'own' countries (even if middle-America thinks so and gives 12 million dollars annually in aid of a defence used to liquidate neighbours).

Isn't it more correct to say that, in my childhood innocence, I stumbled on a higher truth apropos 'the family of man'. Did I not grasp as a youngster 'love is colour-blind'? Did I not understand in my childhood innocence that transfiguration refigures the human form; that affable affiliations transcend the colour of one's skin and even, with sufficient love, obliterates colour altogether? No, I didn't stumble on it at all, damn it. It's what I had been taught from childhood. God damn anything less or other.

That's Feuerbach's God speaking, incidentally.

I knew *from day one* 'God is no respecter of persons' because my Mother told me so, as she also taught me 'Jesus loves me this I know', and not only because the Bible told me so. And because my beloved Mother, bless her, taught me the words of another Sunday-school hymn which made it even more specific: 'Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world, red and yellow, black or white, all are precious in his sight, Jesus loves the little children of the world'. Compare and contrast the 'take-off' on Davy Crockett which echoed in the halls of Wood-Ridge high-school attesting to what it was felt was *really* going on in the middle-east during the time when the new nation of Israel was born.

The original went like this: Born on a mountain-top in Tennessee, breathed the air of land of the free, went to the woods with a hatchet in his hand, and kilt himself a lion when he was only three,

Davy, Davy Crockett, King of the wild frontier'. Here's the take-off: 'Born on a sand dune in Palestine, raised on matzos and kosher wine; went to the temple like a good little Jew and killed himself an A-rab when he was only two; Fritzzy, Fritzzy Goldberg, King of the wild frontier.' Disgraceful indeed! But it's a *social, moral*, and a profoundly *irreligious* disgrace. That's why Feuerbach tried to clean up religion's act. 'By the person you know their God, and by their God you can predict the (im-)morality of the person.'

6. The truth-teller's dilemma

'I am not a religious man but I cannot help seeing every problem from a religious point of view.'¹⁵

Wittgenstein felt culpable on another front too. Not only had he (ostensibly) 'lied' about his Jewishness, but during his short stint as a teacher before returning to Cambridge, he admitted lying about 'hitting a student'.

What is interesting here – in addition to the actual fact, whether it happened as such; including its legal implication, and so on – was the extent to which Rhee went to explain the 'incident', even explain it away, making excuses for Wittgenstein.¹⁶ Rhee did not so much challenge the accuracy of Wittgenstein's account as much as the severity, appropriateness, and the extent of its impact on 'the great one'; even going so far as to redo Wittgenstein's *possible* intent; what he *likely* meant on that fated occasion.

It's as if Rhee couldn't quite get his head 'round the lacerating effect of Wittgenstein's prick of conscience, and wanted to reduce the brutalisation of Wittgenstein's conscience, as well as repair Wittgenstein's image in the eyes of admirers; damage-limitation, so to speak – forgetting the damage to the child, which Wittgenstein couldn't have failed to notice to such an extent that he felt he had to lie to draw attention away from himself.

Admitting he was clutching at straws, Rhee speculated: – 'when the headmaster called him, he was still angry with the girl for what she had done and reacted as though her complaint were an answer disputing what he'd have said in scolding her: insisting angrily in the sense of "No, she is *wrong*."

This is more than a bit convoluted and requires analysis.

The first thing to notice is that there are no qualifying softeners in Rhee's *apologia*: When the headmaster called him to account, Wittgenstein was *probably* still angry with the girl for what she had done, that which led to a thumping rebuke, or just a thump, and *possibly* reacted 'as though' her complaint were an answer disputing what he'd have

said in 'scolding' her *if only* she had given him the chance. None of these qualifications. Rather, one notices a sharp shift of sentiment from a thump to a 'scolding'; a minor infraction or misdemeanour. In short, Rhees is sailing close to the truth of a hypothetical: to wit, Wittgenstein 'reacted *as though* her complaint' were ill-founded, ill-framed, and so on. None of those compromise words like 'likely', 'possibly', or 'probably' in Rhees's account; merely single-lane inference; what one might call 'bullying-tactics'. 'No, she is flat wrong!'

It's as if Rhees implores us to consider mitigating circumstances: to wit, if only the child herself had understood Wittgenstein's frustration and accepted she deserved a right telling-off, all might have been forgiven, just a 'scold' (always presuming, of course, a child could understand counter-causal probabilities which play fast-and-loose with extenuating circumstances). After all, aren't there always two sides to every story? Yes; but not if one is using stories to tell 'tall-tales' or a fib which suppresses the truth of a *lie*, as Wittgenstein eventually conceded.

Rhees's 'account' is more like an accounting exercise, impartial and neutral. It seems to assume the child had seriously enough misbehaved to justify Wittgenstein's 'anger' or so infuriated him to where he 'lost his cool' or 'dropped his bundle' as we say on either side of the pond. Although he was doubtless angry over what the girl had *done* – past-actual tense – Rhees made it sound as if it was essentially the temporal *discontinuity* of what the girl said, or failed to say when she brought the incident before the Head which Wittgenstein was effectively challenging. It wasn't No, in the long wrong and all be out, *she* was 'in the wrong'. Flat, 'No, she *is* wrong'. Here another 'as if' inserts its hypothetical head. It's *as if* Wittgenstein was above the child for not reporting her role in the matter; merely squealing on his distempered reaction. Speaking as an American, it as if the brat ignored all the precipitating background and simply 'ratted on him'.

But what if the girl was dim-witted or just plain slow, and suppose Wittgenstein had a short-fuse, as it were (as remarked by more than one acquaintance, including his sister Hermine) let us suppose because he had grown accustomed to 'quick-on-the-uptake' Cantabridgeans (whose nervous responses often outstrip their *real* understanding).

Rhees tables this suggestion: '[H]is friends might recognise here what they often saw, especially in a dispute...: in the heat of the argument Wittgenstein could come down on what the other person was saying, as though it were wrong and stupid'.¹⁷

In fact, Rhees's *apologia* gets slimmer the closer one looks at it. Analysed word-for-word, he

wants us to accept the suggestion that it was essentially the nature of the girl's complaint which was fundamentally at issue – the nature of her *speech-act* rather than the act itself, which was an unsavoury performative. Moreover, that this 'ill-reporting' was somehow Wittgenstein's excuse for throttling her in the first place; all part of a proper scolding, you know. We must learn to live-up to our shortcomings – which, of course, the English excel at when they want to produce anal-retentive politicians, scrupulous academics, or toilet-oriented comics.

In the *final* analysis, Rhees's explanation naughtily implies the child might have been guilty in the *first* place. There is another 'cultural' idiosyncrasy here. Jo Anne Galbraith reminded me that it would have taken an incredible amount of courage for any student to dare confront the power-logistics of a teacher back then. So perhaps Rhees believed Wittgenstein *did* have the power of his office behind him. 'Look, I'm the adult here, and, after all, I *am* the teacher, and obviously mature enough to know right from wrong; so when I say "*She* was wrong", it follows as night follows day, I was right and she *was* wrong!' 'Case closed; authority restored.' Just in time for the shadows to fully descend.

To hear Rhees tell it, Wittgenstein reacted *as though* the girl's complaint was at issue because her phraseology was ill-formed, insufficiently evidenced, unconvincingly presented, and so on – in effect putting in our minds what Wittgenstein *might* have said in disputing the accuracy of any report based on the invalidity of linguistic resources or the child's reckless, unproven capacity for truth-telling and the like; all of which, we know, are well-known debater's tricks using disputatious and disingenuous use of logic to *disestablish* or undermine 'the truth' of the opponent's position. Although Rhees was not, as we say, privy to the act or even audience to the event, he places Wittgenstein's words, 'No, she is wrong', in quotes and even italics. One is led to assume this was Wittgenstein's actual outburst. He even felt confident enough to italicise *No, she is wrong*.¹⁸ Of course, he might have stressed the pronominal 'SHE' – whereupon a crushingly personal accusation would follow, 'She, *that little snitch* is wrong!' (And one could substitute another witchified word.) But this would only be an 'implied allegation', as proper dons would say; those brought up on emotionless logic which is arrived at from a sanitised and sterile use of language, from which Wittgenstein clearly departed on *that* particular occasion.

He obviously raised his voice. SHAME!

So let's strip Rhees's obfuscation to the core.

Wittgenstein didn't hit the child because she failed to accept his *reasoning* behind the provocation. Nor did he try and squirm his way out on grounds that one lame-duck protest 'justifies' another, even worse in its ramifications. Just deserts for not eating suet-and-pudding propositional pie. And certainly 'two wrongs don't make a right', even if they allow the culprit to hide behind such a bluster.

Let's get tougher still.

Disputing 'the facts', even what led to the smack, doesn't make the consequences any less the worse or any more the plausible and *almost* palatable so as to sweep the entire event under the carpet. And such casuistry did not wash in Wittgenstein's eyes either. Clearly he felt discredited or dishonoured. 'I lied'.

It is therefore – as philosophers are prone to say – spurious and hence seriously misleading to suggest what Wittgenstein *likely* meant was: 'No, she is wrong *in her protestation*. Even less credulous would be the following: 'I fear, Herr Meister-Head, she was faulty in the presentation of her case against me because, all things considered, she didn't address the provocation *behind* the reason for striking her; the simple fact that she drove me *non compos mentis!*' A final option *is* a taking by force: 'Who are you going to believe, her or me?' Or should it be 'Me or she'? which certainly appeals to my poetical ear over proper grammar, she or I.

Here we have an *argumentum ad hominem* which is driven home by *force majeure*; a 'taking by force' *and* from a position of blank authority. (Sound familiar? I'm the supervisor Charles and I prohibit you from using 'impute', despite the Good Book says 'It was imputed to them for righteousness's sake.' You can't 'impute' anything I can refute!)

I don't imagine for a moment Wittgenstein felt he lied because the girl's premises were faulty, her case ill-framed, or her sense of injury based on a fallacious argument or a misspeak. Neither that she bungled her report, telling a real porky pie *so* 'wrong' Wittgenstein had to tell his own lie to match, *quid pro quo*, tit for tat; a Jewish 'Eye-yay-yay' for a troublesome tooth.

Significantly, Wittgenstein did *not* try and pull out his own 'rotten tooth' with a truth-pliers – the one which gave Rhees such a headache. Nor was there any patronising condescension in his overall deportment, deceiving the Head with calm imperturbability which is polite brow-beating, 'Now, now dear child; tell the *whole* truth. Tell the Head what you *really* did.'

Wittgenstein went through the roof, so to speak; and he certainly wasn't after transcendence.

Rhees's choice of words 'gave the game' away. He shifted guilt away from the *act* with a mealy-mouthed '*as though*': – Wittgenstein reacted *as though* he might have thought her complaint unfounded. So, Wittgenstein reacted with what? – a lie!?

That was all subsequent.

At the time, Wittgenstein tried to confound the issue with a slur on the girl's propositional truthfulness, using a form of words which deflected from the real truth; the truth of an actual slap by using *other* words to confuse 'the order of truth' so to speak; not only its actual order of occurrence but also its orderly reporting. In other words Wittgenstein used other words to ambiguate or distrustify the truth; to make the appeal to event seem somewhat disingenuous. In short, Wittgenstein lied with an untruth. He untruthed the child's truth with a form of words which actually *masked* a lie. (Clever fellow, to use typical philosophical casuistry to confront, confuse, or confound an issue.)

In other words Wittgenstein used words *inappropriate* to the occasion; he used words *other than* the situation actually demanded. He used a typical philosophical expression, in other words, to disambiguate a lie: He used other words, in other words, to confuse words, in other words, if you catch my drift. He resorted to what philosophers call 'second-order discourse' based on the shifting sands of meta-language to acquit first-order culpability. He compounded the girl's unfounded allegations with a vehement protest, 'No, she is wrong!' confounding his own truth-telling lie.

Perhaps he hoped for a subsequent query; 'What *exactly* do you mean Meister Wittgenstein?' Or perhaps he childishly thought he could confound the Head by pulling the wool over his eyes. Did the gauzy guise work? Hardly, it came back to haunt him years later, whereupon one might say Wittgenstein 'saw through himself'. He suddenly saw how he appeared to others. He saw as he was seen. And for an autistic genius, that must have downright revelatory, if not utterly condemnatory.

In short, I don't think anything like Rhees's scenario remotely flashed through Wittgenstein's mind. He lied for reasons I suspect *he himself* did not fully understand. Cutting to the quick, I suspect Wittgenstein lied to cover-up something far deeper and much more disquieting – which is why I am telling Wittgenstein's tale in order to show the unsatisfactoriness of Rhees's more '*philosophical*' account and to unearth the conviction in Wittgenstein's *soul* which became so compelling he had to do something about it. All this, in order to illustrate why the strict options 'truth or lie?' just ain't up to a

pragmatic test of truth, speaking as a mid-Atlantic yank trying to jerk your soporific Brits into dancing to a different tune of how language actually works, Wittgensteinian-style. The later Wittgenstein.

The meaning is the form of its presentation; meaning as use.

Meaning as truth and truth as meaning is meaning in *meaningful* use.

7. Narrative identity and Wittgenstein's 'acrostic of consciousness'

I believe it was the mystery of identity locked in Feuerbach's and Kristeva's 'acrostic of consciousness' which lay at the heart of the matter.

This is the truth of which Paul Ricoeur speaks when he describes us as 'narrative selves'. What lies at the heart of *narrative* identity is how we self-emplot, especially when our editorial options are tempered by the unmistakable fact of 'species-beings'. Perhaps this alludes to the Jewish problem once again, where identity is allowed to be misguided by an exclusifying principle of non-assimilation: to wit, a jealous gods for a zealous people, or solitary gods for hermetic people or perfect gods for callous and immoral aristo-prats. And let us not forget Feuerbach's 'theory of *positive* correlation'; of loving gods for loving people. 'By the God you know the person, and by the person you know the God.'

If so, Rhee's analysis of Wittgenstein's ulterior motive for 'fessing-up' to a 'lie' in order to restore a sense of spoilt dignity is somewhat of a misreading of what Wittgenstein really learnt *about himself* from this sad event.

I think Wittgenstein was forced to ask himself, What does 'the good', 'the true', and 'the beautiful' *ultimately* entail, humanly speaking? And I believe his answer was implied in the admission or the moral axiom, 'To err, *humanum est*.' It has been called 'the liar's paradox', but I prefer to dub it 'the truth-teller's dilemma'.

To err is undoubtedly to belong to the human condition. But if I lie, I disgrace myself both as a person and a philosopher, especially someone who is supposed to be in love with 'the truth' and I become a speaker of *untruths*, a liar; whereupon, *ipso facto*, by pressing ethical ergo-dynamics into operation, my philosophical integrity deserts me and takes with it my precarious sense of self-esteem along with my reputation as a person of manifest social integrity. Perhaps I even become a lost soul who has benighted the ability to tell the difference between white lies and morally culpable dark truths. I certainly find it a lot harder to live with myself on such occasions (and I can't seem to get much help

from Plato who said he was both a skunk and a monk at the same time).

In short, I think Wittgenstein was forced to conclude *something about personal identity* on that occasion; something which, if resolved, might bring the two closer together, philosophy and life.

He learned that propositional fidelity to the facts is not always the same as 'keeping faith' with the facts; and that the latter is brought about by honouring the truth of events. I think he learnt his lie could *only* be resolved if he acknowledged a related foible; the truth-teller's dilemma: that human beings don't always *tell* the truth because fallible minds don't always *know* the truth of their tellings; toings and froings, comings and becomings in the human condition.

Since things are seldom black-and-white in matters of social intercourse, how can we know when an alleged 'truth-teller' is telling the truth when he or she accuses the *other* of lying? Can one resort to simple definition: - 'I am a truth-teller, *ergo* can't lie'. In fact, that is the truth of a lie because it is a silly untruth; a silly lie which 'unfacts' itself.

'In fact' is often in philosophy a truth of 'unfact'. Like *ergo* means 'Abracadabra'.

The deeper deception lies with the fact that anyone who thinks he or she can analyse the simple truth from a form of words which presents themselves as speaking on behalf of moral justice *vis a vis* the truth of what *really* happened on this or that occasion is deceiving themselves. Such a *truth-slayer* is as bad as a person who deigns to tell the truth he is a liar. How can we trust the truth of a person who describes himself as a liar, or accused the other as lying? How can we rely on the truth of a description which is based on a complex situation based on something beyond playing the TV game of truth or lie or bluff? How dare anyone say they *know* the truth *always* and *obviously* when such an assertion leads them to morally incriminate themselves?

The point is, it doesn't take much for the truth-teller's dilemma to 'morph' into the liar's paradox either (a) when one is overly sure what one is saying, or (b) not entirely sure what one is talking about.

On this occasion, Wittgenstein was inclined to bluff his way out of this dilemma.

And stop to think for a moment: why do such difficulties of truth or lie seem peculiar to philosophy and theology? Answer: - 'Tis because of our limited understanding of philosophical psychology.

The sub-point is – or the sub-text of philosopher's pretext over 'truth *or* lie' – is that philosophers don't *always* live up to the truth of their reputations as

noble seekers of the truth, because, in fact, they lie on occasion de-truthifying themselves. They even lie *using* the truth. They resort to some imaginary *absolute* difference between right and wrong using a false antithesis – right or wrong; black or white, truth or lie? – by which a tiny red herring can land a real whopper; a whale of a lie.

8. 'Truths' of life versus the 'truth' of logic

Let's stop being clever with words.

On that particular occasion, I think Wittgenstein learnt the truth of the human condition; that psychological truth is not always compatible with truths of logic. As Strawson famously said, 'life is larger than logic', and life in all its wonderful and sloppy permutations doesn't cater to easy analogy or always lend itself to trite solutions. Unlike the cleverness of advertising one is a liar in order to tangle up one's opponent in logical casuistry, the truth-teller's dilemma is a simple human truth. You never know if a philosopher is really telling the truth, or merely commenting on the truth, because there is no other way of telling certain truths except in words, especially when they are truths of self-analysis or social intercourse. And how that expression used to bemuse Margy Mitchell, when stiff – sorry formal – visiting Americans used to write to Professor Mitchell, asking if they had any time for 'social intercourse' being in England on holiday or sabbatical. What a wicked smile that produced.

Truth is like a soothsayer, not a truth-slayer; it *speaks* itself. But how can one speak the truth if one has a penchant to lie, even on occasion? Or if one is taking the Archangel Michael out of words like 'intercourse' or 'white lie', which often go to bed together on dirty hotbeds of disbelief in the obvious. Truth and lies 'bed' together quite often in religion – idols look just like we think God looks – but never, never in philosophy.

Really; I promise you. Trust me! I'm a truth-teller.

The liar's paradox thus quickly overtakes the truth-teller's dilemma. Or perhaps the truth-tellers dilemma degenerates into the liar's paradox when one doesn't quite know what the hell one is talking about, heavenly speaking. If I am fallible as to the truth of my being, because the truth of my 'be-ing' is a 'becoming' which is not visibly on show as rocks or rills, how can I claim 'the other' is a liar and I am truthful when the truth of my report is sullied by, well, let's say, a *lack* of social graces or an honesty which proceeds from a fundamental ambiguity?

Do we approach others with the words, Can you please love me despite being a liar, or given my lack

of self-certainty as to who I am can you please save me from myself. I think I love you but being so unsure of myself can't really tell.

One could say a lot more here – such as 'there's no such thing as unrequited love because if the other doesn't encourage it, you will never find the words to say 'I love you'. Surely there is much more going here in social intercourse 'than meets the visible eye'. Not to mention when what greets me from the other side of the room is a glare during a philosophy paper, or a stare of disbelief in the light of the morning after?

In short, Rhees's explanation fails to explain why Wittgenstein felt so disturbed *and at so deep a level*.

9. 'Losing face' and more salvific forms of social grace

Wittgenstein lied because he 'lost face' – a telling phrase which, yes, bespeaks reflexivity. And not only with others, but ultimately *with himself*. Wittgenstein felt betrayed by his inability to cope with the God-awful truth that, in human matters, we are 'not of ourselves'; we belong to another.

'Aweful' in two senses then; with and without that dashing otherness over against which or whom we are bound to measure ourselves in relation thereunto.

If, then, Wittgenstein was being obscurantist – which he undoubtedly was – it was, putting all propositional rectitude aside, to cover up a deep *personal* ambivalence. I thought the antithesis between self-love and self-loathing was too strong until I read the same words in Alexander Waugh's *The House of Wittgenstein* (p. 105)

I also sense the ghost in Wittgenstein's closet was the ghost of 'logical atomism', reducing components of truth to individual particles or compositional atoms of which Wittgenstein was a mechanical 'genius'; whereas persons are exceedingly complex; always and ever an *incomplete* whole. No 'alas' necessary.

Thanks be unto God who has given us the *unspeakable* gift of otherness in the form of a Love-child whom, in our better moments, we do well *not* to box 'round the ears but learn the gifts of nurture therefrom.

According to Rhees, Wittgenstein *merely* tried to cover himself, almost innocently, by a spontaneous protestation based on a possible justification of right and wrong. But it was just this obfuscation which caught out Wittgenstein in the end and taught him the *real* un-truth of himself; that he, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Cambridge's leading light and brilliantly sensitive analyst of language ever, had no corner on

the truth when it came to the crunch; when propositional rectitude or intellectual notoriety is overtaken by moral (in-)sensitivities. Truth is not like exactitudes; more like beatitudes.

I believe Wittgenstein's profound sense of guilt derived precisely from the conviction of being able to tell 'right *from* wrong' which let him down, allowing him to live the truth of a lie; which was that one could presume to know how to extract the truth from a proposition to *such an extent* that one could, by blustering or shifting semantics, accuse others of being 'wrong' in their formulation of what 'really' happened on this or that occasion with any degree of assertoric confidence when it was, in fact, *he* who was at fault – both in fact and in sentiment; in 'words', in 'deed' and in 'declaration'. Indeed!

The truth of Wittgenstein's account was 'really' an *impersonator* of truth borrowed from fact and applied, without suitable discount or amplification, to persons.

To link both halves of this paper together: it wasn't the Jew-child's obscurantism or some hidden Semitism that eventually got to him: it was Wittgenstein's deep-seated ambiguity which confirmed that, in matters of 'truth-telling', he didn't entirely 'belong' to the human species; wasn't fully assimilated; wasn't entirely whole. Having to play philosophical patrician to the mathematical Yobbos at Cambridge, Wittgenstein failed to acknowledge his own broke-back dependence on otherness. Which is why that ancient Jewish proverb is 'right' to remind us 'He is not whole who is not conscious of a lack'. We are 'connatural' with others.

And perhaps connaturality accounts for the schizoid effect of both of Wittgenstein's lies in one. *Den jüdischen Geist* or 'the spirit of truth-Judaism' forces one to live a lie because it assumes a moral superiority on fallacious grounds of appointed selectivity; not, in this case, being Cambridge's 'leading light', the chosen few, but God's select Jew.

Be that as it may, and predestination aside, both respective 'takes' on religion and philosophical truth force one to come to terms with *fallibilities* in our cognitive certainties. Both philosophy and religion treat truth as akin to religious dogma or as part of a rational or national heritage which is taken too much on trust, private trust, and is not enough earned according to social means. Which is why Feuerbach wished to divorce religion, true religion, from both philosophy and theology. Religion is a matter of the heart, not cogitating intently. Nor is it preserved by living a changeless history from the beginnings of the dawn of consciousness.

Rhees's explanation is little better than an ordinary 'white-wash'; even parasitic on evasive,

injudicious and tactics. And Wittgenstein was certainly no ordinary man. Nor was he a typical philosopher. And if anyone would have known how *not* to frame a student by defaming her protest, it would have been him, language-sensitive philosopher that he was. And that's why something else must have been going on there; something deeper.

I believe Wittgenstein stumbled on the constructive truth of Feuerbach's transpositional idealism. At work in *all* human relationships is a strong, transformative element; attesting to the transitional or dispositional need for love which sometimes emerges, chrysalis-like, from unexpected sources, especially the depths of what we call unconscious needs; those heart-felt desires which work for the *good* of others. Stronger than the lure of truth is undoubtedly the magnet of love. And when we resist either pole of self-love or other-vilification, consciousness is brought into clearer focus by undercover agents like 'lie' and... well, you'll have to wait on Wittgenstein's unfolding story for its redemptive counterpart. But I've already given you a clue; I said 'redemptive counterpart'

10. Confession contra Circumcision

According to a Notebook entry dated 18 November (1937), Wittgenstein wrote: 'Last year with God's help I pulled myself together and made a confession.'¹⁹

Confession, not circumsession, Derrida!

Significantly, Wittgenstein did *not* cavort with justifications of the sort Rhees formulated for him. Wittgenstein 'the man' did *not* take consolation in an approach as Wittgenstein 'the philosopher' might have relied on in order to relieve a sense of accursedness or salve a guilty conscience. Wittgenstein regarded his 'lie' as a serious blotch against his integrity; a lesson learnt the hard way. All this was in answer to the troubling question, 'What kind of a person am I?' Except that, in Wittgenstein's case, he added a Feuerbachian trailer.

Believe it or not, Wittgenstein 'the man' implored God as 'other' for help in answering it. Now I could give you page after page of probilifying why this 'religious' move is not what philosophers think it is, but I have word-limits to observe as Wittgenstein recognised he has moral moments he dared not transgress.

If this rings true, or rather, if any of this makes sense, Wittgenstein's 'confession' is a prime example of using the judgement of others to gain entrance to one's 'holy of holies'; that 'inner sanctum' where soul delights to hide, a secret place, but is *sometimes* obliged to leave solitary caves or Bavarian cells replete with all the comforts of

self-certainty and come out and show contrition for acts of commission, the slap, as well as seek remission for sins of omission, the excuse.

Ecce Homo! Behold the man, covered in indignity and repentant in sackcloth and ashes. And even if by constantly repeating his confession, much to the chagrin of colleagues, Wittgenstein was trying to establish his frail humanity for one and all to see, especially since he found hero-worship odious (as do most of us), it was doubtless *not* to ask to be forgiven for his failings *as a clever philosopher* but to seek absolution for a far more fundamental existential truth, the truth of what it means to be a person.

No suspicions needed to pussy-foot 'round here. My rhetorical 'doubtless' was surely a sincere 'surely'. Wittgenstein said it loud and clear. 'How can I be a good logician if I am not a good person?' In an undated letter to Bertrand Russell before the war started (which would make it pre-1919 and early on in his academic career, such as it academically un-was):

... and I keep on hoping that things will come to an eruption once and for all, so that I can turn into a different person.... Perhaps you [Russell] regard this thinking about myself as a waste of time – but how can I be a logician before I'm a human being! Far the most important thing is to settle accounts with myself!²⁰

Not even 'By far'. 'Far and away the most important thing for Wittgenstein was to be a human being! Strong words for even stronger sentiments! Wittgenstein recognised that he failed to honour *the priority and the actuality of the human condition* – to which any *honest* philosopher is naturally indebted for material to work with.

One can get either solemn or supercilious, with the point. 'Verily I say unto you, 'Your *primary* duty is to soul-tend, not truth amend!' And I say this unto you (adds our 'deepest lodger') because *my* reflexive psychology says it loud and clear to me.' *Experientia vocit!* Experience speaks. Nay, I Ludwig Wittgenstein, now speak from the depths of the shallows of my *own* personal experience with others, including my estrangement from others which has forced me to live in a frayed soul whereby I recognised the real truth of my lie; lying with flawless logic.

Time to wrap things up.

I presume we all know the debt Wittgenstein repaid his Italian colleague, Piero Sraffa, and how badly Derek Jarman presented it in film of Wittgenstein's life, substituting a middle-finger salute for the inimical Italian gesture of 'flick-chin'. 'So you think the relationship between word and world is a

one-to-one, picture-perfect correspondence', Sraffa challenged the early Wittgenstein; 'Well, tell me then, what's the meaning of *this!*'²¹ Sraffa then performed a picturesque gesture flicking the underside of the chin with the underneath of his fingers in a contemptuous dismissal. Not to be outdone, a Spanish friend tells me the further south you go in Spain, the more number of flicks. Suffice it to say, Wittgenstein got a mouthful, Continental style.

11. Italianate Images and Gestures: (how to move from 'True/False' Thinking' to 'Recur-sive Redemption')

Now wouldn't it be ironic – in the Socratic sense of irony, re-truthing the truth of a lie by pressing dishonest explanation to where it utterly breaks down– wouldn't it be compellingly 'telling' if on that occasion it was actually Wittgenstein's fixation with 'the lie' that was responsible for a shift in his thinking *from* formal logic to a greater sensitivity *within* language-games? Or, to speak more correctly, if the lie initiated a movement to *language-frames* in the later work; especially that *religious* frame of social mind Feuerbach believed was *built-into* human psychology, given consciousness is *always* in relation to others, and is much more than merely a cultural construct or a universalisable truths. Feuerbach felt this way because he thought, like Wittgenstein, that God-symbols enter the mind from infancy onwards as displays of morally unifying instances of abiding love. Which is why Wittgenstein said 'God' is one of the earliest words learnt.

Wouldn't it even be even further compelling if Wittgenstein used *religious* language as a *model* for how ordinary language *should* work once purged of its stark, bleak, midwinter, realistic factual references of a one-to-one relationships between words and things; if, that is, Wittgenstein used the 'religious' component of language (which philosophers of his generation struggled so hard to eliminate) to 'rehouse' language in a larger framework, indeed, a spiritual setting; whose logic, especially the logic of God, is not just notoriously *difficult* to pin down on reductive grounds of the 'true/false if neither meaningless' trichotomy but *per impossible*.

After all, after logic has had its day or its say, surely religious language is not *utterly* lacking in practical import to ordinary mortals, much as Wittgenstein found to his temporal or 'eternal' dismay.

And, to begin to bring things to a close, when you comprehend why Wittgenstein's 'ordinariness' was quite extraordinary really, especially when judged by the philosophical standards of his day, and why he

eventually came to conclude that language carries all the wrinkles, contours, or depths of personhood in its precious folds, you will have penetrated the depths of Feuerbach's treatise on *The Essence of Religion*.

Actually only scratched the surface. But at least you will have begun to understand the significance of Feuerbach's 'rechristianisation' of religious ideals; the idea that any God worth having has buried itself in the folds of the consciousness and is revealed in acts of loving kindness one to another; especially in ethics and aesthetics and not some bizarre arcane metaphysics as Farrer described as 'high and dry'.

Wouldn't it be amazing, in other words, if words like 'God', 'grace' and 'goodness' could be seen to have a *healing* capacity in someone's soul who, although, ostensibly *not* a believer and certainly not a person who merely paid 'lip-service' to the 'cleansing facilities' of religion, as Camus exploited it in 'The Fall', who was undoubtedly one of the 'best minds of his generation', if not the best of all time in the philosophy of language, if such a mind used religion *psycho-dynamically* in order to rinse, rid, or cleanse the mind of the untruths of false 'gods' as mere idols of the mind, including Truth, in order to teach himself the error of his ways or sensibly to re-route moral identity around vital, life-giving concepts found in ordinary religious language, wouldn't that be something to write home about, so to speak? If such a person of integrity who *did* not treat religion as a 'giant laundering service', as Jean Baptiste did in Camus's story, and who was, moreover, aware of the supercilious 'superfoetations' of truth (as James warned), and whose self-analysis helped him to appreciate the vitality inherent in religious constructs, wouldn't that earth-shaking news to consciousness?

It depends on what one means by 'linguistic consciousness', you might say. Well, whatever it was, it was certainly not without deeds to back the words up. Wittgenstein was enamoured of the remark, 'In the beginning was the deed, not the word.'

One can push the *logoi* of words even harder.

Wouldn't it be a *practical* extension of the truth of religion if 'the lie' Wittgenstein told on that occasion actually gave him a *greater* appreciation of the scope and integrity of language to be able to carry the richness of words in order to break the humble truths of life and love to people; including the capacity for refrain from the paucity of reason and the insight to reframe the truths of language in a *larger* socio-cultural setting, including a meta-physical context, where ideas pervade consciousness on many levels, using ideas as ideals, and ideals as

social norms, and moral reals as latently religious constructs?

By the behaviour of such a man, you could certainly tell the provenance of the God he or she worshipped, Feuerbach might say as he knighted Wittgenstein the Kierkegaard 'man of the year award'; not just a Knight of Infinite Resignation who believes in Logical Necessities, but a Knight of Infinite Recursivity into the very spiritual complexities of consciousness itself.

If this reading is correct, the heavy-handed incident which caught Wittgenstein out on that occasion, might have helped him shift from the *aprioristic* theory of language of the early work to a more sensitive appreciation of the redemptive features of language in the later work as communication; away, that is, from allowing bullying truth-telling logic to set the terms and conditions *for* the meaningful use of language to where, by patient probing, one explores the logic *of* language; in order to explain why we use different sorts of language for different occasions or for different purposes, bringing out the depth and richness of the grammars of assent as well as the logic of ascent, 'lower-case' truths struggling to be both communal and hierarchical in one.

Now if all isn't a good example of using personal biography to re-truth the logic of language as well as using religious concepts like 'confession' or 'at-one-ment' with others to revamp one's psychology *by revising the logic of God*, it will do until a better one comes along.

To my mind and what's stamped on my currency – in the godliness of love I trust – Wittgenstein is a living example of how Feuerbach used anthropology to integrate psychology and theology as one. Theology is anthropology because anthropology has 'religious psychology' at its core, and anthropology is latently theological because we adopt gods for the sake of promoting ideals worthy of emulation. In return, the gods adopt us, perhaps having arranged it this way.

By his god, one knows the man; and from the man, one can guess the monster or maestro God one worships. Which is why Feuerbach insisted only the pretence of truth is left when the spirit of God as love is lost.

This was the lesson Wittgenstein learnt the hard way.

Now I'm going to press a religious analogy home which philosophers will not like at all. As with Aquinas after his *visio Dei* – when he saw his majestic Summas as mere straw fit for the fire – from Wittgenstein's realisation that one can be entirely scrupulous with the truth but utterly

unscrupulous as to its actual application, our Vienna sage learnt that abstractions of truth or paper-propositions are as mere dust-and-ashes compared to human truths, and this was the 'higher' truth Wittgenstein discovered in the aftermath of his confession. Or that which prompted it?

In moral reality, the truth of God as a Love-Giver or 'given' is confirmed. And that's how I think 'smart God' arranged it.

If none of this strikes you as appealing, you might like to ponder these aphorisms as 'truer' to life than Wittgenstein's natural philosophy since they came from his life and had a significant bearing on his work:

'A confession has to be a part of your new life.'

'If anyone is unwilling to descend into himself, because this is too painful, he will remain superficial in his writing.'

'You cannot write anything about yourself that is more truthful than you yourself are.'

You write about yourself from your own height. You don't stand on stilts or on a ladder, but on your bare feet.

Now let's add Feuerbach to Wittgenstein's catechism of confessional humility.

As a Man thinketh, so is he.

But as a Man thinketh 'she',
so are they both closer to God.

And as a person thinketh 'God',
all three become closest to each other.

That only requires a simple 'Concluding Unscientific Logical Postscript' in the form of the Logos of living words.

And when a philosopher turns to God, the pearly gates begin to slowly creak open and 'god' becomes closer to the minds of men that consciousness itself; indeed, as close as I am to you today made of nothing but yearning for how to become one with the breath of the Spirit of living words; a God not made of 'nothing but loneliness', as is the theologian's God, but a God of sacred calling whose own needs cry out in the Garden, A-dam, where art thou?

So thanks be unto God who has given us the unspeakable richness of the gift of life in living words, especially nurturing images.

Postscriptum: not canned philosophy or theological lies.

Selah.

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Notes

1. *The essays of Michel Eyquem de Montaigne*, trans. C. Cotton, W. Carew Hazlitt (ed) (William Barton, 1952), II, 18
2. This is reminiscent of Alice's remark, 'How do I know what I mean until I've said it?' confirming the unspoken truth that any firm line between public and private is creatively blurred by speech and often for the good of speaker and hearer, said or heard
3. Rhees is the editor of *Recollections of Wittgenstein*. In the passage alluded to, Plato uses the fictive character of Socrates, his read mentor, as an interlocutor in his *Dialogues*, which is another example of where fact and fiction combine to 'good effect'. Having written nothing which survived, Socrates became a *non d'plume* for Plato's own thoughts as suggested by W. R. Reese in his *Dictionary* under 'Socrates'
4. *Ibid*, 175f. For Wittgenstein's 'Jewishness', see 177f
5. Quoted by M. O'C Drury in Rhees's *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, 134; a reference to Lessing's *Theologische Streitschriften*, 'Eine Duplik'. *Vide* Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Sammtliche Schriften*, ed. Karl Lachman, 3rd revised ed, by Granz Muncker, 23 vols; the specific ref is to Vol. 13, pp. 22-4. The passage from Lessing which 'immediately precedes' Drury's quotation (as he remarks in footnote 24, p. 221) is most significant: 'It is not the truth which anyone possesses, or thinks he does, but rather the pains he has taken to get to the bottom of the truth, that makes a man's worth. For it is not in having the truth but in searching for it that those powers increase in him in which alone lies his ever-growing perfection.' It sounds for all the world like the Indian mystic who leaves no stone unturned in the quest for truth. God forbid there should be one marked with X: here lies the spot; build your cathedral thenceforth. Or, as Wittgenstein finishes off his own mystical yearnings, 'The possession [of truth] makes one placid, lazy, and proud' (*vide* Rhees, 221-2 for this important revelation of Wittgenstein's use of Lessing.
6. An isolated remark in one of Wittgenstein's manuscripts, quoted ftnt. 26, p. 222 in Rhees
7. In the opening lines of his book, Ray Monk tells us Wittgenstein wrestled with lies from 'day one'. (See

also Rhees's Memoirs, 187) In addressing his 'unheroic nature' – Wittgenstein's own description – Rhees extrapolated Wittgenstein's words, putting the following in Wittgenstein's mouth: 'If I try to tell myself "I'm not really like that" or to pretend something else when I'm with others, this will be lying to myself about what I am, or living a life that is a lie.' (187) Wittgenstein's social failures are only one aspect of his 'flawed genius'. According to his own 'autobiographical evaluation', 'In my autobiography I must try both to recount my life truly and to *understand* it. For example, my unheroic *nature* must not show as an unfortunate irregularity but as an essential quality (not a virtue).' (189, italics not added)

I believe Wittgenstein is alluding to the split-nature of human personality which only *in part* depends upon moral infidelity but has a deeper source of divisiveness as a form of interrelated a psycho-social as well as individual failure. The one has more to do with how one lives *up* to one's lights when they flicker between egotry and sensitivity; the other has to do with the very sensitivity which prompted his intellectual genius unable to solve tensions between heart and head. This 'magnificent flaw' made ready the healing balm of another, constantly frustrated by Wittgenstein's own frequent outbursts of pride, so writes that when he gave up his professorship at Cambridge, he thought it might deal with his pride, but confesses it didn't. Depression and discontent were *not* an irregular visitor to Wittgenstein's soul, but rather an quintessential quality, not quite a virtue, but an apt description of an opportune flaw in the breach of the soul which looks to some form of 'self-overcoming' to transcend. Appreciating this, has allowed me to move from angry comments in marginalia – when I read many of the wounding anecdotes from friends and colleagues – to a greater empathy with what demons he was wrestling with; doubtless why almost all forgave him the wrestle or tussle of the soul and loved him despite all.

8. Loc. cit., 182.
9. Introduction to Monk's Biography, xvii-viii.
10. *Vide*, Rhees, 168
11. Rhees, 208
12. Quoted in Rhees, 78; 'Some Notes on Conversations' by M. O'C. Drury
13. *Ibid*, 79
14. Loc. Cit., 39-40
15. Quoted in Rhees, 79
16. At the very beginning of his 'Postscript', Rhees writes: 'I do not pretend to have made his [Wittgenstein's] intention clear in either case [re both aspects of his confession]. All I have done is to bring together some remarks I heard Wittgenstein make and remarks he wrote down which to me to bear on one or other of them.'
17. Rhees, 175, Cf. the poker incident with Karl Popper, where Wittgenstein *didn't* intend to play poker with him or together attend a cowboy movie after the philosophical 'show' was over, as with Norman Malcolm, but supposedly threatened him with a fireplace instrument; as Popper interpreted it and used it an example of a dubious moral gesture to prove

Wittgenstein wrong. (See *Wittgenstein's Poker* by David Edmonds and John Eidinow; an excellent read). For how badly Popper misunderstood Wittgenstein, see the passage from 'Lecture on Ethics' where Wittgenstein uses strong 'religious' language of 'explosive sublimity' to insist what philosophical disquisitions can't do:- 'we cannot write a scientific book the subject matter of which could be intrinsically sublime and above all other subject matters. I can only describe my feeling by the metaphor that, if a man could write a book on Ethics which really was a book on Ethics, this book would, with an explosion, destroy all the other books in the world.' Now if that isn't an 'elucidation' or a vindication for how to 'sublime the signifier' by avoiding any 'logicizing' or scientific use of language, nothing is.

Making the metaphoric hyperbolic point even clearer, Wittgenstein added, 'Our words used as we use them in science, are vessels capable only and conveying meaning and sense, *natural* meaning and sense. Ethics, if it is anything, is supernatural and our words will only express facts as a teacup will only hold a teacup for of water [even] if I were to pour out a gallon over it. (LE, 7; quoted with emphasis in Drury's contribution to Rhees's *Collection*, p. 82-3.) One should not overlook the natural supernaturality of 'ethics' here.

18. Although Rhees begins his paragraph with a hypothetical, 'I would guess...' he goes on to use sanctified quotation-marks to suggest these were Wittgenstein's *actual* words, 'No, she is *wrong*'. More perceptively than 'exonerating circumstances' or unnecessary self-laceration, Monk sees Wittgenstein's confession as *not punitive* in motive but a *mea culpa* for mortifications or a call for deep change of character
19. See *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, 172, 3, 5 for the account of Wittgenstein's life which follows. For another rendition on the same issues, see 'A Personal Memoir of Fania Pascal' in Rhees's collection, 34ff.
20. Rhees, 191
21. 'What is the logical form of that!' is more likely the language Sraffa used, as Monk carefully reports that 'incident'.

CRITIQUING STRAWSONIAN SELVES

Abigail Klassen

Abstract: I argue against Galen Strawson's phenomenological method, which he argues precedes and informs the metaphysical question 'Does the Self exist?'. I problematize other aspects of Strawson's project: (i) his view that the Self is (or can be) experienced as a bare locus of consciousness; (ii) his distinction between Mental- and Self-experience; and (iii) tensions between his conceptual/ontological account of the identity/constitution relation between an experience, its subject, and its content and experience's disclosure of situatedness in space and time as a limit and condition of possibility of a Self.

Key words: Galen Strawson, metaphysics, the self, philosophy of mind, intentionality, consciousness, mentality, personal identity, phenomenology.

1. Introduction

Strawson's view of the Self¹ spans many works, notably *Selves: An Essay in Revisionary Metaphysics*, (2009), 'The Self' in *Models of the Self*, Eds. Shaun Gallagher and Jonathan Shear (2001), 'The Self and the SESMET' (1999), and the very specifically titled 'What is the Relation Between an Experience, the Subject of Experience, and the Content of the Experience?' (2003). Across these works, his views differ, evolve, and as I will argue, reveal inconsistencies.

Do Selves exist? Galen Strawson answers:

It depends on what one means by 'self'. I'm going to make a case for understanding the word 'self' in a rather demanding way before arguing that the right answer to the question... is Yes. But most, I suspect, will judge that my Yes amounts to a No, because they won't be prepared to take the word 'self' in the way I do. (2009, 5)

When it comes to interrogating the existence of the Self, Strawson maintains that phenomenology - a version that Strawson acknowledges has little to do with the Husserlian tradition - is prior to and informs metaphysics (Strawson 2009, 1). Whether or not one takes Strawson's account to be palatable will depend, at least in part, on what one takes proper phenomenological analysis to be. I try to show that Strawson's particular - one might say *highly personal* and idiosyncratic - phenomenological method is largely untenable.

I then go on to problematise three other aspects of Strawson's project: (i) his view that the Self is (or

can be) experienced as a bare locus of consciousness; (ii) his distinction between general Mental-experience and full-blown Self-experience; and (iii) tensions that arise in light of his conceptual/ontological account of the identity and constitution relation between, on one hand, an experience, the subject of the experience, and the content of the experience, and, on the other, lived experience's disclosure of situatedness in space and time as both a limit and a condition of possibility of a Self's being. Strawson's views on (iii) are articulated most clearly in his 2003 article, aptly titled 'What is the Relation Between An Experience, the Subject of the Experience, and the Content of the Experience'. Strawson's goal is to provide an account of - to outline the conditions of possibility of - *any* possible Self's being, thereby permitting that there exist non-human Selves and presumably humans without Selves. Situatedness in space and time is perhaps not a necessary feature of *any* possible Self's being, but it seems to feature as a necessary condition of human beings' being. Though Strawson does not intend his account of the Self to pertain to human beings per se - he is interested in investigating the minimal conditions of Selfhood, it is nonetheless worthwhile for creatures like us (that is, us human beings) to analyse his program insofar as it may or may not apply to our lived experience.

2. An overview of Strawson's phenomenological and metaphysical accounts and their relation to the Strawsonian sense of self

In *Selves* (2009), Strawson describes the problem of the Self as best formulated as a question: Is the Self or SESMET (short for Subject-of-Experience-that-is-a-Single-Mental-Thing) that figures in Self-experience metaphysically real? I take it that Strawson's question is best understood as whether Self-experience is anything other than self-referring. That is, does one's sense of Self refer to an entity, to a Self, or only to itself, that is, to a sense? According to Strawson, a sense of Self is not sufficient to entail the 'real' metaphysical (read: physical) existence of Selves since 'SELF-experience can exist whether or not selves do, just as PINK-ELEPHANT experience can exist whether or not pink elephants do' (Strawson 2009, 1). He advocates a version of non-reductive materialism where 'every thing or event has non-mental, non-experiential being

whether or not it also has mental or experiential being' (Strawson 2001, 7). Self-experience could turn out to 'be illusory in so far as it purports to be experience of an existing entity... called a self' but in fact fails to refer *in the right way* (Strawson 2009, 1). I stress 'in the right way' since even a hallucination of a pink elephant, a thing with mental/experiential being, has non-mental, non-experiential being (the hallucination supervenes on some brain state, *B*). Hence, the illusion supervenes, or some might say, refers to *B*, though the hallucination does not refer to an actual (read: physical) pink elephant. In other words, the sense of Self could fail to pick out an entity, Self. Strawson, however, seems to deny this possibility:

There cannot be a SESMET without an experience, and it is arguable that there cannot be an experience without a SESMET. I take it that SESMETs exist and are part of (concrete) reality... as real as rabbits and atoms. (Strawson 1999, 503-4)

Throughout *Selves* (2009), Strawson characterises Self-experience in various ways - as the experience 'we' (we psychologically 'normal', non-infant members of the human species) have of being an inner subject of experience, a locus of consciousness, a mental presence, a mental someone or thing. 'Inner' is relative to the human being considered as a whole. Though it does not positively exclude it, nor does Self-experience necessarily 'involve any positive... figuration of oneself as something that has any existence (i.e. a body) beyond one's mental being' (Strawson 2009, 2). This phenomenological description lends itself to a positive metaphysical view. Selves are distinct from the human being conceived of in its entirety and lack 'ontic depth' (Strawson 2009, 348). His 'Transience View' says that a Self only exists when there is experiencing and since each Self is identical with the experience and the content of the experience of which it is a subject.² Selves therefore have very brief existences indeed (around 3 seconds) (Strawson 2001, 10). Selves persist neither across gaps in consciousness nor through shifts in the content of consciousness, but exist one after another (see especially Strawson (2003)). Insofar as a Self is some set of neurotransmitters in a state of activation, it constitutes an ontically distinct physical object (or more specifically, a synergy) (Strawson 2001, 22). Strawson endorses both the Russellian position that the standard distinction between object and property and between mental and physical is superficial and unreal, as well as Kant's view that 'in their relation to substance, [properties] are not in fact subordinated to it, but are the manner of existence of the substance itself' (Strawson 1999, 23). Thus, Selves

are not a further fact from their physical realisation; they have no separate existence even though their experiential component is irreducible.

3. A closer look at Strawsonian phenomenology and the Strawsonian sense of self

In *Selves* (2009), Strawson describes his phenomenology as the analysis of 'the complex, cognitive experience-determining element SELF that is active in SELF-experience and that gives it its distinctive character' (3). Only after one has established, by means of reflection, the content of this experience-structuring element, can one ask the ontological question: 'Is there anything in reality to which it applies?' (Strawson 2001, 2). Interrogating the existence of the Self begins with the claim that '[m]any people believe in the self, conceived of as a distinct thing, although they are not clear what it is' (Strawson 2001, 3). They believe in it because 'they have a distinct *sense* of, or experience as of, the self, and they take it that it is not delusory' (Strawson 2001, 3). And it is precisely this sense, he argues, that 'is the source in experience of the philosophical problem of the self' (Strawson 2001, 3). In short, the first step in addressing the problem of the Self 'is to track the problem to this source in order to get a better idea of what it is' (Strawson 2001, 3). Strawson thinks we must begin with the 'phenomenological question' - a question pertaining to human beings rather than to any possible species with the capacity for Self-experience: (1) 'What is the nature of the sense of the Self?' (Strawson 2001, 3). Allowing for the existence of other (non-human) possibilities of Self-experience; Question (2) asks 'What is the minimal case of genuine possession of a sense of the Self?' (Strawson 2001, 3). Answers to (1) and (2) raise what Strawson calls 'the conditions question': (3) 'What are the grounds of possession of a sense of the Self?' (Strawson 2001, 3) Answers to (1), (2), and (3) are required before the 'factual/metaphysical question' can be asked: (4) 'Is there (is it possible that there exists) such a thing as the Self?' (Strawson 2001, 3).

Strawson conceives of the question 'Is there such a thing as the mental Self?' as equivalent to the question 'Is any sense of the Self an accurate representation of anything that exists?' (Strawson 2001, 5). He then splits the equivalence claim in two: (E1) If there is such a thing as a Self, then some sense of the Self is an accurate representation of something that exists and (E2) If some sense of the Self is an accurate representation of something that exists, then there is such a thing as the Self (Strawson 2001, 5). He takes these claims to avoid two challenges: (C1) there is no reason to assume that if the Self exists, there must be some sense of

the Self that is an accurate representation of it since it is possible that the Self is unlike any experience of it and (C2) the Self that Strawson describes is an accurate representation of something that exists, but it is not *the* Self since it lacks some feature *F* (immortality, etc.) (Strawson 2001, 5). E1 therefore imposes a phenomenological constraint on any metaphysical account and lays down a necessary condition. E2 stipulates a sufficient condition:

[N]othing can fail to count as the self if it features all the properties that feature in some sense of the self, whatever other properties it may possess or lack (Strawson 2001, 5).

Given the very specific way that Strawson frames the issue, we require answers to the phenomenological question before we can answer the metaphysical question (Strawson 2001, 2).

The aspects of the Self with which the question of the Self is concerned, Strawson claims, are basic. That is, they are 'situated below any plausible level of cultural and individual variation' and are conceptual or structural rather than affective (Strawson 2009, 35). Rather than featuring as a conclusion of investigation, this claim is simply assumed. Across cultural divides and individual variation, he takes it that there are eight ways in which the Self is usually thought to be experienced - (i) as a thing, (ii) as a mental thing, (iii & iv) as a single thing when considered synchronically and diachronically, (v) as ontically individual, (vi) as a subject of experience, a feeler, or a thinker, (vii) as an agent, and (viii) as a thing with a character or personality - he ultimately characterises the minimal form of Self-experience as requiring only those qualities that correspond to the acronym SESMET: a Subject of Experience that is a Single MEntal Thing (Strawson 2001, 3).

4. Strawsonian phenomenology

In 'The Self' (2001) Strawson claims both that the Self is experienced in ways that transcend cultural and individual divides *and* that the existence of 'dramatic differences' in the way people experience themselves only 'backs up the view that we need a phenomenology of the sense of the self before we try to answer the factual question' (Strawson 2009, 14). He therefore draws a distinction between, on one hand, merely 'experiencing oneself', casual introspection, and serious, proper (albeit non-Husserlian) phenomenological analysis. Unlike most phenomenologists, Strawson does not propose a method for general (multi-thematical) analysis. At worst, one might characterise his method as tantamount to a report of how Galen Strawson (the man) goes about experiencing himself where certain

aspects of his experience are privileged over others by means of appeal to what has more significant philosophical or intuitive force means little other than what has more significant philosophical or intuitive force according to me Galen Strawson's experience of himself.

Some might feel uneasy with Strawson's subordinating of metaphysics to phenomenology. This issue, however, is not just a problem for Strawson, but for all phenomenologists.³ There are also problems, of course, with seeing metaphysics as prior to, or as trumping, phenomenology. Metaphysics, like scientism, posits theoretical objects, structures, relations, and laws from the perspective of a disinterested or perspective-less observer. It thus ignores or dismisses the first-person, lived perspective and privileges the third-person perspective while simultaneously, some argue, forgetting that it is *from* the first and second-person perspectives that the third-person perspective, or 'objectivity', is constructed. Where Strawson's project becomes most problematic is in the details (or lack thereof) of his particular (proto-?) Phenomenological method, to which I now turn.

Strawson acknowledges that his project might seem to some to risk 'being self-undermining' since '[p]hilosophical reflection on the nature of SELF-experience may disrupt the natural tissue of pre-reflective experience, misting or knocking out the very thing it's trying to examine' (Strawson 2009, 15). How, if at all, can Strawson avoid the objection that the Selves he champions are merely artefacts of his idiosyncratic phenomenological method? One defence he proffers is that

concentrated reflection on the nature of SELF-experience may transform the thing that it is trying to examine in a valuable way... [R]eflection on SELF-experience may alter pre-reflective SELF-experience precisely because it increases insight into how things actually are, so far as the existence of selves is concerned. (Strawson 2009, 16-17)

If one is not persuaded by his response, then the objection is still weakened by the fact that it extends to *all* projects that utilise a phenomenological or introspective method. In a similar vein, one might argue that differences between individuals' accounts of the same phenomenon merely represent what they already pre-reflectively believed those phenomena to be. This objection, however, is weaker than it might initially appear. Thinkers such as Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Hegel show us that we cannot ask a question like 'What is the Self?' completely divorced from our *already* constituted meanings and from what we already think. As Hegel criticised Kant, there would be nothing for (literally

empty) – that is, content-less - creatures to discover and no tools with which they could begin to discover or create. A stronger objection might go as such: The power of suggestion might cause one to have a sense of nearly anything. How, then, can one delineate the genuine phenomenological findings from the spurious? To put it differently, it is not obvious that the Self Strawson describes would be discovered by *any* person's phenomenological Self-investigation or if it is simply prompted in the reader (by Strawson) and therefore *created* (rather than discovered) by thinking about the issue in a very specific and perhaps contrived way – indeed, in the way *Galen Strawson* thinks of it. With respect to all these objections, Strawson falls short of providing an acceptable account of why *his* phenomenological reports are privileged (why they are 'more real', 'less spurious', more revealing of the way things are) than those of others.

I now turn to some specifics of Strawson's account in order to flesh out and problematise: (i) the Strawsonian view that the Self is (or can be) experienced as a bare (purely cognitive) locus of consciousness; (ii) his distinction between general Mental-experience and full-blown Self-experience; and (iii) tensions that result in light of his conceptual/ontological account of the identity and constitution relation between, on one hand, an experience, the subject of the experience, and the content of the experience, and, on the other, lived experience's disclosure of situatedness in space and time as both a limit and a condition of possibility of a Self's being. Strawson's views on (iii) are articulated most clearly in his 2003 article, aptly titled 'What is the Relation Between An Experience, the Subject of the Experience, and the Content of the Experience'.

5. A closer look at Strawson's phenomenological results: the self's singleness, the inessentiality of personality, and the 'I' as 'eye'

Considered synchronically, Strawson characterises the Self's principle of unity as mental. The Self 'is conceived of as something that has the kind of strong internal causal connectedness that a single marble has, as compared with the much weaker unity of internal causal connectedness found in a pile of marbles' (Strawson 2001, 8). Problematically, this metaphor relies on the reader's intuition of 'singleness', which is the very intuition which is in need of explanation. As another attempt, Strawson describes the Self's synchronic singleness as consisting in 'an experientially unitary, unbroken, or hiatus-free period of thought or experience' (Strawson 2001, 9). He offers the thought 'The cat is on the mat' as a paradigm example of such an

experiential unity (Strawson 2009, 107). Questions thus ensue. Does the conjunctive 'The cat is on the mat and the dog is at the door' count as one thought or two and why? What about 'The cat is on the mat... the mat that my friend brought me from Japan'? In other words, exactly how Strawson thinks experiential unities (mental states and content) are individuated is, at best, in need of argument.

In any case, relying on the reader's intuition of what counts as 'single' versus 'multiple', he argues that nothing could annihilate one's sense of synchronic mental singleness. Even if

one came to believe that the existence of the mental did *not* involve the existence of a diachronically single substance, there is no reason to think that this would undermine one's experience of the self as single. (Strawson 2001, 11)

Further,

[o]ne's experience of the self as single is independent of any belief that it is single in its non-mental nature. This [only]...illustrates the respect in which the singularity of the self is conceived of as being essentially grounded in its mental nature alone. (Strawson 2001, 11).

Similarly, non-mental diachronic singleness (i.e. having one brain) does not guarantee diachronic mental singleness (Strawson 2001, 11). Moreover, he suggests that the initial thought that the Self is diachronically single breaks down given our experience of multiplicity. An analysis of rapid thought-processes, for instance, rather than disclosing the co-existence of multiple Selves, reinforces the sense of a single mental presence - one experiences oneself as a single spectator to the pandemonium (Strawson 2001, 13).

Strawson goes on to argue that the experience of a consistent personality 'is not a necessary component of any possible sense of the self' since

most people have at some time, and however temporarily, experienced themselves as a kind of bare locus of consciousness – not just as detached, but as void of personality... a mere (cognitive) point of view. (Strawson 2001, 13)

He also maintains that in the human case 'lack of any sense of the self as having a personality is normal' because personality is 'built so deeply into the way one apprehends things that it does not present itself to awareness in such a way as to enter significantly into one's Self-experience' (Strawson 1999, 492). Plausibly, he says that '[o]ne's own personality is usually something that is unnoticed in the present moment. It's what one looks through, or where one looks from; not something one looks at' (Strawson 1990b, 492). But his various claims - about experiencing one's self as a bare locus of

consciousness or a mere cognitive point of view, as experiencing one's Self without personality, as experiencing personality as what one looks through rather than at appears - are incompatible.

Given Strawson's characterisations of Personality-experience and Self-experience, how can personality be individuated from the Self? In order to avoid objections stemming from the thought that Self-experience is impossible because the Self cannot be an object of thought without being systematically elusive, Strawson characterises the Self just as he characterises personality - as *something one looks through* rather than *something one looks at* (Strawson 1999, 498-9). It would seem to follow then, that either the Self just *is* (identical with) one's personality or that Self-experience and Personality-experience have different referents (whether they only refer to senses or also refer to entities), but there is no clear sense in which they can be individuated. To put it a bit differently, it is unclear whether Strawson wants to claim that (i) personality is inessential to one's being a unitary mental Self since personality does not (and can never) feature as an object of thought because it features instead as the vantage point - in this case, one with a kind of mood - from which experience happens (just like the Self) or if (ii) he believes it possible to be a Self while experiencing oneself as a bare locus of consciousness. In the first case, personality features as a component of Self-hood and so is actually neither inessential nor distinguishable from the Self. In the second case, personality is inessential to the Self since a Self is (can be experienced as) a bare locus of consciousness.

Strawson seems to hold both views in his most recent works (2003 and 2009). The first of these views is problematic insofar as it blurs the distinction between the Self and personality and fits awkwardly with his claim that personality is an inessential feature of the Self. In championing the second of these views, however, Strawson lands himself in a contradiction given his account of the identity and constitution relation between an experience, the subject of the experience, and the content of the experience, a position most clearly articulated in his aptly titled paper 'What is the Relation Between an Experience, the Subject of the Experience, and the Content of the Experience?' (2003) and also defended in *Selves* (2009). If Strawson wants to maintain his architecture of the experience-subject-content relation as well as his characterisation of experience as inherently experience *for*, he has to give up the view that one can experience oneself as a bare locus of consciousness. The initial reasons are

obvious. If the experience-subject-content relation is one of identity and constitution, a subject cannot exist without experience and content. Moreover, if all experience is really experience *for*, then all experience is given *to* a subject and is characterised by *what-it's-likeness for* a subject and one cannot experience nothingness. In other words, given Strawson's own views, it seems that 'to experience a bare locus of consciousness' is a contradiction in terms. But let me attempt to articulate why the problems run deeper than just these for Strawson's overall project.

6. The impossibility of the self as a bare locus of consciousness and a strange dilemma: the self's omnipresence or the self's disappearing act

Strawson says of his own experience of consciousness that it is 'one of repeated returns into consciousness from a state of complete, if momentary, unconscious' (Strawson 2001, 18). In other words, the experience of consciousness is best described, Strawson thinks, as a continual restarting - a series of coming to's from pure nothingness. While there may be coherence amongst the contents of thought over time, this is not necessarily the case with the operation of thought, which he says can be quite episodic (Strawson 2001, 18). This, at least, is consistent with his other claims, namely that there cannot be a SESMET without experience and that 'it is arguable that there cannot be an experience without a SESMET' (Strawson 1999, 504). Mental life, then, is a gappy series of eruptions of consciousness from a substrate of apparent non-consciousness/nothingness (Strawson 2001, 20-1). Or, is it better to say that there is a series of eruptions of self-consciousness from mere consciousness?

Owen Flanagan (1992) writes:

It is an illusion, fostered by reflection on experience, insofar as reflection requires that we be thinking about thought, that an 'I think that' thought accompanies all experience. Furthermore, even when we do think or speak in self-referential terms, there is no warrant for the claim that we are thinking about our complex narrative self. We are not *that* self-conscious. The upshot is that all subjective experience is self-conscious in the weak sense that there is something it is like for the subject to have the experience. (194)

Strawson is in agreement with Flanagan's final claim; consciousness is characterised by an essential inner polarity, which is to say that all conscious experience is experience *for* a subject. In agreement with Husserl, for Strawson, it is not that consciousness reaches out to its object; there is no consciousness that exists prior to any of its objects.

Strawson and Husserl et al. seem to agree that consciousness, its subject, and its content exist simultaneously and are mutually dependent as well as that once consciousness is conceived of as essentially intentional, the ordinary and neat division (and opposition) between subject and object is abolished.

It is therefore more than a bit perplexing to find Strawson arguing in 'The Self and the SESMET' (1999) that it is 'not clear that all genuine Mental-experience must have the full structure of Self-experience' and that it is

not clear that the minimal case of Self-experience is *ipso facto* the minimal case of Mental-experience... the minimal case of Mental-experience may be some kind of 'pure consciousness' experience, of the kind discussed by Buddhists and others, that no longer involves anything that can usefully be called 'Self-experience' at all. (Strawson 1999, 498)

To recapitulate, Strawson claims:

1. (Experience iff Subject iff Content), a constitution relation, and (Experience = Subject = Content), an identity relation,⁴
2. that under a phenomenological description, *all* experience is experience *for* a subject,⁵

And so, following from (i and ii) that

3. the Self *qua* subject is the unseen point of origin even in the case of mere Mental-experience (as contrasted with full-blown Self-experience).

This enables Strawson to avoid objections stemming from the claim that Self-experience is impossible if the Self is supposed to be an object of thought, but only at the cost of creating new problems. Given Strawson's view of the relation between an experience, the subject of experience, and content, how can we now make sense of his distinction between Mental-experience and full-blown Self-experience? Is there really a distinction and if so, in what does it consist?

Let us first attempt to bolster Strawson's case. Perhaps a distinction can be drawn between thinking and experiencing. Perhaps thinking is a subset of the more basic activity of experiencing (mere Mental-experience). Thinking, one might argue, seems to imply a more active Self, an active role that is missing in meagre Mental-experience. Hence, if not all experiencing is tantamount to thinking, perhaps Self-experience is only possible during the latter activity. But it seems that this cannot be the case for the following reasons.

1. Strawson claims that the very existence of each thought 'involves a self, or consists in the existence of a self or SESMET or subject of

experience entertaining a certain mental content' (Strawson 2000, 47).

2. He also claims that '[t]here cannot be a SESMET without an experience, and it is arguable that there cannot be an experience without a SESMET' (Strawson 1999, 504).

In the footnote to this quotation, he continues:

If this is so, then SESMETs... exist even in the case of unselfconscious beings. Many, however, will prefer to say that SESMETs exist only in self-conscious beings, or (even restrictedly) only in the case of explicitly self-conscious experiences. I note this issue and put it aside for another time. (Strawson 1999, 504 fn. 59)

Yet, without addressing this issue, does Strawson offer us anything approaching an answer to the question 'What is the difference between Mental-experience and Self-experience?' More specifically and more damningly, does he give us an answer to the question 'What is the nature of Self-experience?' Strawson's 'I' is an 'eye', an unseen point of origin, which is to say that the Self somehow manages the feat of instantiating an irrelational relation to itself. And this is precisely why Strawson's program harbours a dilemma: If the 'I' is made an object to itself, then the Self is nowhere since it is systematically elusive à la Ryle and if the Self's self-relation is irrelational, then thought/experience is saturated with the Self and the distinction between Self-experience and Mental-experience cannot hold. There is no such thing as experiencing one's Self as a bare locus of consciousness in the very moment of experience. One can only reflect on having *been* a bare locus of consciousness after the fact. Let me now turn to another problem, one that affects the plausibility of Strawson's program insofar as it can be said to aptly characterise ('normal') human experience.

7. Selves and human beings, selves in space and time

Strawson's Selves lack ontic depth. As Thomas Nagel (2009) writes:

The self that is the subject of your present experience does not know algebra or French, or how to make an omelette, and it does not have political convictions. But such things, says Strawson, can find an adequate home not in the fleeting sequence of selves but in the persisting human being, with its persisting brain, which stores the capacities and dispositions that allow us to attribute these more stable properties. Materialists, he says, 'take the mind - the mind-brain - to have non-experiential being in addition to experiential being, non-experiential being that provides all the ontic depth anyone could possibly want.'

On Strawson's program, then, the common use of the word 'I' is ambiguous. As Sydney Shoemaker (2009) complains of Strawson's account:

Sometimes it ['I'] refers to a full human being, while sometimes it refers to a self distinct from the full human being. (He [Strawson] sometimes marks the latter use by writing 'I*'.) He must think that this ambiguity thesis protects him from incoherence when he says things like 'when I think and talk about myself, my reference sometimes extends only to the self that I am, and sometimes it extends further out, to the human being that I am' ([*Selves*,] p. 31).

Shoemaker's objection is that Strawson insinuates that 'he *is* (identical with) two distinct things, a self and a human being, which on the face of it seems incoherent' (Shoemaker 2009).

On a related note, Strawson's distinction between the Self and the human being considered wholly (that is, the human being considered in space, time, and history) is somewhat artificial. To use Strawsonian metaphysics against Strawson, the distinction is merely conceptual, not ontological.⁶ If Strawson's account of the relation between an experience, the subject of experience, and the content of experience holds, then any reference to a Self is also implicitly a reference to mental content and any reference to content is implicitly a reference to things extrinsic to the Self and to the individual body. Let me attempt to argue why this might be the case.

Being positioned in space and time is a limit and a condition of possibility of one's (a human being's) perceptual horizons and possible mental content. Lived experience does not reveal that everything can be experienced simultaneously. My thoughts happen in time. That is, my thoughts are given to me sequentially. Further, time and place dictate limits on *what* I can think. I could not have entertained as mental content, the concepts 'Higgs boson' or '*epoché*' a thousand years ago. Indeed, on the Strawsonian program, this 'I' of now could not have existed in any space or time other than here and now since I am (identical with) the I that is experiencing writing this sentence and that is entertaining as mental content, roughly the content of this sentence. I am identical to, and constituted by, *this* experience and *this* content. The Selves that we are, are not able to generate (all) content on their own and from nothing. *Dasein*, Heidegger tells us, 'is already in a definite world and alongside a definite range of definite entities within-the-world' (Heidegger 1962, 264). Further, lived experience discloses our relation to, and dependence on, the Selves of others since Selves, it seems, 'can direct themselves toward something inner-worldly only from within the context of the horizon of their lifeworld' (Habermas 2008,

35). In other words, no Self appears to be at liberty to entertain any meaning or concept it pleases, but only those that, given a Self's space and time, are already available or within reach. If the human Self's identity is in part determined by the content of its experience and if content cannot be divorced from space, time, and culture (things extrinsic to the Self and even to the individual body), then a Self's identity is not separable from the world outside of it.

8. Conclusion

I have argued that when it comes to the problem of the Self, the general method of subordinating metaphysics to phenomenology is tenable. I have, however, highlighted problems with Strawson's particular phenomenology and with some of its specific results.⁷ I have taken issue with (i) his thought that the Self is (or can be) experienced as a bare locus of consciousness, (ii) his distinction (or lack thereof) between general Mental-experience and full-blown Self-experience, and (iii) difficulties that arise with respect to his conceptual/ontological account of the identity and constitution relation between an experience, the subject of the experience, and the content of the experience, on one hand, and on the other, lived experience's disclosure of *being in a position* in space and time as both a limit and a condition of possibility of a human Self's being. If Strawson wishes to uphold his architecture of the experience-subject-content relation and his characterisation of experience as inherently experience *for*, he has to give up the view that one can experience oneself as a bare locus of consciousness. If there is no such thing as experiencing one's self as a bare locus of consciousness in the very moment of experience (one can only reflect on having been a bare locus of consciousness after the fact), then Strawson's distinction between Mental-experience and Self-experience requires, at minimum, more careful consideration. Lastly, insofar as Strawson's project relates to human experience, if the 'average' human Self's identity is in part determined by the content of its experience and if content cannot be divorced from space, time, and culture (things extrinsic to the Self and even to the individual body), then a Self's identity – indeed, more 'deeply' its metaphysical constitution – is not easily separable or delineated from the world outside of it.

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thank an anonymous reviewer for reminding me of this piece

Notes

1. I use the terms 'SELF'/'Self'/'self'/'SESMET' (or Subject of Experience that is a Single MEntal Thing) as Strawson seemingly does, which is to say that aside from cases where I explicitly attempt to delineate between them either for my purposes or in following Strawson's (rare) delineations, I use them more or less interchangeably. Mostly, I avoid use of 'SESMET' since it not colloquial. Also, since Strawson switches, seemingly without any rule, between 'SELF', 'Self', and 'self' across and even within his works, I use 'Self' (capital 'S') unless I am quoting Strawson directly in which case I use whatever he does – either the upper or lower case.
2. This view is argued most clearly in *Selves* and in his aptly titled paper 'What is the Relation Between an Experience, the Subject of the Experience, and the Content of the Experience?'.
3. I thank an anonymous reviewer for reminding me of this.
4. This is the main claim of 'What is the relationship between an experience, the subject of the experience, and the content of the experience?' (2003).
5. See especially Strawson's *Mental reality* (2010), Eds. Hilary Putnam and Ned Block, p. 132.
6. See 'What is the relation between an experience, the subject of an experience, and the content of the experience?' (2003), pp. 294-295.
7. For a very good discussion of Strawson's phenomenology, the reader might refer to 'Phenomenal consciousness and self-awareness: a phenomenological critique of representational theory' by D. Zahavi and J. Parnas in *Models of the self* (2001). I

MICHAEL POLANYI AND THE PRACTICE OF CONTEMPORARY SCIENCE

James Beauregard

Abstract: Michael Polanyi wrote extensively on the nature and practice of science, including the manner in which new scientific discoveries become part of the scientific canon. While the technology of science has developed markedly since Polanyi's day, the persons who practice science operate similarly as they apply explicit and tacit knowledge in the scientific process to attain new discoveries and communicate them to others. In this regard, the work of physician/neuroscientist Stanley Prusiner is presented as a case study on the nature of contemporary science and of Polanyi's enduring contribution to our understanding of the scientific endeavour.

Key words: apprenticeship, bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, kuru, mad cow disease, neuroscience, Michael Polanyi, prion, proteins, scrapie, Stanley B. Prusiner.

1. Prusiner, Polanyi and prions

The purpose of this essay is to take a contemporary look at Michael Polanyi's vision of the scientific process, and to examine the ways in which this vision continues to be useful, as exemplified in the work of a contemporary neuroscientist, Stanley B Prusiner. I will begin with a brief account of Prusiner's life and work, followed by a brief summary of Polanyi's account of scientific procedure, and then consider how Polanyi's account continues to show its importance through a case study of the process by which Prusiner made new and striking scientific discoveries with significant implications for the future of medicine.¹

2. The work of Stanley B. Prusiner

Stanley Prusiner is a contemporary American physician and neuroscientist who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1997 for his ground breaking work on prion diseases. The prize came as the culmination of decades of research that led to the discovery of a new and hitherto unexpected disease agent that accounted for several progressive, and fatal, neurological disorders, opening new avenues of research on possibilities of care and prevention through the understanding of a common disease process manifesting itself in numerous ways. As we will see, the trajectory of Prusiner's scientific career strikingly confirms Polanyi's descriptions of

the process of science, and the manner in which new discoveries become part of the scientific canon.

2.1 Prusiner's story

Born in the United States on May 28, 1942, the descendent of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, Prusiner studied chemistry at the University of Pennsylvania, where, the summer after his junior year he had his first experience with scientific research. His love of science grew deeper over time. 'The privilege of spending time discovering something that no one else had ever known before became an insatiable thirst.'² He identifies several scientific mentors at the University of Pennsylvania who taught him to read and understand the scientific literature. He attended medical school (four years), followed by his medical internship at the University of California San Francisco, worked as a research associate at the National Institute of Health, at the National Heart Institute where he studied under biochemist specialising in enzymes and completed a residency in neurology.³ He subsequently entered conducted several decades of research and publication investigating the nature of a variety of progressive neurologic diseases, research that was at many points fraught with controversy. In 1997, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for his work on prions.

2.2 Deadly diseases

In order to consider Prusiner as a Polanyian scientist, it is necessary to turn to a brief consideration of the clinical neurology and neurobiology of Prion diseases. In *Memory and Madness*, Prusiner vividly recounts the first time he saw an individual who had Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD) In 1972, as first-year neurology resident, he was asked to see a woman who began having difficulty with memory and fine movements in her hands. She had difficulty describing her symptoms and her husband had to give Prusiner her history. Her husband reported that he had observed that his wife suddenly began having difficulty inserting the key into her car's ignition and had difficulty unzipping a compartment on a golf bag. Soon after, she began to experience short-term memory deficits (difficulty learning and remembering new information), which Prusiner observed during the mental status examination, and the neurologic findings included myoclonus - a jerking movement of her muscles. Her deficits progressed rapidly and in

just a few months she became mute and almost unable to move, with increasingly severe cognitive deficits. She died shortly after.⁴

Prusiner went directly to the neurologic literature better to understand the disease, but was dissatisfied with what he found. The disease was already known to be part of a family of related neurologic illnesses in humans and animals. In animals these included scrapie in sheep and goats, and bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE, the so-called 'mad cow disease'). In humans, the neurobiology of the disease had been studied by D. Carleton Gajdusek and C. Joseph Gibbs, who had demonstrated that the disease could be transmitted between humans, and between humans and animals. CJD in humans was already known to have a long incubation period and the neuropathology, which caused vacuoles and molecular changes in the brain, were assumed to be caused by a yet undiscovered virus that took months to years to do its damage. Prusiner, however, considered recognised a fact that would become essential to his discoveries: the woman he examined did not exhibit any of the traditional signs of an infection – she did not develop a fever, a sign of the body's fighting infection, and she had no increase in her white blood cell count, part of the body's immune defences.

Working within the knowledge base existing at the time, virologists assumed that these neurodegenerative diseases must be caused by one of the known disease agents, most likely a virus, but one that operated more slowly than was typical in most diseases. In addition, the structure of the agent that caused CJD remained elusive. In reading the literature, Prusiner learned that the disease agent could not be killed by the methods that typically destroyed viruses. He also came upon the work of Tivkeh Alper, a neuroscientist who is suggested that the scrapie agent was something altogether different from the known disease pathogens. The answers that were available had been formulated within the paradigm of virology and attempted to use that knowledge base to explain something that, to Prusiner, was not a good enough fit. This gap between infection and evidence of infection would prove crucial for Prusiner.⁵

3. Enter Michael Polanyi

Michael Polanyi was himself a scientist who wrote at length, across multiple works, on the process of science, as well as the nature and value of the wider scientific enterprise. I would like to briefly review some of the main points in Polanyi's understanding of science, and then consider how these ideas are demonstrated in Prusiner's career. This will entail Polanyi's considerations of 1) becoming a scientist,

2) the practice of science and scientific discovery, and 3) convincing others of new scientific findings.

3.1 Becoming a scientist

Apprenticeship is Polanyi's key notion in the making of a scientist. For Polanyi, becoming a scientist requires a long educational process, both inside and outside the classroom. It begins in primary school with education into the scientific world-view, is expanded in secondary school, and takes flight both theoretically and practically at university. Critical in the process of the creation of a scientist was a scientific apprenticeship. In this process the student scientist apprentices him or herself to a master of a discipline, during which the details of scientific practice and discovery are imbibed, both in the explicit methods of science, and tacitly, in the deeper acceptance of a scientific world-view. This master-apprentice relationship is grounded in trust, a process he compared to the way children learn speech.

Just as children learn to speak by assuming that the words used in their presence means something, so throughout the whole range of cultural apprenticeship the intellectual junior's craving to understand the doings and sayings of his intellectual superiors assumes that what they are doing and saying has a hidden meaning which, when discovered, will be found satisfying to some.⁶

The process of apprenticeship entails the granting of one's 'personal allegiance' to a mentor and is 'a passionate outpouring of oneself into untried forms of existence. The continued transmission of articulate systems, which lends public and enduring quality to our intellectual gratifications, depends throughout on these acts of submission.'⁷ By the conscious submission to scientific authority, embodied and the master-apprentice relationship, the student imbibes knowledge of the scientific process, and the world-view of science, its values and its beliefs.

3.2. The practice of science and scientific discovery

Polanyi was clear that knowledge of the mechanics of science is in the end insufficient for the advancement of science. To move forward in a preprogrammed manner of scientific experimentation fails to take into account the human dimension of science, that which is communicated tacitly in the master-apprentice relationship, and what comes to be understood in this relational context enables a newly formed scientist both to practice and, when necessary, to step outside methodology and make new discoveries. Such discoveries are founded upon faith in one's teachers and in the practice of science, which in itself entails the ability to go beyond one's

teachers, to think in new ways and even to make new discoveries that challenge the accepted knowledge and structures of science. Scientists in the process of discovery sees reality as an 'inexhaustible' source for discovering.⁸

This process cannot succeed without having mastered the body of knowledge in one's own scientific discipline since scientific discovery is built on knowledge already gained. The open-ended nature of science must allow for dissent against established views, and while the process are bringing new ideas into the scientific canon can be enormously difficult, science can ultimately pay homage to startling new discoveries that bring about modifications in current models.⁹ In his discussion of scientific value, Polanyi articulates three criteria, all of which must be present in some measure in order for an original idea to enter the scientific canon: 1) certainty, 2) systematic relevance and 3) intrinsic interest. Polanyi noted that the first two criteria were scientific, while the third extends beyond scientific practice identity human/interpersonal dimension of science.¹⁰

Before it can be considered for entry into a scientific canon, a new idea must be certain, that is scientifically true and reliable (capable of replication). This is accomplished through publication of new ideas in peer-reviewed journals and conference presentations, and replication by other scientists.¹¹ Scientific findings must have a consistent track record to attract attention. A new scientific fact in and of itself can easily fall by the wayside, but if pursued and publicised will have importance if it expands, deepens or offers a correction to current scientific understanding.¹²

3.3. Convincing others of new scientific discoveries

The two scientific factors (certainty, systemic relevance) in themselves are not enough. An interpersonal/communal factor must be present in order for a new discovery to be brought into the established canons of science. The finding must hold an *intrinsic interest* for the scientific community. This 'extra-scientific' component must seize the imagination of the scientists before it can gain ultimate acceptance and inclusion. This process that can generate widespread controversy, opposition and difficulty for the scientist attempting to introduce a new idea. While the process of discovery can be arduous, fight for acceptance can be even more so (PK, 135 – 136). There are several reasons for this controversy, including the personal factors of competition in science. One researcher publishes a discovery first; all others are then moved to second place. In addition. Polanyi captured the deeper

epistemological issue when he wrote about the presumed objectivity of scientific discovery:

It is due to a fundamental reluctance to recognise our higher faculties, which our empiricist philosophy cannot account for. We dread to be caught believing – and, in fact, knowing – things which are not demonstrable by the measurement of observed variables. So we fabricate all kinds of pretences and excuses and describe our most profound insights as merely 'economic descriptions' and speak of our most assured convictions as mere 'working hypotheses.' This serves as a verbal screen behind which to hide our philosophically unaccountable power of discovering the truth about nature and our wholehearted commitment to the truths which we have so obscurely acquired.¹³

Insight, intuition, thinking beyond the accepted strictures of current beliefs in science – this is how new truths are attained.

In Polanyi's three-factor model, the discovering of a new idea is only the beginning. The scientist(s) must then mount a campaign to introduce new ideas to the wider scientific community, a process where passions often collide. For Polanyi, the discoverer has moved into a new vision of reality, one that is composed of the science that has gone before her, but that in some way contradicts that body of fact and theory. It is necessary for the discoverer to speak the language of science, but to do so in a way that opens new vistas, which means engaging in a process of persuasion both written and personal, and can frequently be fraught with conflict, conflict that cannot be settled by reasoned argument alone. Polanyi describes a situation in which there are suddenly two competing conceptual frameworks instead of the single, established one that accounts for the evidence up to that point. The discoverer collides with the old framework in presenting a new one, one that often is not easily accepted, one in which a 'logical gap' must be bridged:

Formal operations relying on one framework of interpretation cannot demonstrate a proposition to persons who rely on another framework. Its advocates may not even succeed in getting a hearing from these, since they must first teach them a new language, and no one can learn a new language unless he first trusts that it means something. A hostile audience may in fact deliberately refuse to entertain novel conceptions such as those of Freud, Eddington, Rhine or Lysenko precisely because its members fear that once they have accepted this framework they will be led to conclusions which they – rightly or wrongly – abhor. Proponents of a new system can convince their audience only by first winning their intellectual sympathy for a doctrine they have not yet grasped. Those who listen sympathetically will discover for themselves what they would otherwise never have understood. Such an acceptance is a heuristic

process, a self-modifying act, and to this extent a conversion.¹⁴

Polanyi's use of the word 'conversion' here is apt, as scientific beliefs are typically held with profound fervour. In summary, the process of science entails extensive training, apprenticeship, trust, knowledge of the scientific method, imagination, in the capacity to communicate one's findings to others.

4. Interlude: prions

This Polanyian scientific process is illustrated in our own day in the work of Stanley Prusiner. In order to approach Prusiner as a Polanyian scientist, we must briefly consider the nature of prions and prion diseases, and then proceed to Prusiner's research program and discoveries.

4.1 Prions: A Short History

One would likely have to search into the most remote corners of the British Isles to find someone unfamiliar with the term 'mad cow disease.' Its medical name, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, was reported by British veterinarian Dr. Colin Whitaker, who in April 1985 received a call from a farmer requesting that he come examine a cow that was behaving strangely. The veterinarian reported that when he approached the cow "she would shy away. She was previously a quiet cow and it started becoming aggressive, rather nervous," and aggressive to the other animals in the herd, comprised of about 300 cattle. The animal was also noted to be uncoordinated. The disease spread, and over the next year and a half more cases were reported across the South of England. The Ministry of Agriculture investigated and, studying brain samples from the affected animals discovered neuropathology similar to the disease known as 'scrapie,' which had long been known in sheep.

By the end of 1987 the illness, which the British press had termed 'mad cow disease' was present in cattle throughout England and Wales though not in Scotland. Seeking the source, epidemiologists zeroed in on the food source for dairy cattle, which were fed a high-protein diet to stimulate milk production. The disease source was found in the ground meat and bone meal from local slaughterhouses and it would become clear that the disease agent was closely related to several other known diseases, ultimately a normal body protein that had formed abnormally and became a disease agent. In Scotland the rendering of this food source was done differently, which is why the disease did not spread there initially.¹⁵ The scientific processes that uncovered a hitherto unknown disease agent progressed precisely as Michael Polanyi predicted in

his descriptions of the empirical, and, more importantly, personal aspects of scientific practice.

4.2 Scrapie

Scrapie, a disease found in sheep, is a progressive neurologic condition with characteristic neuropathology findings at autopsy.¹⁶ Clinically, the disease was known to have an extended incubation period, as long as 5 years from infection to symptom onset. The disease agent, then, did not operate the way typical virus or bacteria does, in which onset of signs and symptoms of illness happen much more quickly in relation to the time of infection. The disease had been studied from the 1930s, by Wilson and later by Alan Dickerson in Scotland. They had transferred the scrapie pathogen to mice and determined that the agent was extremely difficult to kill – it could not be destroyed by means that typically destroyed viruses and bacteria (boiling, freezing, chemical attack such as aldehyde and carbolic acid, ultraviolet light).¹⁷

4.3 Kuru

The research on scrapie would eventually converge with and unusual human disease studied among the Fore (*For-ay*) people of Papua New Guinea. The members of this tribe suffered from an illness they called kuru (shaking) and epidemiologic study by Australian physicians determined it to be confined to the Fore people and immediately bordering tribes in the eastern highlands of New Guinea. Prusiner visited the region in the late 1970s and was able to study individuals with the disease first hand. He describe members of the tribe who contracted kuru as having initial mild difficulties with co-ordination and balance, progressing to not being able to balance themselves while standing, the onset of tremors, and the re-emergence of primitive reflexes, suggesting frontal lobe damage. Cognitive deficits were evident as well. It was typically less than a year from the onset of symptoms to death.¹⁸

Autopsy studies of the brains of individuals who suffered from kuru were known to display similar pathology to the brains of those infected with Creutzfeldt-Jacob disease (CJD), and also to the brains of sheep and goats infected with scrapie. The disease agent, however, had not yet yielded up its secrets. An important clue to the disease came from anthropological studies that documented the practice of ritual cannibalism among the Fore people, beginning at the turn of the 20th century. The kuru epidemic reached its height in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Most of the victims were women and children, leading to charges of sorcery practised by men.¹⁹ Research in the 1960s and 70s demonstrated that the disease could be transferred from humans to chimpanzees, and the combination of Christian

missionaries in Papua New Guinea and the process of scientific discovery brought about a sharp decline in cannibalism, and in kuru, an essential epidemiological insight. Once the Fore abandoned the practice of ritual cannibalism, children ceased to develop the disease.²⁰

4.4 'Slow viruses'

The known agents of disease until the 1980s included viruses and bacteria, both containing nucleic acid, the building blocks of DNA. It was assumed that those who suffered from kuru were suffering from some sort of viral agent that did not operate in the same manner as traditional viruses. The time from infection to disease onset could be years, and so the cause was assumed to be what was termed a 'slow virus.'

4.5 The problem

Scientific study contributed to the eradication of a disease in the Fore population, but the nature of the disease itself remained a mystery. The study of these diseases illustrates both the advances that can be made by scientific discovery, and the ways in which the scientific establishment, and accepted the accepted canon of scientific knowledge can also act as a barrier to discovery. The disease model extent through the early 1980's required disease agents to fall into one of the known categories. The family of diseases that resulted in spongiform encephalopathies was thought of as having to be caused by bacteria, or, more likely a virus. The agent was known to be small, and so was assumed to be an extremely small virus that exerted its influence in its host over an extended period of time – a 'slow virus.' The answer would not be found until there was someone able to step outside this paradigm and think about disease in a new way. This is where Prusiner enters the story.

5. Stanley Prusiner, a Polanyian scientist

Prusiner's work follows the trajectory of Polanyi's writings on the nature and practice of science. We can now consider Polanyi's vision of the practice of science and see it worked out in the process of Prusiner's coming to a major scientific discovery, a process shot through with determination, imagination, conflict and not a little personal pain.

5.1 Becoming a (Polanyian) Scientist

Prusiner's scientific training began early in life, in grammar school and high school studies in science, a process by which the scientific world-view is communicated subtly but continuously. By the time he reached his undergraduate education, science was already familiar territory. Prusiner studied chemistry as an undergraduate and developed the desire to pursue a career in scientific research. He

described that, for him, 'The privilege of spending time discovering something that no one else had ever known before became an insatiable thirst'.²¹

As Polanyi has written, science cannot be learned alone; it requires both education and guidance from a trusted individual, a mentor who can engage with the student in a trusting relationship the transmits that only the knowledge of science, but it's world-view Prusiner identified scientific mentors throughout his undergraduate, graduate and postdoctoral training. At the National Institute of Health, (National Heart Institute) where he studied under a biochemist specialising in enzymes.²² His medical residency was in clinical neurology, which comprised extensive patient care, medical rounds with his teachers and conferences, during which he learned another important skill – how to think like a neurologist. It was during his first year of his residency that Prusiner was called in to see a patient who would set him on his career path. His reflection on his patient, and what he came to see as gaps on the clinical literature, led him on the path that resulted in the discovery of prions.²³

5.2 The practice of science and scientific discovery

Prusiner chose to begin his research career with the study of scrapie, the disease that infected sheep and had a neuropathology similar to CJD, as it held out the potential of quickly identifying the disease agent. In the course of his research he developed new methods for purifying (isolating) a disease agent, a vital first step in identifying it. In reflecting back on these years, Prusiner commented on the process of apprenticeship

Apprenticeships have been around for centuries; they work well in training doctors, lawyers, engineers and other professionals – but they may not be the best formula for scientists or other creative people engaged in forging new endeavours.²⁴

At first blush, this may appear to contradict Polanyi's thinking, but the context suggests otherwise. Here, Prusiner was lamenting the difficulty of obtaining grant money for research program unless the scientist already had extensive experience in a given field. For Polanyi, knowledge of one's academic area is an essential complement for scientific progress – one must first have a box in order to think outside it. That box, for Prusiner, was the field of virology, where was an accepted fact that viruses and bacteria were the causes of disease, and, vital to the infectious process, organisms that contained nucleic acids, the building blocks of DNA and RNA, which were assumed to be essential for a disease agent to reproduce itself. The disease agent

in scrapie, CJD and similar neurologic illnesses was termed a 'slow virus,' one which infected its host and then took months to years before symptoms of illness emerged. Scrapie, then, was assumed to be a virus containing a some for of a genome (DNA/RNA). Prusiner's difficulty with this concept was twofold: the traditional means to destroy viruses did not work on the scrapie agent, and those infected did not show the traditional medical signs of infection.

Virologists had developed various explanations as to why this might be the case – perhaps the agent had a heavily protected genome, or a modified genome somehow able to resist destruction by ultraviolet light, or a genome that could quickly repair itself when damaged. Prusiner, facing the gap in understanding, however, conceived of a new and at the time, heretical idea: 'All the data might be pointing to an infectious particle devoid of nucleic acid and thus with no apparent way to replicate.'²⁵ It was this insight, the existence of a hitherto unknown disease agent, one that might be neither a virus nor bacteria, and one that contained neither DNA nor RNA to replicate itself, that placed him, for a time, outside the traditional canon of science, and set him on a course he would pursue both scientifically and interpersonally in the coming decades.

5.3 Discovery

Prusiner's research program was thus focused on purifying (identifying) the scrapie agent, which had been determined to be 1/100 the size of a typical virus. In the process, he visited Papua New Guinea and examined individuals who had kuru, the shaking disease whose neuropathology was similar to the scrapie pathogen.²⁶ In the late 1970's and early 1980s, Prusiner began publishing what are now considered classic works, in which he reported the discovery of a disease agent, neither a virus nor bacteria, which he named a 'prion.' (for *protinaceous infectious particle*, with a bit of vowel shifting to make it easier to pronounce).²⁷ This was the beginning of a long and often arduous process of convincing the scientific community of his, then heretical, idea that a disease could be caused by something that contained no genetic material at all but was instead a normal body protein that had formed in an abnormal fashion (which would explain why the body did not exhibit an immune reaction to an invading virus or bacteria – the disease agent was one of the body's own proteins).

5.4 Convincing the world

Prusiner participated, as most scientists do, in the presentation of his findings at research conferences. Prusiner's own words best capture the opposition he received from his fellow scientists, who insisted on

maintaining the notion that the disease agent that caused the group of neurologic diseases under study must contain some sort of nucleic acid. Describing some of the initial reaction to his coining the word *prion*, Prusiner wrote:

It is difficult to convey the level of animosity that both the word 'prion' and the prion concept engendered. At every turn, I met people who were genuinely irritated by my findings. It seemed that faculty members at many universities were annoyed by their students' fascination with our data, which forced the faculty to take the results seriously and marshal arguments against them. The adjectives used to describe me because of 5-letter word were astonishing. I was called impulsive, presumptuous, reckless, ambitious, aggressive, callous, manipulative, and egotistical. I had thought that people might appreciate the separation our data had affected between the scrapie agent and viruses. And I thought that at least some scientists would enthusiastically embrace a new word that encompassed an entirely new concept in biology and medicine. I was surprised and disappointed by the negative reaction of many of my colleagues. Even some of my friends had difficulty comprehending the prion story as it was evolving.²⁸

Polanyi's thought on the acceptance of new ideas in science come to the fore here. The research base for Prusiner's discovery was growing, and they had the potential to bring about a systemic change in the areas of medicine, virology and molecular biology, and the subjects (medicine, disease) had a high level of intrinsic interest.²⁹ Prusiner had at this point moved from the heuristic passion of discovery to the 'persuasive passion,' speaking the language of science to his colleagues while simultaneously attempting to communicate a new vision.³⁰ Along the way, he frequently felt doubts about his own findings, despite a growing body of evidence in its favour. In Polanyi's words,

Heuristic passion seeks no personal possession. It sets out not to conquer, but to enrich the world. Yet such a move is also an attack. It raises a claim and makes a tremendous demand on other men; for it asks that its gift to humanity be accepted by all. In order to be satisfied, our intellectual passions must find response. This universal intent creates a tension. We suffer when a vision of reality to which we have committed ourselves is contemptuously ignored by others. For a general unbelief imperils our own convictions by invoking an echo in us. Our vision must conquer or die.³¹

Prusiner collided with the strength of firmly held scientific beliefs confronted by threatening facts. The struggle to gain acceptance for his ideas in the wider scientific community was often reported in the press, which typically try to portray his work in a controversial manner, focusing more on opposition to

his ideas than on the presentation of his findings in a balanced manner.³²

5.5 The Nobel Prize

Data supporting prions as an improperly folded protein grew through the 1980s and found increasing acceptance in the 1990s, through both Prusiner's work and the work of other scientists. As Polanyi has commented, signs of scientific acceptance include publication in peer-reviewed journals, the award of research grants, the granting of tenure, and the granting of scientific awards by the scientific community. Prusiner had received the prestigious Lasker Award in September 1994, and early on the Monday morning, October 5, 1997, Prusiner, then in Washington DC participating in a Food and Drug Administration panel, received an early morning phone call in his hotel room from Nils Ringertz of Sweden's Karolinska Institute, who informed him that he has just been awarded the 1997 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for his prion research.

At the Nobel ceremony on December 10, 1997, in Stockholm, Prusiner was presented to the King of Sweden, with words that reflected the difficult process of new ideas in science attaining acceptance. After brief description of what prions are, the speaker acknowledged the controversy that had surrounded prion research, saying

The hypothesis that prions are able to replicate without a genome and to cause disease violated all conventional conceptions and during the 1980s was severely criticised. For more than 10 years, Stanley Prusiner fought an uneven battle against overwhelming opposition. Research during the 1990s has, however, rendered strong support for the correctness of Prusiner's prion hypothesis. The mystery behind scrapie, kuru, and mad cow disease has finally been unravelled. Additionally, the discovery of prions has opened up new avenues to better understand the pathogenesis of other more common dementias, such as Alzheimer's disease.³³

Prusiner received what many consider the highest professional acknowledgement in science of the validity of his work. At the Nobel banquet, Prusiner acknowledged the difficulties he had faced in communicating his ideas to a wider audience,

Because our results were so novel, my colleagues and I had great difficulty convincing other scientists of the veracity of our findings and communicating to the people the importance of work that seemed so esoteric! As more and more compelling data accumulated, many scientists became convinced. But it was the 'mad cow' epidemic in Britain and the likely transmission of bovine prions to humans producing a fatal brain illness called Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease that introduced prions to the public. Yet the principles of prion biology are still so new that some scientists and

most laymen, including the press, still have considerable difficulty grasping the most fundamental concepts... No matter how new and revolutionary the findings may be, as data accumulate, even the sceptical scholars eventually become convinced except for a few who will always remain resistant. Indeed, the story of prions is truly an odyssey that has taken us from heresy to orthodoxy.³⁴

The controversy, however did not come to an end, in part because science is of its nature an open-ended activity, remaining ever receptive to the possibility of future discoveries that may alter current ways of thinking. As recently as 2011, Claudio Soto of the Mitchell Centre for Alzheimer's Disease and Related Brain Disorders and the Dept. of Neurology at the University of Texas Medical School in Houston expressed some of the questions about prions that remain as yet unanswered: Is there more to a prion agent than mis-folded protein? What is the normal function of the prion protein? How do prions cause brain degeneration? How common are prions in nature? Are there prion-like proteins in us that confer some biological advantage?³⁵ Lastly, some of the most staunch opponents of the prion hypothesis, the principal objection is that it is not been proven to their satisfaction prions are free of nucleotide building blocks of DNA and RNA.

6. Conclusion

Stanley Prusiner's scientific career, spanning several decades, and continuing today, illustrates the ongoing usefulness of Michael Polanyi's thoughts on the nature and progress of science, in which scientists are educated explicitly and implicitly through schooling and professional apprenticeship, who then independently then practice of the scientific method in both the explicit and implicit (tacit) dimensions, and, of interest here, make new discoveries work to convince the wider scientific community of their validity, particularly when such discoveries initially appear to run against accepted understandings. While the equipment of science is far more advanced now that was in Polanyi's day, the human aspects of scientific progress remain a constant.

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Notes

1. Prusiner recently published a first person account of his research into prions, which, along with his scientific publications, will serve as primary source material for this essay. See Prusiner, Stanley B. *Madness and memory: the discovery of prions – a new biological principal of disease*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014 (hereafter *MM*). The book contains an extensive bibliography of the research conducted by Prusiner and others on the structure and action of prions.
2. *MM*, 2.
3. *MM*, 14. The first Chapter of *MM* traces Prusiner's medical education and the beginning of his research program.
4. *MM*, 16-21.
5. See especially Chapter 2 of Prusiner's *MM*, where he describes this initial encounter with a person who had CJD, and how his puzzlement with the extant explanations led him to develop a research program aimed at discovering the agent responsible for a number of related neurologic diseases.
6. *PK*, 207-8.
7. *PK*, 208.
8. *TD*, 68.
9. *TD*, 68.
10. *PK*, 135 – 136.
11. *TD*, 69.
12. *PK* 135-136; *TD*, 66.
13. Polanyi, Michael. 'Scientific beliefs.' *Ethics*, 61, 1 (October 1950), 30.
14. *PK*, 151.
15. The history of the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy spread in England is chronicled by Richard Rhodes in *Deadly feasts: the 'prion' controversy and the public's health*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997. The veterinarian's quotation is taken from pages 171-172. While I use Rhodes as an accurate source for describing the history of the events in England, and some of the events leading to the discovery of prions, the later history is interpreted very cautiously as Stanley Prusiner, having had numerous bad experiences with the press, declined to be interviewed by Rhodes.
16. The disease took its name in part from the fact that infected sheep would scrape against fences and the sides of buildings, eventually wearing off all of their wool.
17. *MM*, 82ff.
18. *MM*, 62ff. The 'primitive reflexes' referred to here are reflexes that are normal in infants, such as the sucking and rooting reflex, in which infants will turn their heads toward a stroking motion on the face, and will suck automatically when something touches their lips/mouth. Primitive reflexes disappear as the central nervous system matures, but when there is damage to the brain's frontal lobes, these reflexes will reappear on neurologic examination, indicative of neurologic damage.
19. Rhodes, *Deadly feasts*, 78.
20. Rhodes, *Deadly feasts*, 128.21. *MM*, 2.
22. *MM*, 14.
23. See *MM*, Chapter 2.
24. *MM*, 23.
25. Prusiner details his scientific program in *MM*, which will not be traced in detail here. Prions are a well-established scientific fact today, and research on them continues. Prusiner's research has entered the scientific establishment through scientific publications and inclusion in scientific textbooks, two events Polanyi sees as essential for scientific facts to bring about a change in scientific understanding. My main concern in what follows is the process by which Prusiner's findings entered the scientific canon as illustrative of Polanyi's thinking on scientific value.
26. Prusiner, S. B. (1982). 'Novel protinaceous infectious particles cause scrapie.' *Science*, 216, 136-144. Prusiner gives an almost comical description of the process of coining this new term, starting with 'piaf' (protinaceous infectious agent) 'proin' and finally, the more easily pronounceable 'prion.' One editor at the journal *Science* objected to the term 'prion' as too self-serving, seeing in it 'PRusiner IONs). See also *MM*, 88-92.
27. *MM*, 93.
28. *PK*, 135 – 136.
29. *PK*, 162.
30. *PK*, 150.
31. See especially Chapter 11 of *MM*, 'Jousting with the press' which led Prusiner to refuse media interviews for the better part of a decade.
32. *MM*, 227.
33. *MM*, 230-231.
34. Soto, C. (2011) 'Prion hypothesis: the end of the controversy?' *Trends biochem Sci*, 36, 3 (March 2011), 8.

THE MEANING OF RANDOMNESS: THE LAPLACIAN FAULTS OF NEO-DARWINIANS ACCORDING TO MICHAEL POLANYI

Daniel Paksi

Abstract: According to Michael Polanyi, randomness is only a relation between deterministic systems and their principles. Random mechanisms, such as natural selection, mutation, are based on this relational concept of randomness. In itself, explicit 'Laplacian' knowledge of the lower level processes says nothing about the tacitly recognised higher level emergent processes defined by this randomness. Therefore it is a 'deceptive substitution,' a Laplacian fault, to think that we can explain every higher level phenomenon through only lower level processes, and principles.

Key words: Emergence, evolution, Laplacian fault, Michael Polanyi, mutation, natural selection, Neo-Darwinian theory, personal knowledge, randomness, tacit knowledge.

1. Preface: order, randomness and tacit knowledge

In the final chapter of *Personal Knowledge*, Michael Polanyi clarifies his standpoint concerning life, evolution, and the origin of tacit and personal knowledge as *emergent evolution*.

We must face the fact that life has actually arisen from inanimate matter, and that human beings [...] have evolved from tiny creatures resembling the parental zygote in which each of us had his individual origin. I shall meet this situation by re-establishing within the logic of achievement, the conception of emergence first postulated by Lloyd Morgan and Samuel Alexander. (*PK*: 382)

However, the ruling dogma in science concerning life and evolution upholds neo-Darwinism which, being a materialist theory, denies emergent evolution. On these grounds, many scholars have strongly criticized Polanyi's emergentist theory of life and evolution since its initial articulation (e.g. Giere 1968; Causy 1969; Grene 1992; Clayton 2003, 2004; Gulick 2011, 2012). Neo-Darwinism's overwhelming dominance in science and philosophy forces us to question Polanyi's emergentist ontology and his strong conviction in emergent evolution, almost as if the final chapters of *Personal Knowledge* never existed.

Yet, this fatally false path negates the fundamentals of tacit and personal knowledge and leads to deceptive substitutions, precisely the Laplacian faults from which Polanyi wanted to protect us with his theory of tacit and personal knowledge. Polanyi

discusses this fundamental fault in several places (e.g. *SOM*: 48–49; *PK*: 139–142, 358), the purpose of which is as follows.

According to the Laplacian ideal of explicit knowledge, modern scientists seek to know everything about lower level material processes. They want perfect observational accuracy and systematic precision in science, as well as to know all explicit numeric parameters of all parts and their governing principles in perfect equations, as Laplace's famous demons understand it. Modern scientists think that if they could know all of this, then they would know everything. Though this goal is their explicit ideal, in practice they do something else; they tacitly substitute, or more exactly connect, this monotonous explicit knowledge with tacit experiences of important, interesting, and higher-level comprehensive events, features, things, beings, and so on, all of which are in fact *not* part of the Laplacian ideal of explicit knowledge.

Once you refuse this deceptive substitution, you immediately see that the Laplacian mind understands precisely nothing and that whatever it knows means precisely nothing (*PK*: 141).

As such, modern scientists explicitly state one thing according to the Laplacian ideal yet tacitly do another. On the strength of Polanyi's thought, this is what we might call a *Laplacian fault*. In what follows, I show how these deceptive substitutions work in cases involving the concept of randomness and neo-Darwinian theory.

Chapter 3 of *PK* puts forward the example of pebbles in a beautifully kept garden of a railway station that are arranged in words reading, 'Welcome to Wales by British Railways' (*PK*: 33). Everybody who understands the language would recognise this as a meaningful pattern and think that the careful stationmaster greets us in this way. Yet, how can we know that this is the case if we have never seen the stationmaster arranging the pebbles in such a pattern? What if the pebbles are there in the garden and arranged as a consequence of, for example, a strong wind or storm? How can we know for sure that such is not the case?

The answer that generally seems immediately obvious to us entails computing the probability of the second case: that is, the exact probability that a storm can randomly arrange pebbles into text reading 'Welcome to Wales by British Railways.' Since the

result would be an awfully infinitesimal number, we could calmly rule out this possibility and thereby strengthen our original impression that the stationmaster intentionally arranged the pebbles to greet us. However, the answer is not so simple and unequivocal, for a storm, of course, can create many other random, meaningless arrangements of pebbles, the probability of which would be an equally infinitesimal number. Nevertheless, contrary to this fact, we would never claim that these arrangements are also the intentional work of the stationmaster. What is the source of this problem? Moreover, why do we state that any arbitrary arrangement of pebbles by a storm is random when the material processes of a storm, and thus the movements of the pebbles, are in fact entirely deterministic according to the laws of physics?

Polanyi's answer to these questions is that the recognition of any order in nature is the achievement of two tacit acts of human knowledge.

Every kind of human knowing, ranging from perception to scientific observation, includes an appreciation both of order contrasted to randomness and of the degree of this order. (*PK*: 38)

By the first we can distinguish order from randomness. In other words, we can find causal explanations for comprehensive orders of nature suggesting that they are not merely random and illusory but the consequence of some natural law or ordering principle. By the second we can appreciate the extent and depth of an order – that is, the position of an order within a meaningful emergent hierarchy of reality.

In this sense, Polanyi asserts that we appreciate order and its meaning – for instance, the 'Welcome to Wales by British Railways' pebbles in the garden – not by some kind of exact, Laplacian, explicit probability calculation but *by our tacit powers*. To forget this leads to Laplacian faults and our questioning of real, tacit convictions and the fundamentals of tacit and personal knowledge.

'When I say that an event is governed by chance, I deny that it is governed by order,' Polanyi writes (*PK*: 33). That is, randomness is nothing other than a statement of a correlation concerning nature. A recognised comprehensive pattern is either (1) a consequence of order and some kind of ordering principle or else (2) randomly occurring for which there is no ordering principle. Accordingly, in the second case, we call the comprehensive meaningless 'patterns' random though they are in fact the consequence of entirely deterministic lower level processes.

As shown later, neo-Darwinians, according to their materialist conviction, deny any higher-level

ordering principles and focus only on highly explicable, lower level processes and mechanisms such as mutation, natural selection, and genes drifts, among countless others. For them, life starts and evolves by chance, not by the ordering principles of life and evolution.

In what follows, I shall first investigate the true meaning of randomness (Section 2) to show that randomness is only a relation between at least two different determining factors. Randomness alone can never produce any real, meaningful pattern of order. Second, I shall focus on neo-Darwinian theory (Section 3) that seeks to explain higher-level, comprehensive phenomena of life and evolution by applying only lower level, random mechanisms and factors such as natural selection and mutation to show that neo-Darwinian theory can explain neither the origin of life nor real evolutionary development, facts which neo-Darwinians conceal with Laplacian faults. In a brief conclusion (Section 4), I establish that Polanyi and neo-Darwinians have radically different views on evolution and emergence and that Polanyi's ontology of emergent evolution cannot be expelled from *PK*. In this sense, one must choose between Polanyi and neo-Darwinism. There is no middle ground.

2. *The meaning of randomness*

As we have seen in the Preface, at the beginning of Chapter 3 of *PK* there is an example of pebbles arranged by a careful stationmaster to greet us: 'Welcome to Wales by British Railways' (*PK*: 33). Everybody who understands the given language would recognise this as a *meaningful* pattern of order (see, p. 53, Figure 1). Contrary to this, years later the pebbles, now randomly scattered all over the garden, naturally also have a kind of structure but *no meaning* (see, Figure 2).

At the level of the pebbles, there is *no* essential difference between the two cases. We see the same pebbles, but in different positions, and we can map out on a sheet of paper the explicit position of every pebble, assigning to each numeric parameters in *both* cases – this is the entirely explicit knowledge of Laplace's demon. However, in themselves these exact numeric parameters could *not* determine which state of pebbles is meaningful and which is not, which is lettering and which is only a pile of pebbles. Only on the grounds of the explicit numeric parameters could it be otherwise as there are several other numerically different situations in which we would see the meaningful pattern of Wales lettering (multiple realisability; compare Figure 3 (p. 53) to Figure 1).

There is no explicit formula to define in numeric parameters the meaningful patterns of Wales

lettering, thereby determining an exact boundary between meaningful and meaningless pebbles states, because the meaningful Wales lettering is not only a listing of numeric parameters at the level of the pebbles but *also a distinct higher level lettering* that we recognise as a higher level pattern of order by our tacit powers. As a matter of fact, in the second case of the scattered pebbles there is *not* any kind of pattern and we recognise *nothing* (Figure 2). This, however, does not mean that we cannot get meaningful and important physical knowledge out of the meaningless movement of the pebbles. (At this point, one might think that only the knower interprets the meaning because the Wales lettering is a cultural phenomenon, while a living being – a frog, for example – is not. Of course, we must interpret the meaning of a comprehensive biological phenomenon – that is, whether it is a frog or not – though such does not mean that we create frogs and other higher-level, comprehensive biological phenomena. As a matter of fact, such is true for cultural phenomena, too; neither the arriving passengers nor the stationmaster created the word ‘Wales’ and its true meaning.)

So, in the first case we have two levels (Figure 1), the higher level of the Wales lettering and the lower level of the pebbles; but in the second case we have only the level of the pebbles (Figure 2). The pebbles are clear, *tangible* things, while the Wales lettering has no separate, tangible body but is a *meaningful* pattern of order at the level of pebbles, a specific listing of numeric parameters (see *TD*: 32-33). The relationship between the two levels is not symmetrical because there are piles of pebbles without meaningful pattern (second case), but for the Wales lettering the pebbles (or something else as a body of the lettering) are necessary conditions (first case). This is the reason why the Wales lettering is an *emergent* phenomenon and the pebbles are its material body. An emergent thing emerges from its material conditions and cannot exist without them. Nevertheless, ‘man has the power to establish real patterns in nature’ (*PK*: 37) as we can recognise pebbles. We cannot define these patterns of order in exact numeric parameters at the fundamental level only by entirely explicit Laplacian knowledge, but we can recognise them *by our tacit knowledge*, which Laplace’s demon, with its entirely explicit knowledge, cannot have by definition. And if we think that we recognised the Wales lettering only by explicit knowledge of the pebbles that would be a Laplacian fault.

We recognise higher level, emergent patterns of order and we can make exact knowledge about the lower level parts in numeric parameters, formulas,

and equations, etc. The two kinds of knowledge have fundamentally *different* natures, and *both* of them are meaningful and important for us. The emergent knowledge concerns complex, *comprehensive* patterns of order, e.g., frogs, men, crystals, tornadoes, and it is *tacit*, while the physical one refers to simple, quasi *point-like* entities, e.g., atoms, quanta, neutrinos, and it is *explicit* and law-like (Wiener 1961: 30-44). The reason our emergent knowledge concerning the Wales lettering can *not* be replaced by our explicit knowledge of the parts is that the latter simply *does not contain* the former – Laplace’s demon has not and cannot have tacit knowledge concerning comprehensive emergent phenomena. It follows that *according to our explicit knowledge of the parts* (the pebbles), the Wales lettering is not distinguishable; it is just one pebbles state among many others. But if one says, ‘Yes, it has specific numeric parameters, contrary, for example, to the numeric parameters of the scattered pebbles,’ one has to explain why those specific parameters referencing the pebbles are distinguished. Why? The only reason is because these numeric parameters mark out a meaningful lettering, but the meaningful lettering is *already* an emergent pattern of order; that is, our answer is based on emergent as well as physical knowledge. It could be a Laplacian fault if one persists in the idea that these numeric parameters are specific in themselves.

In the Preface, it was asked how we can know for sure that the stationmaster carefully arranged the pebbles in the Wales lettering to greet us if we have never once seen him arranging them in such a pattern. From this, it is clear that we have three possible options:

1. There is a recognisable, comprehensive pattern of order in the pebbles – a Wales lettering – arranged intentionally by the stationmaster, indicating that the message is real and meaningful.
2. There is no recognisable pattern of order.
3. There is a recognisable, comprehensive pattern of order in the pebbles – a Wales structure – that is the consequence of lower level material processes (e.g. of a storm), indicating that the ‘pattern’ is false, random, illusory, and not a real message.

Polanyi says, in reference to the Wales lettering, that:

No one will fail to recognise this as an orderly pattern, deliberately contrived by a thoughtful station-master [first case]. And we could refute anyone who doubted this by computing as follows the odds against the

arrangement of the pebbles having come about by mere chance [third case] (PK: 33).

Then he shows that it is only a *disguise*, a deceptive substitution, that is, a Laplacian fault; our answer, tacitly, is grounded in something other than numeric probability computing. First, the probability of the case (2) of the scattered pebbles is exactly the *same* ($1/n$, where n equals all the possible arrangements of the pebbles in the garden) as that of the Wales lettering of case (3) by chance; but still, *no one would say* that because of this case (2) of the scattered pebbles is not arranged by mere chance. Second, why do we say that it was arranged by mere chance if it was not arranged by the stationmaster? In this third case the arrangement of the pebbles is simply the clear consequence of the lower level *deterministic* processes of the physical state of the garden and e.g. a storm, according to our explicit knowledge and numeric computing! So now random apparently equals deterministic. Obviously it does not, but then what is the meaning of randomness?

Polanyi answers the first question as follows: no one says that the case (2) of the scattered pebbles is arranged or not arranged by mere chance because in this case it is out of question.

We have assumed from the start that the arrangement of the pebbles which formed an intelligible set of words appropriate to the occasion represented a distinctive pattern. It was only in view of this orderliness that the question could be asked at all whether the orderliness was accidental or not. When the pebbles are scattered irregularly over the whole available area they possess no pattern and therefore the question whether the orderly pattern is accidental or not cannot rise (PK: 34).

It cannot rise because the comprehensive emergent pattern is the *precondition* of the question. And in the case (1) of the Wales lettering, according to the modern scientific ideal of objective and perfect, entirely explicit Laplacian knowledge, we want to tell by explicit numeric parameters (by the extremely small chance of $1/n$) in reference to the physical parts why the Wales lettering is distinguished. But *already* the computing *itself* presupposes the meaningful emergent pattern, so it is nothing more than a fake answer, a Laplacian fault, if we want to replace our emergent knowledge with it. *Tacitly we definitely know* that this Wales lettering was arranged by the stationmaster (first case). We know because this is our natural human experience in which we believe that meaningful emergent Wales lettering does not emerge by chance, by a storm, from pebbles in appropriate places and appropriate occasions. And if we still

want explicit knowledge about the origin of the Wales lettering we can get it easily without any hard and pointless explicit computing; we simply have to ask the stationmaster, he will tell us.

The second question leads us further to understand the deeper meaning of randomness according to Michael Polanyi. But first, let's look at the different cases using the word 'chance'. Ernest Nagel, whose work *The Structure of Science* (1961) is still fundamental in the reduction and emergence debates, differentiates five cases of chance or randomness (Nagel 1961: 324-335):

1. Something happens unexpectedly rather than as the consequence of a deliberate plan; for example, two friends run into each other on the street.
2. No one knows the determining factors of an event or we do not have enough knowledge of the factors to predict the determined event, so in practice the event is random for us. For example, in principle we can compute the result of a coin toss or a dice rolling using Newtonian mechanics, but of course this is impossible to do before a football match.
3. An event is a consequence of the intersection of two independent causal series, e.g., walking man on the street hit by a flowerpot in a wild wind.
4. A given paradigm or 'the context of inquiry' does not determine its object's every property; e.g., the future positions of planet Mars can be exactly predicted with the help of Newtonian gravitational theory, but to do any computing we must first provide the planet's initial position and velocity, which were not determined by the Newtonian theory.

In these four cases, randomness is only a *relational* concept because here *there are only deterministic events and processes* (coin tossing, dice rolling, falling flowerpot, the movement of planet Mars, etc.) and the events we call random are only the consequence of the special relationships of the determining factors or our insufficient knowledge of them. Therefore, there are no kinds of 'absolute' randomness or indeterministic processes; randomness and deterministic processes coexist well. In other words a process, e.g. a rolling of a dice, that in itself is entirely deterministic, in a relation with another process or system could be random. In *An Introduction to Cybernetics* (1957) W. Ron. Ashby put it like this: 'By saying a factor is *random*, I do not refer to what the factor is in itself, but to the relation it has with the main system.' This is well reflects the approach of cybernetics and system theories which will be important for us. So, the question is what are the entirely deterministic

determining factors in the case of the Wales lettering, the interrelations of which we call random?

Before considering the answer, let's look at Nagel's last case for randomness.

5. There are *no* determining factors or conditions for an event, so it happens *without any cause* (and we *know* that there is *no* cause).

In this case randomness is not only a relational concept but an 'absolute' one. Nagel himself thinks that this absolute concept of randomness is contradictory (Nagel 1961: 335), as do Ashby, Einstein, and Polanyi himself. (See his understanding of quantum mechanics, which is the source of indeterministic events in some mainstream interpretations, e.g., *PK*: 392-393; and the main reason questioning absolute randomness is that how can we know for sure that an event has no cause and this in not only the 2nd Nagelian case of randomness.) Nevertheless, this is not important for us now as our topic is not quantum mechanics. What is important is that randomness could be a relational concept and Polanyi thinks that it is. So, if something appears to us as random because it is an emergent phenomenon, this does not mean that it is a consequence of some kind of indeterministic or even supernatural process or factor, as it might be seen intuitively.

When we see the white pebbles in a garden of a railway station arranged in the words 'Welcome to Wales by British Railways,' we immediately and involuntarily think that this pebbles state has been arranged by the stationmaster (our first case). If we learn that this is true, we believe that the pebbles state *is not random*; that is, it is a real Wales lettering. But if this comes to be false (third case), then we believe that this specific pebbles state *is random*, independent of the fact that, by the way, it has been arranged by entirely deterministic physical processes, e.g. a storm. Nevertheless, this does not mean that randomness equals deterministic. It simply shows us the true meaning of the randomness of the pebbles in the garden. The pebbles state in itself *at the lower level* is deterministic in both cases and the true question in our mind is the following: *is the Wales pebbles state determined only by lower level physical factors, processes, or is it determined also higher level emergent processes, principles?* In other words: can we understand the true nature of the Wales pebbles state only by our exact physical knowledge (third case) or do we also have to use our higher level emergent knowledge concerning the intentions of the stationmaster and the meaning of the lettering (first case)?

So, (1) if the Wales pebbles state is determined *only by physical processes or factors* (meaning

that the pebbles state is the consequence of only physical processes), then the pebbles state *is random* without meaning. However, (2) if it is determined *by both physical processes or factors and emergent processes or ordering principles* (meaning that it was created intentionally by the stationmaster using physical pebbles according to the higher level principles of English language) then it *is not random* and is meaningful.

Whether it is a consequence of some kind of higher level emergent or lower level physical processes, the true question is not which is deterministic and which is random. This questioning is simply a *false dichotomy*, because the determining factors and principles are *all* deterministic and are all important and meaningful for us. The true question is: what is the *number* and *nature* of these true determining factors? No one says that 'random' factors and conditions are not important or meaningful, our 'random' lower level physical knowledge is unconditionally necessary in *both* cases, but in case (1) they are simply not sufficient for an adequate explanation. This is because, even by computing with the explicit numeric parameters in reference to the physical parts, no one can explain why the Wales lettering is distinguished and how it has been emerged.

The random relationship of the determining factors will shed light on the deeper meaning of the notions of randomness and emergence. In case (1) when the Wales lettering is determined by both physical and emergent factors, the relationship of these two determining factors is *random*. This, and not something else, is what is really random in this case, and it means that in this case it is *logically impossible* to explain the meaningful pattern of order *by only one* determining factor (*TD*: 45); both are equally needed, at least tacitly. We can explain a phenomenon using just one principle only if *we rely solely on our physical knowledge* to determine the given pebbles state (case (2) of the scattered pebbles). This, in fact, means that our physical knowledge of the pebbles *also determines* our emergent knowledge (case (3) of the false Wales 'lettering'); that is, there are not two independent (random) determining factors, and the emergent one can be reduced to our physical one. This, naturally, does not mean that the two kinds of knowledge are identical. To recognise the fake Wales 'lettering', we *still need* our emergent knowledge concerning the 'lettering', but in this case we do *not* recognise a *real, meaningful* pattern of order using our tacit powers; we see *only* a specific pebble-state that in fact is not a welcome lettering from the stationmaster. Instead, it is just an interesting and

miraculous 'random' phenomenon. If we think henceforward that it is a real, meaningful pattern emerged according to higher level ordering principles, we would be searching untrue, illusory principles as do astrologers who render meaning to 'random' constellations (PK: 37).

I wish to suggest that the conception of events governed by chance implies a reference to orderly patterns which such events can simulate only by coincidence. To test the probability of such coincidences and hence the permissibility of assuming that they have taken place, is the method of Sir Ronald Fisher for establishing *a contrario* the reality of an orderly pattern (PK: 36).

Such is, for the sake of explicit accuracy, to allow, at least in principle, the possibility that astrological heavenly patterns can emerge from stellar constellations in ways other than random ones, or that a storm can create a Wales lettering in ways that are not random. However, the question of whether a pattern of order is meaningful and real cannot be answered by the probability of lower level, explicit stellar and pebble movements, because our probability statements do not in fact refer to exact star or pebble states but to existent or non-existent ordering principles of recognised patterns: there is a stationmaster who painstakingly created the Wales lettering or there is not. In the case of the Wales lettering, we can know for sure that there is. And, as a matter of fact, lower level processes in themselves are entirely deterministic; thus, if we know of these lower level factors, then there is no question of probability, and we always know their movements with 100% probability. Such thinking is one of the great benefits of exact Laplacian knowledge. Accordingly, in case (2) of the scattered pebbles, in which there is no recognisable pattern, there is no sense in interrogating the probability of the actual pebbles' states. Without ordering principles, lower level and random – and in themselves, deterministic – processes cannot create higher-level, meaningful comprehensive patterns, an idea which in fact corresponds to the second law of thermodynamics.

Randomness alone can never produce a significant pattern, for it consists in the absence of any such pattern; and we must not treat the configuration of a random event as a significant pattern, whether by attributing to it fictitiously a distinctiveness that it does not possess, as in the case of the scattered pebbles, or by granting it erroneously a specious significance, such as the fulfilment of a horoscope (PK: 37-38).

Thus, falsely assigning to random structures probability values only allows the possibility that astrological patterns can emerge from stellar constellations in ways that are not random but ordered.

This train of thought, as shown later, perfectly corresponds to that holding that, for the sake of the illusion of objectivity and explicit accuracy, we allow the possibility that real, meaningful order of life can emerge from meaningless material processes randomly or that the evolution of real, meaningful living beings can occur randomly. However, random structures, as shown in case (3) of the false Wales lettering, have no reality and true meaning.

So, to draw a conclusion, in the fourth Nagelian case of randomness, the initial velocity and position of planet Mars is random to the equations of Newtonian theory of gravity; therefore, we cannot predict the orbit of Mars without accurate *data* of the initial position of the planet. Naturally, here, in the case of the position of Mars, there is no further independent, higher level, emergent determining factor or principle beyond Newtonian physics as in case (1) of our Wales example, but we still need to recognise and explicate an initial position of planet Mars or the fake Wales lettering if we wish to assert anything about them by the help of our lower level explicit knowledge; if, for example, we want to reduce them to physics. Naturally, our physical knowledge does not yet contain our higher level, emergent knowledge of emergent phenomena, as statistical physics does not contain thermodynamics though it determines them (see Figure 4). This means that by appropriate methods, e.g., 'bridge laws', we can connect the two kinds of knowledge from the two levels to make a proper reduction (Nagel 1961: 353-354). This connection, however, is so easy and tacit in the case of our Wales example that, according to our ideal of entirely explicit Laplacian knowledge, we are inclined to forget its existence and to think that there is only explicit, physical knowledge. (See, Figure 4 and Figure 5)

In the third Nagelian case of randomness, there are two independent determining factors, as there are in case (1) of our Wales example. Our emergent knowledge of the Wales lettering and the action and intention of the stationmaster *cannot* be reduced to our explicit knowledge of the physical states of pebbles and their numerically computable movements in the garden. They are only parts of a higher level, emergent system that also determines the state of the system by its own, emergent principles (see figure 5). Elsewhere, Polanyi calls these *ontologically* higher level, hierarchical systems *machine type boundary conditions* (KB: 226). Here arises an important question concerning the widely accepted physicalist theory of causal closure of the physical world but the way as the emergent levels determine the system is not the same as the physical processes do (see e.g. El-Hani and Queiroz 2005) so

they do not violate the fundamental physical principles. (There is no opportunity to deal with this problem in detail here but see Paksi 2014).

In cases (2) and (3) we have physically determined, *ontologically uni-level systems* whose shapes, structures, and higher level properties – if they have any – we can recognise but which have *no* real meaning. The real and important meanings of these systems are found only in their physical principles. In case (1) we have *ontologically multi-level systems* with real and meaningful emergent patterns of order. The typical Polanyian example for case (3) is a crystal and for case (1) a frog (PK: 394) which, of course, is not a cultural pattern of order as the Wales lettering but a biological one. Naturally one can deny this differentiation and thus the existence of these higher level systems, but then one must also deny the whole ontologically emergentist and Polanyian world view, including the theory of tacit knowledge by which we recognise these random systems and emergent principles. This also leads to a materialist world-view that, for the sake of perfect observational accuracy and explicit systematic precision of science, every phenomenon and system should be explainable *by only one kind of principle*. This is the true meaning of randomness, according to Michael Polanyi.

3. The Laplacian faults of neo-Darwinians according to Michael Polanyi

Elsewhere, I have written in detail about a mechanical explanation accounting for the evolving of new species that is based upon *two* necessary and *fundamental* conditions: the existence of variants and insufficient means for living (Paksi 2012). When there are insufficient means for living, the variants must compete and an evolving process starts. This is the Darwinian point of natural selection. Later, neo-Darwinian theory created some new concepts, such as mutation, genetic drift, migration, species isolation, etc., but the fundamental two factors for natural selection *remained the same*. (See the figure 6 below.)

What is mutation? Mutation is a random process that leads to new variants in a species. It is random but, naturally, as we have seen, only in a *relational* sense. At their lower level the entirely *deterministic* physical and chemical processes lead to change in the higher level biological and emergent system of the cell. A letter is changed by the erosion processes of the garden in the Wales lettering. This change cannot be predicted or explained with the help of higher level biological principles (or the principles of English language in the case of the Wales lettering), so in this relation it is random. This relation, however,

is *symmetrical*. The change can lead to a new, emergent biological phenomenon at the higher level of the cell, as the Wales lettering can get a new accurate form by the change of a letter, but it also cannot be predicted or explained by only the use of the lower level physical and chemical processes. *In itself*, a *deterministic* step of the lower level processes is not distinguished and has no pattern of order but only explicit and numeric parameters according to its principles. Moreover, there are *several* deterministic steps at the lower level that do not lead to any changes in the higher, emergent level of the cell (but only to a different pebbles state of a letter in the Wales lettering which, of course, can be realisable by multiple pebbles states); therefore, they are *not* called mutations. A deterministic step of the lower level is a mutation *only in relation* to the higher level system. So, the concept of mutation *presupposes* the higher level and its emergent principles; therefore, it is only a lower level, material process of the neo-Darwinian theory and *cannot* be the real source and explanation of a higher level, new emergent phenomenon and its principles, for example, of a new species. This is simply a ‘logical muddle’ (PK: 35). And when a neo-Darwinian thinks that it can be, she simply commits a Laplacian fault.

Furthermore, mutation is not a new ‘additional factor’ (Gulick 2012: 58) in the concept of natural selection; it only explains the forming of new variants (1st factor), which is, of course important – we know more than Charles Darwin – but does not change the logical structure of natural selection. See the figure.

The same is true for genetic drift or migration, etc., which are all important *parts in* the theory of natural selection. We have more and more small pebbles in the Wales lettering, but natural selection itself remains the same: a mechanical explanation based upon *two fundamental* conditions: the existence of variants and insufficient means for living. When a neo-Darwinian thinks that these important parts contribute beyond natural selection to explain evolution and emergence of man she again commits a Laplacian fault.

Here, we arrive at a greater problem with neo-Darwinian theory and its vocabulary. Neo-Darwinian theorists maintain evolution and evolutionary development by natural selection, though from natural selection nothing evolutionary or developmental follows, for *natural selection by itself can lead to regression* (cf. Darwin 1872: 99–100). A species can lose the magnificent capability of vision if such is its course of adaptation by random forces of environmental pressure. From natural selection, according to its two lower level

random factors, only random change follows (cf. Paksi 2010). Darwin knew this and thus did not use the word 'evolution' in 1859 (Sanderson 1990: 35).

Neo-Darwinians still speak about evolution and the fact that neo-Darwinian theory actually denies evolutionary development emerges only in explicit details of the theory. Yet, how could it be the theory of evolution? Tacitly, and in a deceptive way, we always substitute the explicit theory with the true meaning of evolution. Since neo-Darwinians generally also believe in evolutionary development in fact and the evolutionary origin of man, only this trifle is excluded from their explicit theory for the sake of explicit accuracy and the Laplacian ideal of objective knowledge.

A closely related fundamental problem surfaces in the following Darwinian passage:

There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved (Darwin 1872: 429).

We might infer, according to Darwin, that God created life. However, Darwin is only exactly aware of the fact that his theory of natural selection presupposes variants (1st factor); that is, natural selection presupposes living beings and life, and therefore, the emergence of life cannot be explained by the theory of natural selection only. Similarly he knows that evolutionary development also cannot be. He did not commit these Laplacian faults; in this sense, he is not a neo-Darwinian. He knew that we must find other fundamental, scientific principles beyond natural selection to explain evolutionary development and the emergence of life.

However, neo-Darwinians deny that there is a fundamental mechanism or principle other than natural selection in evolution. In this case, then what originated life? A random event did, with terribly low probability. The image of lightning striking the primordial soup illustrates this answer well. According to Fred Hoyle's aphorism, this probability was much lower than the probability that, after a wild storm, an operational Boeing 747 remains in a junkyard full of aircraft parts (Dawkins 2008: 137). Richard Dawkins, a famous neo-Darwinian, still thinks that such was the case. The question is why.

As shown, 'randomness alone can never produce a significant pattern, for it consists in the absence of any such pattern' (PK: 37). I do not wish to venture into the details of complicated, highly exact probability calculations so popular in revealing the mystic secret of the origin of life; as shown in the

previous section, such highly appreciated exact and explicit probability calculations actually only serve to conceal our real, tacit convictions of the question. That is, do we really believe that after a wild storm an operational Boeing 747 remains in a junkyard? Do we really believe that randomness alone can produce a significant pattern? Do we really believe that randomness can produce a real, meaningful message of pebbles reading, 'Welcome to Wales by British Railways'? If random, this 'message' is only an illusion, as false a pattern as a stellar constellation. Are we false, meaningless patterns?

I do not believe Dawkins really thinks that we are meaningless, illusory, higher-level structures as astrological stellar constellations are. I do believe, however, that Dawkins chooses this possibility – then, by a Laplacian magic trick, conceals its real meaning – because, according to a false dichotomy, he sees only one another possibility for the origin of life beyond pure chance: *divine design*. And, of course, he chooses the 'scientific' solution. For him and other neo-Darwinians, according to their materialist convictions, every higher-level ordering principle of life and evolution is magical, vitalistic, and unscientific. For examples, we need only peruse the works of the great Ernest Mayr, one of the fathers of neo-Darwinian theory (Mayr 1991, 2001)

Contrary to Dawkins, Mayr, and other neo-Darwinians, Polanyi thinks that only a 'magical' storm or a divine lightning can create a real, meaningful pattern of order, the beautiful order of life, and that randomness alone cannot. The magic trick in this explanation is, of course, the Laplacian fault by which, in the name of a kind of scientific accuracy and exactness, we conceal the real meaning, our personal convictions in emergent evolution and neglect to explore the real, higher-level emergent principles of life and evolution. However, these emergent principles are entirely scientific but not materialistic. In other words, these emergent principles are unscientific only for someone who thinks that only material principles are scientific.

...we must conclude therefore that the assumption of an accidental formation of the living species is a logical muddle. It appears to be a piece of equivocation, unconsciously prompted by the urge to avoid facing the problem set to us by the fact that the universe has given birth to these curious beings, including people like ourselves (PK: 35).

The last additional factor to Darwinian natural selection I wish to discuss is the most important. It leads to the ordering principles of life and evolution, according to Polanyi. It can transform the original Darwinian meaning of natural selection and will lead us to a better understanding of Polanyi's critique of

neo-Darwinian theory. Gulick called this factor 'dynamic species-environmental interaction' (2012: 58) and concerns not just variants but the second fundamental factor of natural selection, the insufficient means for living. 'There is nothing random or accidental about what traits best allow a species to survive in an environmental niche,' says Gulick (2012: 59), and he is right. This is the reason why natural selection is teleological. But as randomness is only a relational concept and not something absolute, its counterpart, teleology, is *also only a relational concept*.

What is an environmental niche? It is a *higher level, stable open system* that contains the evolving species in question. It determines the insufficient means for living and the species itself as the struggling variant. The system (and in it the species in question) will change *toward* some form of *stability* or *equilibrium*. Therefore, this change is not random but teleological in this relational sense. But the most important question is whether this process is an evolutionary development, and so possibly an emergence, or only a regression. Which stability means emergence and which means regression? Which pebble-state has a real, meaningful, higher level pattern of order and which does not? The notion of stability in itself cannot answer these questions, just as any theory of complexity cannot.

There is obviously connection between complexity and emergence, but the two notions are far from being the same because complexity-theory only gives us epistemic lower level, explicit, and numeric descriptions of higher level phenomena; as do genetics and, of course, neo-Darwinian theory, but they do not speak about the true meaning, reality, and principles of higher level, comprehensive, emergent pattern or order. To think that complexity equals emergence is a Laplacian fault, because it speaks only about explicit equations and numeric parameters hiding the true meaning behind our words. The difference between a neo-Darwinian and a Polanyian understanding of evolution is not that one of them is scientific and one of them is not; it lies in their different understanding of concept such as 'system', 'stability', and 'environmental niche', etc.

Again, we ask, what is an environmental niche? For the neo-Darwinian, it is a complex material system, as are information and genes. For the sake of perfect observational accuracy and systematic precision of science, the neo-Darwinian wants to find more and more accurate and exact descriptions of the parts of the system and its fundamental governing principle: natural selection. In Polanyi's eyes she looks at only the pebbles in the garden, and forgets the tacit powers by which she recognises the

real, meaningful patterns of order: frogs, man, evolution, and emergence from prokaryotes to man. She commits a Laplacian fault.

For Polanyi an environmental niche is an emergent system in the ontological sense with its own governing principles. The exact parts – genes, mutations, natural selection, etc. – are very important but remain insufficient to explain the most important questions. What principles determine that a process in an environmental niche is an evolutionary development or a regression? What are the emergent principles of the whole evolutionary system of Earth through which man could develop from the first primitive prokaryotes? This process is not random and cannot be random and, of course, is not a regression but a clear evolutionary development which *everybody can see using tacit powers* (unless they are looking at the explicit details, i.e. at the pebbles alone and not the Wales lettering). Polanyi's first answer is 'that the *ordering principle* which *originated* life [and sustains evolution] is the *potentiality* of a stable open system' (PK: 383-384). The stable, open system of Earth originated life and sustains evolution. The question is, according to Polanyi, what was the nature of that ordering principle of 'potentiality' that enabled this process and what is it now? There is no place here to give a detailed analysis of Polanyi's concept but I am sure that this is a good scientific question, and one the neo-Darwinians should not refuse to consider.

4. Conclusion

Michael Polanyi and the neo-Darwinians have radically different views of evolution and emergence. This is the consequence of their deeper convictions and commitments. We can see this even in the case of the close connection of the notions of randomness, emergence, and tacit knowledge. Polanyi is an emergentist in the ontological sense, while neo-Darwinians are materialists (which equal emergentists in the epistemological sense). This is the reason they speak harshly to one other from time to time. For Polanyi, the neo-Darwinian understanding of evolution and emergence is based simply on a 'deceptive substitution,' on Laplacian faults; for neo-Darwinians, Polanyi's view is unscientific, 'metaphysical,' and even quasi creationist. Neo-Darwinians feel that Polanyi is the enemy of the Darwinian notion of natural selection, the only scientific theory of evolution, but that is not true. Polanyi entirely believes in natural selection but merely thinks that it is not enough, that it is only the condition of evolution and not evolution itself.

Darwinism has diverted attention for a century from the descent of man by investigating the *conditions* of evolution and overlooking its *action*. Evolution can be understood only as a feat of emergence (PK: 390).

That is, neo-Darwinism focuses only at the lower level random processes, at the pebbles in the garden, and forgets about the true meaning and principles of higher level comprehensive phenomena which cannot be understood with nothing but explicit Laplacian knowledge. However, for Polanyi, lower level, 'random' processes, the random movements of the pebbles in the garden, without a higher level, emergent ordering principle, cannot lead to real, meaningful patterns of order, life, and man. This Polanyian ontological understanding of emergence and evolution cannot be purged from his philosophy, from *Personal Knowledge*, because the origin of man and his tacit powers is rooted in his evolutionary emergence; this is the reason emergent evolution is the true foundation of the theory of tacit and personal knowledge. One must choose between Polanyi and neo-Darwinism. Between the true emergent meaning of evolution and Laplacian faults. There is no middle ground.

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Figure 1.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.

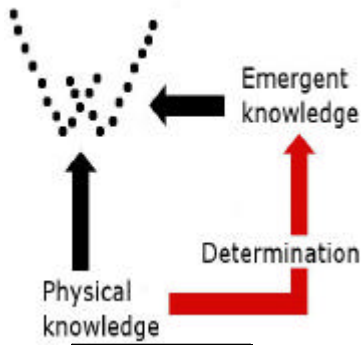


Figure 4.

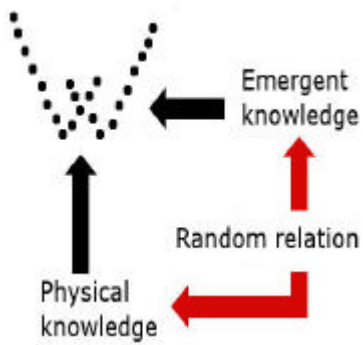


Figure 5.

BOOK REVIEWS

Personalist bioethics: foundations and applications

Elio Sgreccia Trans. John A. DiCamillo and Michael J. Miller. Philadelphia: The National Catholic Bioethics Centre, 2012, 838 pp. ISBN-10 0935372636, ISBN-13 978-0935372632.

The recent publication of Sgreccia's *Personalist Bioethics: Foundations and Applications* contributes significantly to the international Personalist conversation. Sgreccia is professor emeritus at the A. Gemilli School of Medicine and Surgery, where he served as the Bioethics Centre director from 1985-2006. This book is a translation of his 2007 *Manuale di bioetica*, Volume 1: *Fondamenti ed etica biomedica*, ably rendered by John A. DiCamillo and Michael J Miller.

Sgreccia writes in the tradition of Thomistic Personalism, though to say only this would not do justice to the extent and subtlety of his thinking as he considers persons in themselves, in the context of medicine, and in light of modern philosophy. The book is organised in two parts. The first part includes the development of a Personalist position, while the second examines this position vis-à-vis specific bioethical issues. Sgreccia identifies his philosophical perspective as 'ontologically grounded personalism' developing from 'the Thomistic tradition and – on this foundation – continues to develop in harmony with Catholic thinking, yet without precluding or avoiding dialogue with other positions' (11). From the beginning, he recognises the interdisciplinary nature of bioethics and states that any sound bioethics

requires a standard philosophical anthropology, which is the framework within which an ethical value is assigned to bodily life, marital love and procreation, and suffering, sickness, and death, as well as to the relationships between freedom and responsibility, individual and society, and individual and nature (24).

He proceeds to outline a Personalist model, the details of which will be familiar to all Personalists, and goes beyond the typical Thomistic position through dialogue with modern philosophical concepts. He identifies several key features of his vision:

1. Personal subjectivity founded on a body-soul composite
2. Persons as active and capable of self-determination
3. Persons as a unity 'a whole and not part of a whole'. Dualism is rejected.
4. Persons as 'an end and never a means'.
5. The 'personal dignity of every human subject'.

6. The human capacity for transcendence

Regarding the Catholic Bioethics tradition, he notes that 'opposition between secular bioethics and Catholic bioethics is fictitious and misleading' (74). Science and the scientific method is integral to bioethics for Sgreccia, and he suggests that faith and reason can work together in developing norms for medical practice. For example, he views evolutionary theory as a necessary but not sufficient position to understand persons, and argues against any reductionist attempts, particularly a biological reductionism ultimately grounded in materialism, to describe who we are. Standing at the nexus of British and Continental personalism, he takes a stance toward persons and toward dignity that will be agreeable to some but disagreeable to those who put more, or all of their focus on the functional, observable aspects of personhood:

Becoming a person, in the sense of possessing one's own radical ontological status, is not a process but rather an event or instantaneous act whereby one is established in personhood once and for all; on the other hand, personality – in the psychological sense – is acquired gradually through the accomplishment of personal (secondary) acts (137).

Part Two of *Personalist Bioethics* delves into the specifics of medical practice at length, far more than can be developed in a brief review). Considering the nature and dignity of the human person, Sgreccia examines genetics and prenatal diagnosis, bioethics as it touches on human sexuality, including fertilisation technologies, sterilisation and abortion, the ethics of human experimentation, organ transplantation and end-of-life decisions. These last two areas touch on the contentious issue of the determination of death, in contemporary medicine defined 'the complete and irreversible cessation of all brain activity.' (659). In this context he addresses euthanasia and assisted suicide.

Personalist Bioethics concludes with an essay on bioethics and technology (Chapter 16), Sgreccia criticises the notion that, technologically, everything that can be done should be done; rather, he approaches technology from the perspective of persons with dignity, recognising the need for personal and moral direction of new technologies.

In summary, Sgreccia has made an important contribution to a contemporary personalist current as it touches on philosophical anthropology and the practical matters of bioethics.

James Beauregard

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References to books by Michael Polanyi:

Because of the particular interest in the work of Michael Polanyi, and in order to avoid unnecessary repetition, please make references to his books by means of the following abbreviations followed by the page number:

- CF = *The Contempt of Freedom* (London, Watts, 1940; reprinted New York, Arno Press, 1975)
- FEFT = *Full Employment and Free Trade* (London, C.U.P., 1945; 2nd ed. 1948)
- KB = *Knowing and Being* (London, Routledge; Chicago, University of Chicago Press; 1969)
- LL = *The Logic of Liberty* (London, Routledge; Chicago, University of Chicago Press; 1951)
- M = *Meaning* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1975)
- PK = *Personal Knowledge* (London, Routledge; Chicago, University of Chicago Press; 1958)
- SFS = *Science, Faith and Society* (London, OUP, 1946; 2nd ed. U. of Chicago Press, 1964)
- SOM = *The Study of Man* (London, Routledge; Chicago, University of Chicago Press; 1959)
- TD = *The Tacit Dimension* (London, Routledge; New York, Doubleday; 1966; reprinted Gloucester, Mass., Peter Smith, 1983)

Also:

- SEP = *Society, Economics and Philosophy: Selected articles by Michael Polanyi*, ed. R.T. Allen (New Brunswick, NJ, Transaction Publishers, 1997).