APPRAISAL

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Editorial Policy:

P   *Appraisal* seeks to develop and promote constructive ways of thinking, especially from within a personalist perspective, 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* welcomes articles, discussion items, and reviews of books.

P   *Appraisal* takes a particular, but by no means exclusive, interest in the work of Michael Polanyi.

P   From Vol. 7, onwards all articles will be subject to blind review.

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. Shorter items (discussions, working papers, notes, etc.) are especially welcome.

P   **Please ask for the Style Sheet or save or print it from our web site: www.spcps.org.uk.**

   In particular, please write or rewrite all end-notes (no footnotes) and their indices (superscript) as **ordinary** text, and *do not use the special tool for creating footnotes and end-notes*.
   Please include an Abstract (no more than 100 words), and a list of Key Words.

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

P

Please send all communications regarding **Appraisal** *(articles, subscriptions, etc.) to:*

Indexing: *Appraisal* is indexed in *The British Humanities Index* and *The Philosophers' Index*.

Reciprocal Arrangements:

   Appraisal exchanges copies with several other journals – see 'Journals Received', inside – and would welcome other exchanges.

Subscriptions: Please see inside rear cover.

APPRAISAL

The Journal of the Society for Post-Critical Philosophy and Personalist Studies

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This issue's new and less recent contributors:

Dr Tihamér Margitay is professor of philosophy at Department of Philosophy and the History of Science
Budapest University of Technology and Economic Sciences (BUTE). His interests are in philosophy of
science, epistemology, philosophy of language, logic

EDITORIAL

Conferences

Our joint conference in March with the John Macmurray Fellowship was agreed, by those who attended – sixteen persons – to have been a successful interchange of ideas among the two societies, almost equally represented. The only disappointment was that we failed to attract only one person who was not a member of either society. The three papers are published in this issue, and also in the latest Newsletter of the JMF.

There is still no prospect of holding our own conference, but, as previously advertised, there will be two very important Polanyi conferences next June, in Chicago and in Budapest: details opposite. I hope to meet at least some of you at the one or the other. I cannot speak of Chicago but I can certainly recommend Budapest as a place for a holiday as well as a conference.

In the meantime, there will be the Annual JMF Conference, on Macmurray and Religion: details below.

Editorial Policy

In order to raise the standing of *Appraisal*, all articles in future will be sent for blind review to one or more of our editorial advisers, or to an external authority in the case of any subject not covered by them. I am grateful to our advisors for agreeing to undertake this extra work.

Subscriptions for Vol. 7, 2008-9

These are now due: please see either the attached Renewal Slip with your printed copy or the e-mail message announcing that this issue is now available for download.

Although postal rates have increased, we shall make a small profit on Vol. 6, and subscription rates can stay the same for Vol. 7.

THE JOHN MACMURRAY FELLOWSHIP

ANNUAL CONFERENCE, OCTOBER 13th, 2007, 10.30 am - 5 pm

Friends' Meeting House, 43 St Giles, Oxford.

'IS RELIGION A DELUSION?
THE SEARCH FOR REALITY IN RELIGION'

AM Session: 'Religious belief and personal freedom in the thought of John Macmurray',
    Adam Hood, The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham

PM Session: 'John Macmurray's ideas and the current debate on religion: reflections of a secular
    religionist', *David Oliphant, clinical pastoral educator, Canberra Hospital, Australia*

Conference fees:
With lunch: £15 (£10 students/low income)
Without lunch: £10 (£5 student/low income)

Please send cheques, payable to 'The John Macmurray Fellowship', to:
Gordon Ferguson, 31 Rossington Road, Hunters Bar, Sheffield S11 8SA
gordon.ferguson@phonecoop.coop

www.johnmacmurray.org

CONFERENCES

The Polanyi Society
Personal Knowledge at Fifty
Call for Papers
June 13-15, 2008
Loyola University, Chicago

Personal Knowledge was published in May, 1958 and this conference will celebrate this event as well as provide an opportunity to reappraise Michael Polanyi' *magnum opus* and its philosophical agenda in terms of developments in philosophy, science and the globalization of culture.

The conference will be organized like the 1991 and 2001 Polanyi Society conferences at Kent State University and Loyola University, Chicago. There will be several plenary speakers as well as parallel sessions in which conference participants present and discuss papers with others interested in the session' particular topic. Invitations for plenary speakers are presently pending. This will be a conference that builds in many opportunities for discussion as well as a trip for those interested to the archival Polanyi Papers at the Regenstein Library of the University of Chicago.

Proposals are invited for papers that discuss the themes or impact of *Personal Knowledge* and the importance of Polanyi' philosophical ideas in the contemporary world. Below are a few suggested general categories within which papers might be grouped; these are intended merely to stimulate reflection. The final program will organize sessions in terms of rubrics fashioned in light of proposals submitted.

Personal Knowledge, Postcritical Philosophy and Postmodernism

Personal Knowledge As Fiduciary Philosophy and the the History of Philosophy

Personal Knowledge And William Poteat, Marjorie Grene, Wittgenstein, Phenomenology, etc.

Personal Knowledge and Contemporary Discussions of Emergence

Personal Knowledge On Religion

Personal Knowledge And Contemporary Philosophy of Science

Personal Knowledge And Political Philosophy

Personal Knowledge, Moral Inversion and Polanyi' Criticism of Culture

Personal Knowledge and Polanyi' Reformulations in Later Writing

Personal Knowledge: Shortcomings

Proposals for panel presentation on topics are invited.

Proposals will be blindly reviewed by a panel of jurors and should be no longer than 250 words. On the first page of the proposal, give your proposed paper title (or panel title), your name and your e-mail address. On the second page, repeat the title and provide an abstract. Mail proposals as e-mail attachments to Phil Mullins (mullins@missouriwestern.edu). Proposals will be reviewed in two or three batches.

The initial deadline is Oct. 15, 2007
with projected response by December 1, 2007.

RECONSIDERING POLANYI
June 26-28, 2008
BUTE, Budapest

The Department of Philosophy and History of Science at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics (BUTE) and the Michael Polanyi Liberal Philosophical Association cordially invite you to participate in this three-day international conference.

The conference organizers welcome proposals that examine one of the following aspects of Michael Polanyi's oeuvre:

Personal knowledge in the light of social epistemology

Tacit knowledge and the new results of cognitive psychology

Reappraising Polanyi's *Logic and Liberty* in the age of post-academic science (to use Ziman's term)

The cognitive function of emotions

Polanyi on the management of knowledge

The postcritical and postmodern perspectives

Polanyi's liberalism and Enlightenment values

Polanyi and Gestalt psychology.

The list is not exclusive, however, and you are welcome to suggest any further aspects related to the philosophy of Polányi. The conference is open to contextual, historical, and analytical (etc.) approaches.

Practical details:
Conference language: English
Registration fee: 30 EUR
Accommodation:
Accommodation is available at BUTE in the university guesthouse for approximately 55-65 EUR per night including breakfast. Rooms in four-star hotels in 5-15 minutes walking distance from the conference venue are available at 80-120 EUR per night.

The closing date for offers of papers has now past but the programme may be able to accommodate one or two more. Likewise anyone wishing to attend but not offering a paper, should contact the Conference Organiser without delay:

Benedek Láng, conference@filozofia.bme.hu

MACMURRAY AND POLANYI ON REASON AND EMOTION

R.T. Allen

Abstract
John Macmurray and Michael Polanyi, separately but similarly, argued that reason and emotion are necessarily connected. Emotions are rational or irrational, and reason is emotional for emotional discloses value and without it reasoning would have nothing to motivate or guide it. Macmurray's general arguments are summarised, and likewise part of Polanyi account of the role of emotion in scientific research.

John Macmurray and Michael Polanyi were exact contemporaries (1891-1976). After Polanyi came to England in 1933, they had several acquaintances in common, but there is no record of any meetings, references or correspondence between them. Yet, despite some notable political differences, their philosophies converged in several respects. My theme today is how they similarly treated emotion and its roles in human life. They both had much to say about that theme but I shall have to limit my talk to the basic relation between reason and emotion.

In short, Macmurray gives a general and fundamental relation between reason and emotion, and Polanyi illustrates it in respect of scientific research. I shall take for granted that reason is commonly taken to be merely calculation and emotion to be a blind and irrational upsurge of feeling.

Macmurray begins Lecture 1 of 'Reason in the Emotional Life' in his *Reason and Emotion* (Faber, 1935), by asserting that 'Any enquiry must have a motive or it could not be carried on at all, and all motives belong to our emotional life' (p. 13), and then asks, 'What is emotional reason?' He argues, art and religion, as much as science, are characteristic and essential expression of human nature and therefore of reason. Hence there must be an emotional as well as an intellectual expression of reason. So, what is reason? It is 'the capacity to behave consciously in terms of the nature of what is not ourselves', that is, 'in terms of the nature of the object, that is to say, to behave objectively', (p. 19). Macmurray gives the example of a mother who sees her child run out in the street and in danger of being run over. Acting in terms of her own nature, as in a response to stimulus, she would cry out to him. But,

because she realises that that would distract her child and increase his danger, she stifles that impulse. She acts in terms of the object. Reason, says Macmurray, 'demands that our beliefs should conform to the nature of the world, not to the nature of our hopes and ideals' (p. 22). Just as thoughts can be true or false as they refer properly to reality or not, likewise our emotions refer to reality or not, and hence they are rational or irrational. 'In thinking thoughts we think the things to which thoughts refer. In feeling emotions we feel the things to which the emotions refer and therefore, we can feel rightly or wrongly'. For example: To a person who is terribly afraid of a mouse we are quite accustomed to say that there is nothing really to be afraid of. Her fear is not in term of the real nature of the situation. It is subjective.' (p. 25). Thus emotion includes reason - better, rationality – within itself, in the form of sets of perceptions, beliefs, understandings and appraisals about its objects. Furthermore,

> It is not that our feelings have a secondary and subordinate capacity for being rational or irrational. It is that reason is primarily an affair of emotion, and that the rationality of thought is the derivable and secondary one. For if reason is the capacity to *act* in terms of the nature of the object, it is emotion which stands directly behind activity determining its substance and direction, while thought is related to action indirectly and through emotion, determining only its form, and that only partially. (p. 26).

It does so because emotion discloses value, for an objective emotion is not a mere reaction to a stimulus or indulgence in one's one feelings but 'an immediate appreciation of the value and significance of real things. Emotional reason is our capacity to apprehend objective values' (p. 31). Hence, other things being equal, it prompts us to do something in respect of them, such as to stop and listen to the song of a skylark or to go to the aid of someone in distress. These are not 'bare facts' to be apprehended with indifference.

Polanyi's aim throughout his *magnum opus, Personal Knowledge,* and in most of his other philosophical works, is to combat the destructive tendencies of 'Objectivism', which upholds a false ideal or knowledge as something wholly impersonal, explicit and precise, such that any personal involvement must render it 'merely subjective'. On the contrary, he aims to show that

> Into every act of knowing there enters a passionate

contribution of the person knowing what is being known, and ... this coefficient is no mere imperfection but a vital component of his knowledge. (p. viii)

It is the 'passionate' nature of the personal contribution that concerns us today. As always, Polanyi takes the fight against Objectivism to its own chosen ground, the exact sciences of physics and chemistry, where, it thinks, its ideal of knowledge is realised. But Polanyi uses his own first-hand experience of physical chemistry as a world-renowned scientist, along with examples from the history of natural science, to prove exactly the opposite. In Ch. 6 of *Personal Knowledge.* 'Intellectual Passions', he argues that emotion has three functions in scientific research: *selective, heuristic* and *persuasive*. I shall have to omit the latter two.

The selective function has two aspects: to signal that a discovery is intellectually precious and that it is precious to science. And behind that is the felt conviction of their value which selects science itself as worthy of pursuit. It is this which is Polanyi's over-all concern. As he says, science along with the other great articulate systems of civilisation, such as religion and law, evokes, imposes and claims to be right, those emotions which sustain and appraise it and appraise its theories for their intellectual beauty as a token of contact with reality. If science were only a body of fact, as Objectivism claims, it could not evoke any interest except a 'justification' in terms of its technological utility, which would crimp and stunt it. (Note: this is one point of difference between Polanyi and Macmurray, for Macmurray often saw the justification of natural science in utilitarian terms: e.g. *Reason and Emotion,* p. 189).

The second aspect of the selective function is to give a specific direction to the underlying desire to discover the truth about nature. Out of all the facts which are known or knowable, only a few are of scientific interest. The appreciation of this interest, which relies on a sense of intellectual beauty, cannot be dispassionately defined, as neither can the beauty of works of art nor the excellence of noble actions. Without selection and guidance by emotional appraisal of the scientific value of what is known or

appears likely to be discovered, enquiry would, as Polanyi says, 'inevitably spread out into a desert of trivialities'. What is needed is a general vision of reality which yields a scale of interest and plausibility, so that important conceptions can be upheld as intrinsically plausible even when there is evidence against them at the moment, and others can be rejected as specious even though there may be some evidence for them. (PK p. 135). A scientist, in selecting a problem to be pursued, requires a sense, a feeling, for problems which are likely to be soluble and to be of some wider value and significance for science (PK pp. 123-4). There is no set of formulae or rules for this. As for what constitutes scientific value, Polanyi suggests three joint factors, unevenly distributed over the natural sciences: certainty or accuracy, systematic relevance or profundity, and intrinsic interest. (PK p. 143) Sensitivity to such values, and their presence, absence and degree in problems, theories and results, is necessary to their scientific evaluation as worth investigating further and to deciding if results are acceptable or unacceptable. Polanyi also refers to what is really a fourth function: the satisfaction that science, all intellectual enquiries, and all intelligent endeavours, seek (PK p. 173). Passionate engagement, the valuing of science and its discoveries, the quest for intellectual satisfaction in discovering the truth, and important truth, about nature – all these are essential to the life of science.

> If the upholding of scientific truth requires that we justify such passionate valuations, bur task expands inevitably also to the justification of those equally passionate valuations on which the affirmation of the several domains of culture is predicated. (PK p. 134)

Polanyi also shows how emotion has similarly essential roles within mathematics. But here I must stop, save to express the hope that I have shown how Macmurray and Polanyi, independently yet convergently, have shown that reason and emotion necessary include each other, especially where they are often thought to exclude each other.

Loughborough

MICHAEL POLANYI: MAKING THE RIGHT DECISION

R. J. Brownhill

Abstract

Polanyi challenged the orthodoxy of science by his concept of personal knowledge, which is a form of objectivity searching for the truth. He examined how decisions are arrived at through the use of interpretative frameworks, commitment and indwelling, and how both the decisions of the individual scientist and the scientific community remain fallible and open to reinterpretation., He used this prototype of the scientific community to provide explanations of the work of other communities.

1 Introduction

Polanyi was for many years a practising scientist, a professor of physical chemistry at the University of Manchester, and a Fellow of the Royal Society. His original interest in philosophy arose as he opposed the central planning of science in the Soviet Union, and the similar views propagated by J.D. Bernal in the United Kingdom.[1] His first major work on the philosophy of science was published in 1946 *Science, Faith and Society*, and then his major work in 1958, *Personal Knowledge*. Both these works challenged the then orthodoxy that science was supposedly purely objective. In contrast Polanyi argued for a personal element in scientific discovery, that the heuristic passion and commitments of the scientist had to be taken into account. He did not deny objectivity but argued it had to be looked on in a new light.[2]

Polanyi in *Personal Knowledge* also began to use science and the scientific community as a prototype for the study of other intellectual communities that developed systematic knowledge, but had also what he called 'coherent knowledge'.[3] This allowed him to apply his analysis to society as a whole.

Polanyi, in looking at scientific decision making, very much put over the viewpoint of a practitioner rather than as a logician looking at scientific practice. He examined how a pure scientist made decisions within the scientific community. His answer was a little like that of Paul Hirst[4] with his development of the concept of 'forms of knowledge'. Hirst in writing about education, argued how teachers had to take note of the different languages, and items of argument appropriate to each subject when teaching it. He also looked at how truth claims are assessed within the group that controls the discourse. He calls this process 'linguistic inter-subjectivity'. The group will need to have developed a framework of understanding which is compatible with each other. They also need to talk in a language and deal with concepts they all understand. Judgements and understandings come about within the specialised discourses. Hirst was really attempting to explain how we organise the world in order to explain our understanding of it. Polanyi, in fact, developed a more dynamic theory to explain the process. He did this by developing his concepts of an interpretative framework, tacit knowledge, and indwelling.

2 Interpretative frameworks

An interpretative framework provides a systematic way of looking at the world in a way that will give some order and create stability. He argued that we looked at things from the point of view of an interpretative framework so that we can understand and make judgements about them. It is interesting to note that Sir Karl Popper[5] criticised the use of a Marxist framework as it used *ad hoc* additions in order to preserve the framework and make it more flexible, and that the coherence and integrity was maintained in order to explain anomalies that may have arisen in practice. It was this possible use of the concept of a framework to avoid successful criticism which was the basis for his claim that Marx was unscientific, and the basis for his criticism of the use of interpretative frameworks *per se*. However, Polanyi argued that the very process of thinking involves making judgements, and that these can be understood only by looking at them from the framework from which they were produced.[6] Polanyi stated that there were four possibilities when making judgements:

1. A correct judgement in a correct interpretative framework.
2. An incorrect judgement in a correct interpretative framework.
3. A correct judgement within an in correct interpretative framework.
4. An incorrect judgement within an incorrect interpretative framework.

The argument is that judgements must take place within an interpretative framework, and can only be understood within its context. We fit things into our framework in order to make sense of them and therefore make judgements about them. Polanyi also

pointed out that theoretically there is another possibility, and that is no judgement and no interpretative framework but that this would apply to non thinking animals who have had part of their brains removed, e.g., rats. However, this would be introducing new criteria, which would distinguish this possibility from the four others. In order to illustrate this he gave the example of a trout who snaps at the anglers fly. In this case the trout was making an error based on a correct interpretative framework. In the case of a young goose who accepted a human being as its mother, and identified other humans as part of its flock, the goose was judging its experience correctly but was using a wrong interpretative framework. It was also possible for a goose and a fish to make a correct judgement in correct interpretative frameworks. On the other hand we can further argue (but not an example Polanyi gave) it was possible for a human being to conceive of himself as an angel making celestial decisions with other angels, an example of category four, an incorrect judgement within an incorrect interpretative framework. Polanyi argued that these activities can be observed in thinking animals and foreshadow all activities of human beings in all intellectual spheres, as human beings continually make judgements within the context of interpretative frameworks.

3 The case of science

The question arises at this point as to how we can know the interpretative framework we use is the correct one. Polanyi pointed out that the use of a particular interpretative framework was essentially a matter of belief, which arose because of its success in providing explanations that gave an increasing understanding of reality. In the case of science he pointed out that science was controlled by a special type of community whose membership was confined to members who met certain requirements. A scientist to be accepted as a member must have gone through an apprenticeship and made his own contact with reality. His contact with reality would be recognised by other scientists when his work showed originality by providing additions to accepted knowledge. The evidence a scientist could produce as a demonstration of his originality was restricted to evidence which expanded in some way that knowledge. We can say that membership of the community was gained when a scientist by his own originality showed that he had become a master in his own particular field of research, and that this mastery was recognised by all the other members of the community. As a community all its members participate in the joint task of apprehending and revealing reality, and share a joint faith, for all believe in the existence of this reality, its apprehension and revelation. The individual

scientist's method of discovery was by indwelling or immersion in his research, and the community's method of checking a discovery meant that an individual scientist had to be given the freedom to conduct his own research but at the same time an authority based on traditional beliefs was needed to exercise control over the results of the research. As a member of the community he did not have the freedom to do nothing, he must be active in undertaking research and producing results. If he did not do this then very soon he would lose his membership, as he would be showing no originality, and would cease to be a master in his own particular area of science. The scientist was also bound by an obligation to seek and reveal the truth as he saw it. He was bound by his conscience to do this and declare what this conscience indicated. Nevertheless, his conscience remained bound by the traditions of the community. The values his conscience exhibited could not move too far from the values of the community as a whole. They needed to lie within a certain range or be rejected. By following the traditions of the community, the scientist was acting on individual initiative and submitting to the obligations of the community. The authoritative element in the community was necessary in order to control the excesses of speculation in individual scientists. This is an additional check on their speculations as their conscience has already provided a check. In this sense the conscience had acted on behalf of the community by deciding on the truth of the new theory. The further check was necessary because of the emotional element in the development of personal knowledge provided by an individual conscience, as such a conscience by its very nature could not be an impersonal conscience, and provide a certain check on excesses. This, of course, was a recognition that the individual scientist was not infallible, and therefore needed to work in a community with a decision procedure.

Another reason for the importance of the authoritative element in the structure of the scientific community was the nature of science itself. Science was a systematic body of knowledge which it was the task of the scientist to expand, and before it could be expanded each scientist had to accept and understand a large part of the system. In order to do this he had to become an adept at scientific techniques, and accepted knowledge. He had to accept the authority of large areas of science as interpreted by his colleagues in the scientific community. They derived their authority from the fact that they were recognised as mature interpreters of science, and acting together with the discovering scientist formed the decision procedure of the community.

We can say that before a scientist could expand

the systematic ideas of science he had to accept a large part of them as given. He had, for instance, to believe in the regularity of reality, and that as science was a developing structure, where some of the ideas would change. He would also need to be prepared to accept the decisions of the community for, as a member of the community, he would be unable to exist outside it, as a recognised scientist. Polanyi wrote of the spontaneous development of opinion about a theory. However, although accepting the decision, he could still argue for his own truth claim, producing reasons, argument and additional evidence with a recognition that opinions could change and that like his own the community's decision was not infallible.

It was really the dedication of individual members and the community a whole to the truth which created an interlocking obligation which bound the community together, and which for Polanyi was a major factor in ensuring its continuing existence. An individual scientist, who has made a discovery had passed through a passionate immersion his research and clues of perception, and had been committed to each stage of his discovery, so that he had arrived at his position of being absolutely committed to the theory he put forward to the community for acceptance. His commitment forced him to declare truthfully that which he had found out about reality. It was a feeling that he was indicating a correct knowledge of reality, but, as we have seen, it was possible for him to have been mistaken, He may have used an incorrect interpretative framework, but this he could not know. Nevertheless, he was bound to declare his theory was valid. His conscience which was bound to the truth, obliged him to declare that which he believed to be true even if it was an erroneous conscience.

4 Conclusion

As we have indicated, Polanyi used this model of the operation of the scientific community as a prototype for the study of other communities. In fact, it is the case, that all science has two related tactics. It has an analytic scheme required to reveal, identify, partition, and classify the items which make up an area of study. Then there is an explanatory scheme required to formulate theories descriptive of the mechanism productive of the items which are being analysed.[7] The analytic scheme helps to find order, pattern, and meaning in the chaotic flow of human activity, but how are these ordered patterns produced? In the natural sciences scientists try to discover the mechanisms which produce the patterns. However, as the generative patterns are hidden from view the scientist will try and find a 'simulacrum' of the real but unknown pattern generator. The generative mechanism has to conform to some general

description of how the scientist thinks the world is. Polanyi calls this an interpretative framework, Harré calls it a 'source model'.[8] The interpretative framework makes our concepts coherent and credible to other researchers. The interpretative frameworks or source models are personal but need to become acceptable to others if they are to be used within a research community or discipline. In fact both Polanyi and Popper recognised there was a personal element in discovery. Popper argued that our knowledge was 'theory laden', and, of course, Polanyi that it was really personal rather than strictly speaking objective.

Polanyi pointed out that our personal knowledge provided differing notions of reality which were developed in specialist communities who looked at the world in different ways with their own language, rules, principles, standards, and methodology to explain the world. They used interpersonal knowledge to explain and control this world, and to participate in their own 'game'.

The answer to a query about the criteria of truth for this personal knowledge (personal constructs) was that they could be considered rational and objective as they hung together, and were coherent, and that they were not internally contradictory, and thereby followed the rules of logic. However, as a realist Polanyi went further than this and argued that the models or 'simulacra' of the scientists were intended to be revelations of reality. This position was very much related to his concept of heuristic passion and commitment. The criteria of truth meant that researchers had to gain social agreement for their ways of looking at phenomena under review. In practice this meant they had to make public their reflections and allow them to be critically examined by other practitioners, in the hope of arriving at some consensual agreement. This was the attempt to be as objective as possible, as the public dialogue is a form of objectivity, where a theory has to stand on its own feet, and meet most of the criticisms made against it, if it is to be acceptable and become part of the consensus.

As we have seen, to participate meaningfully in this cultural process we need to develop the appropriate language in the right way within the interpretative frameworks. Ideally we need to develop the skills akin to a connoisseur, so that eventually we have the skills to make independent judgements. This way of thinking about knowledge brings us to a concept of power. Polanyi recognised this and stated: 'Education is latent knowledge, of which we are aware subsidiarily in our sense of intellectual power based on this knowledge'.[9] He meant by this that we cannot be certain of the extent of our knowledge, as it is not something we immediately recognise. However, the knowledge is something we know we possess, and we recognise

its power to give us mastery over a subject in the intellectual field. It means we have developed the conceptual power and ability to recognise instances of or knowledge, and go beyond this and recognise new instances, and fit them in their turn into our framework of knowledge. We therefore would have developed the ability to bring stability to these new instances by rejecting their randomness and controlling them by fitting them into a framework we already possessed. We therefore would have developed the ability to make them understandable to ourselves and others. This gives us a dynamic concept of education, as it is not just a matter of assimilating information but of taking it in, understanding it, and making use of it. It is not then just a passive notion of developing abilities and the waiting for questions and problems to arise. It is achievement oriented, where we look for questions and problems, and attempt to solve and resolve them, and in this way attempt to extend our control over things previously unknown to us. Polanyi's hope was that we would all develop the ability to perform and make judgements within our social and political world.

R. J. Brownhill
Haslemere
(Formerly Senior Lecturer, University of Surrey)

Notes:

1. See R.J. Brownhill and L. Merricks, (2002) 'Ethics and Science', *Educating the Public, Science and Engineering* Ethics, 8, pp. 43-57, for a discussion about Polanyi and Bernal's ethics in science.
2. R.J. Brownhill, 'Subjectivity and Objectivity in Polanyi's Personal Knowledge', *New Universities Quarterly*, Summer, 1981.
3. LL p. 46.
4. P. Hirst, *Knowledge and the Curriculum*, London, Routledge, 1974.
5. K. R. Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, London,
6. SM
7. R. Harré, *Social Being*, *London*, 1979
8. R Harré, The Principles of Scientific Thinking, London, 1970.
9. PK, p. 103.

SCIENCE, ART AND THE ETHICAL: THE FORM OF THE PERSONAL

Alan Ford

Abstract
This article explores the several examples of the form of the personal showing its essential role in our nature and that a full recognition of this can resolve dilemmas in ethics, philosophy of science and in current art theory. It also shows how these disciplines are related and in so doing removes the mind-body and associated dualisms and puts the ethical back into its rightful place, whilst making religion once more not only credible, but perhaps essential.

1 Introduction.

I shall explore the well-trodden path into Macmurray's notion of the Form of the Personal and attempt to show how a pondering of its implications might help us resolve some important dilemmas in the fields of modern art and the slippery subject of ethics. This is an enormous subject and I shall not attempt, even if there were time and even if I were competent, to tackle this in any detail, but an outline of the issues might be of interest, especially to a conference constituted by personalists. As we all know, the concept of the person is at the centre of the philosophies of both Polanyi and Macmurray.

I shall run through Macmurray's ideas about the relations between Ethics, Art and Science (I shall tend to use the term 'ethics' rather than 'religion' for the sake of clarity and to avoid theological debate: I shall have problems enough!), and emphasise in all this the importance of love, that by now embarrassing notion which he believed, as do I, makes possible, logically possible, the idea and the actuality of persons. I believe it also explains why the Ethical has a *logical* priority over both Art and Science.

In *The Self as Agent* Macmurray outlines his structure of the Form of the Personal (pp. 100-3) which is designed to show that the person is not primarily a thinker, as western philosophy has argued since Descartes (and which has been at the heart of western philosophy, *qua* philosophy, since Plato) but an agent, and this agency is constituted by being embodied in flesh and blood and also implies, logically, being a thinking subject too. In other words, the self as agent is the logically primary

notion that is constituted by having a body and being a thinker: the agent is the positive notion, constituted by the two negative, though necessary, notions of being a thinker and being embodied.

In this volume, and in *Persons in Relation*, the second volume of what he jointly called *The Form of the Personal*, he develops this central notion of the form of the personal on the cultural and socio-political levels. The variation on this theme that I shall explore is where he argues that the ethical, like the self as agent, is the primary (positive) concept, which gives meaning to the negatives, in this instance art and science, by the negative notions being reductions, although necessary aspects of, the primary. They make it possible for the ethical to make distinctions about truth and beauty – both crucial to, and part of, the *good* life, whose primary purpose is to guide action**.**

I shall argue, in parallel with Macmurray, that owing to our mistaken and by now implicit, virtually subconscious metaphysics, that sees the self as essentially a thinker ('I think therefore I am'), that Science and Art have split off from Ethics and, like Blake's Zoas of Reason (Urizen)/Science and Imagination (Urthona)/Art, have caused spiritual and cultural chaos.

2 Art, Science and Value

Because in Science the Ethical, that which makes agency possible, is reduced to the world of impersonal material facts, which are for this reason much easier to conceptualise than the notions native to Art and Ethics, and have consequently produced the most obvious and wonderful results, Science has become the paradigm of truth, reason and how we should address the world. All else, according to e.g. Richard Dawkins and Louis Walpert is either expressions of emotion or nonsense. One can agree fully with their admiration for Science and celebrate its great achievements without making it into a philosophy of existence, that has forced such admirable though unnecessary distortions as the Existentialism of Jean Paul Sartre, that slips in the ethical in the etiolated form of having the courage, the authenticity, to face the 'absurd', conjured by this *Scientism*, of a world constituted by meaningless facts, as in the scene in the municipal garden in *Nausea*. In this world the amorality of the psychopath seems rational, which is perhaps why the central character in Camus' *The Outsider* became a hero for our time, celebrated by Cyril Connolly in the first English Edition, but who also

saw that the aesthetic, offered here as a kind of 'joy of life', the ' touch of flowers and women's hands', is not enough.

I argue that Modernist Art, since the territory of the ethical was so reduced by the logic of the age of reason and of scientism, was virtually forced to take on the weight of the ethical because, unlike science's world of fact, it included at least a toe-hold in the realm of value. The perception of beauty is clearly valuable, which in all its immediacy could be considered an ostensive definition of value. Try denying this within earshot of music you love. Nonetheless, there is a distinct tendency to slip quickly from art's 'holiness of beauty' to ethics' 'beauty of holiness', confusing art with the ethical. Constable's passionate declaration, 'I've never seen an ugly thing in my life!' has the stamp of spiritual transfiguration: until we realise there are some things that *ought* to be, in certain circumstances, seen as ugly. This does not mean that Constable was wrong, just that the aesthetic realm is limited.

Modernism's tendency to equate, even reduce, the ethical to the paradigm of art is seen in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus,* when he writes 'Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same' (6.421) When one realises that his source for this idea comes from Schopenhauer's philosophy, where the solution to life's problems lies in *aesthetic* detachment from the desire for the things of this world, one begins to be aware of the radically aesthetic orientation of this quintessentially modernist text, where value is to be found only at the *limits* of the world and language, because 'The sense of the world must lie outside the world …For all that happens and is the case is accidental' (6.41). This accidental, meaningless nature of the facts of the world is a vision of the world as seen by scientism: a world reduced from its ethical plenitude to the facts, a series of arbitrary, absurd accidents, where everything is addressed, as Macmurray spells out, in the third person. The landscape of the *Tractatus*, like the world it describes, is strangely unpopulated and has little logical space for *actual* persons. The delusion that the third person language of science can knit together the world, as we really know it, is one of the fond hopes of scientism that, if it can't account for the ethical, dismisses it as an illusion. Scientism shows a world constituted only by facts, whilst aestheticism denies their value. Aestheticism and scientism are two sides of the same coin, so easily flipped.

Yet modernism battled honourably, vigorously and ingeniously to find a place for value, as we can see in the *Tractatus* itself – but always in a transcendental, ideal realm, consisting only of logical, not actual, space.

3 Value as form

Modern art, from the Impressionists onwards, battled to make art on its ever-shrinking territory. It slowly abandoned subject matter, narrative, action, for the *facts* of colour and form with their own intrinsic beauty, and soon afterwards in abstract, non-representational art the world itself disappeared. This was implicit as early as the 1860's with Whistler in the doctrine of Art for Art's Sake:

> Art should be independent of all clap-trap – should stand alone, and appeal to the artistic sense of eye or ear, without confounding this with emotions entirely foreign to it, as devotion, love, patriotism, and the like. (*The Ten O'Clock Lecture*)

Oscar Wilde too added his literary skills:

> There is no such thing as a moral or immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all. No artist has ethical sympathies. An ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style. (Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*)

This is the doctrine of the dandy, whose aim is to resolve all the problems of existence by making his life into a work of art, and despising and resisting ordinary existence. The bohemian, who constitutes the other type of the modernist artist, exemplified by Picasso, sacrifices moral responsibility to art, because he cannot conceive of anything higher. In both instances art becomes the aim of existence and substitutes itself for ethics. I shall not argue that art must have a patent ethical 'message', just that one cannot live fully without ethics.

Yet, by the dawning of total abstraction, a complex metaphysical mysticism was adopted by early modernism, explicitly in a few instances and implicitly in most. It is spelled out in a nutshell in the *Tractatus*, where the notion of 'showing' points to the ineffable, or that which cannot be spoken in the propositions of ordinary language:

> It is impossible for there to be propositions of ethics. Propositions can express nothing that is higher.

Ethics must *show* itself as music or painting convey their meaning, not to the head but the heart – or solar plexus – with the immediacy of a slap or, as he also puts it, of a contradiction or a tautology, where evidence is no longer needed for truth or falsehood.

> There are indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical. (6.522)

This betrays the urge, constant since Descartes' *cogito*, to make all knowledge self-evident and absolutely certain.

We are also told that the ethical 'cannot alter the world, it can alter only the limits of the world, not the facts'. There is little room here for political *action*. He continues:

The solution of the riddle of life in space and time lies outside space and time. (6.4312)

This is all deeply impressive, even moving, stuff! But here we have the thinker as hero, who finds the ethico-religious, not in the world of action, but in a detached aestheticism of essentially passive contemplation. Ethics becomes as contemplative, perhaps identical to, aestheticism

4 The flip side of Formalism

A 'pragmatic', aggressive modernism matches formalism's passive contemplation, as Macmurray's theory would predict. The movements of Dada and Surrealism, in intentional opposition to formalism, opt for a materialist art in which the ethico-spiritual is absorbed into a world of physical processes; not the *social* world of Marx's Dialectical Materialism, but a world divided itself between the Radical Empiricism of Dada, where persons disappear into a materialist flow of signifiers on the one hand, and the Radical Subjectivism of Surrealism on the other, where they disappear into the flows of the unconscious mind. Ironically, the subjectivism of Surrealism flips into Dada's materialism by being subsumable and reducible to brain processes. This is a characteristic of such polarisations when the world of action/ethics is suppressed: value is to be found in some Dionysian, anarchic destruction of the present bourgeois culture that it is hoped, and this is the strange faith that comes through the back door of such Gnostic beliefs, will end in a kind of alchemical transformation of society through the white heat of destruction. Nietzsche and his Superman are not far away when artists say: 'To destroy is a creative act'.

I have shown in a past paper that formalist and factic art, pushed to a logical conclusion, collapse similarly into mere homogenised phenomena, as does idealism and materialism. It can also be shown that Aestheticism and Logical Positivism do the same. This phenomenon, that I have called 'philosophical narcissism' (from Lawrence Cahoone's *The Dilemma of Modernity*, SUNY 1988) where, outside a truly ethical realm, outside the Form of the Personal, the negatives, having sundered themselves from the positive, collapse similarly. Macmurray touches on this, although he does not take it any further, when writing about pragmatic and contemplative societies in *Persons in Relation* (p. 145):

These two modes of society, like the two forms of apperception which sustain them, are ambivalent expressions of the same negative motivation. Consequently, *the one can transform itself into the other with ease* (my emphasis). If the 'organic' society, idealizing its actuality, is compelled to take its practical life seriously, if the *self-deception* (my emphasis) cannot be maintained any longer, then the struggle becomes real and is waged in earnest. When this happens, the unity of society can only be maintained by the power of the State. The necessity of social unity makes it certain that it will be so maintained. Rousseau gives way to Hobbes; idealism to realism; modern democracy to the totalitarian state.'

Self-deception's aim is invariably the evasion of moral responsibility.

I believe the concept of philosophical narcissism explains why postmodern art is a direct consequence of modernist art, and why postmodernism has lost its way in the flows and eddies of rudderless 'signifiers' which have tended to make it not a creator of value and insight as modernism attempted and in some cases succeeded, but generally incoherent and a follower or victim of equally rudderless capitalism. The 'rudder' is, of course, the Ethical that *seems* to have become detached from both Art and Science. The fact that Art and Science continue is not because we are clear about the necessity of that mysterious realm of the Ethical, the fact that we think Art and Science are ethically neutral shows that we are not, but because the Ethical, fortunately as well as necessarily, again comes in, often unbeknown to us, through the back door and makes Art and Science possible. The more one looks into it, the more one marvels at Macmurray's insight!

Although what I am saying is a critique of modernism, I have to say that this noble movement, with a faulty metaphysics, still continued to make great art. For an aspect of art is to capture the human condition of its particular age, and that includes what it was like to see the world from a particular metaphysical viewpoint, even, and particularly so, if it was mistaken. This shows why art is not progressive in the same sense as science, since a faulty metaphysics does not negate the art that expresses it, whilst a scientific theory, found to be false, has to be abandoned.

5 Possibility, necessity and the synthesis of the person

We have seen the form of the personal, although generally ignored, operational on the levels of the metaphysical (with the materialist/idealist split), the cultural (with the science/ art split), and in the formalist/factic fracture in our analysis of modernist art. In Kierkegard's analysis in *The Sickness Unto Death* the 'flip' is at the *personal* level itself. Kierkegaard says a person is a synthesis of Necessity and Possibility. The failure of this synthesis ends in failure to become a person, because personhood is an achievement in practice.

'Too Much Necessity is the lack of Possibility'. Such a person restricts himself, either because of

fear of freedom and engagement, to the safe and tried in a life of grinding necessity, or to the pragmatist's attack in order to forestall the other. Both are divorced from freedom to see possibilities. Kierkegaard likens this lack of possibility to being dumb. 'Necessity is like a sequence of consonants only, but in order to utter them there must in addition be possibility'. Possibility, so to speak, provides the vowels. This is allied to the scientific notion of causation, which sees people as processes, totally taken up in the nexus of causation and determinism, about which Kierkegaard writes 'The self of the determinist cannot breathe, for it is impossible to breathe necessity alone, which taken pure and simple suffocates the human self.' For Kierkegaard the eternal source of possibility is God.

The dialectic of philosophical narcissism continues in 'Too Much Possibility is the lack of Necessity'. This is the contemplative side of the equation where thought has priority, expanding into the realm of mere logical possibility rather than being a guide to engagement in the real world. The desire is for absolute freedom, but in this one necessarily flips into necessity, for freedom depends on action and one cannot act without some kind of resistance. In a realm of absolute freedom there would be no motivation or reason for choice and, of course, freedom depends upon choice: but the freedom sought is really freedom from responsible choice, often aiming for isolation from a world which makes demands. Kierkegaard remarks, 'Losing one's self may pass off as quietly as if it were nothing; every other loss, that of an arm, a leg, five dollars, a wife, etc., is sure to be noticed.'

Yet both sides, according to the dialectic of philosophical narcissism, end in the same, incoherent no-man's land, oscillating between freedom and necessity in a homogenised amalgam of both and neither. As we've seen, absolute freedom means there is no freedom, whilst iron necessity offers the absolute freedom from ever making a decision.

Possibility and Necessity are words that reflect idealism and materialism, mind and body, transcendence and facticity, etc., in short the negative aspects of the Form of the Personal which, in their instance works by splitting one from the other and in this way slipping into self-deception in order to evade the real. This splitting is a useful attribute and essential in isolating the relevant in science or an argument, in separating one discipline from another etc. Thought depends upon it. Yet it enables us to evade ourselves, and responsibility for right action. Ethics is about 'keeping it together'.

The brilliance and psychological acuity of Kierkegaard's analysis works on many levels in the constitution of what it is to become a person. On the merely neurotic level we have the loss of reality, based on Too Much Necessity, of the obsessive-compulsive victim who, because of the fear of freedom or the unknown, puts himself on the treadmill of necessity by his magical rituals, invented in order to protect himself from the unexpected. On the side, of Too Much Freedom, we have the person who will not commit because it will, and always does, restrict one's future possibilities. In both cases freedom is lost because action is frustrated. On the Psychotic level we find two similar parameters of madness, where the victims are lost in this meaningless sea of Too Much Possibility and Necessity, where e.g. the Catatonic Schizophrenic is lost in the deterministic fantasy that he is, for example, made of glass that if he moves he will shatter to pieces; or the Hebephrenic, lost in a nightmare of a fantasy where anything can happen, (anything is possible), usually of an horrific kind. In both cases it's the self, the unifier of experience, the moral agent who can make something of them for future action that seems not to have been established – or evaded.

6 The priority of the ethical

Macmurray implies that the religious, I will still stick to the term 'ethical', has a logical priority over art and science when he states that it is the positive that is constituted by these two negatives, which are reductions of it. In this way we are told that science is the most reductive, necessarily narrowing its vision to the third person world of things, even addressing human beings as objects. But, and this is the biggest possible 'but', the only justification for this is for the person's benefit *as* a person, e.g. when the surgeon operates.

Art is the next most reductive, emphasising the second person, the 'You' of the artist's audience or viewers. Here the personal other is generalised and there is no person-to-person relation.

The ethico-religious is the complete realm or 'language' but, according to Macmurray, because of this it is the most difficult to understand. Perhaps because it makes the other realms possible, and these are easier to use, and because it demands self-knowledge. All three persons of language are present and related in the religious realm where there is also the relationship with God, although I would prefer to refer to *what is*.

One can perhaps gain an intuitive grasp of the accuracy of this viewpoint if one, once again, tried to imagine a person from these three points of view. For instance, if a person, *per impossible*, was a scientist and nothing else, not a person with other attributes such as a husband or wife who loved his/her spouse and children, took an interest in sport, wine, dogs, voted or didn't at elections etc., he would be schizoid, since science only makes sense against a background of being a human being,

equipped with a sense of truth, relevance, even beauty.

A person can indeed live the aesthetic life of art. Oscar Wilde tried it and Nietzsche even stated that life could be justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon: Mallarmé agreed with him when he said the only justification of the world is to end up in a book. But this too is easily seen to be limited, and even Wilde wrote a book, *The Picture of Dorian Grey*, that describes the disastrous *ethical* outcome of such a selfish, narcissistic pursuit, when significance is reduced to aesthetic satisfaction.

Yet a person who was an artist and nothing else, would be something like a psychopath, someone who uses the world and other persons for his personal satisfaction: as, at best, objects of beauty, at worst objects of exploitation, sexual and otherwise (e.g.. Picasso).

As the above shows, the realms of science and art are limited and cannot deal with the more complete 'language' of the ethical from which they are derived. Scientism advocates, *à la* Dawkins, that science can explain all that deserves explanation, and that what stands outside it must be delusion; whilst art invades religious territory in the form of mysticism which, as Macmurray explains:

is, in itself, an expression of contemplative reflection. It is an aesthetic rather than a religious experience; or rather, it expresses the point at which the aesthetic attitude seeks to take the whole real as an object, ignoring the limitation of art, and finds it ineffable.

Art, as Macmurray writes, can create only 'in imagination', whilst Religion (the ethical in my terminology) 'creates in reality' (*Religion, Art and Science,* p. 44).

This confusion is clear in Wittgenstein's *Notebooks* where he writes, 'The work of art is the *object* seen *sub specie aeternitatis*', and, 'The good life is the *world* seen *sub specie aeternitatis*. This is the connexion between art and ethics' (7/10/16). To be further compounded in the *Tractatus* by 'Ethics and Aesthetics are one and the same' (6.421).

As Macmurray puts it,

The belief that religion … is grounded in mysticism, that it grows out of a commerce, real or imagined, with the supernatural, is a form of the confusion which is very common at the present time. (*Religion, Art and Science,* p. 44)

Mysticism has its place, but it must be allied to the good or it can easily slip into egotism – and beyond. (See Norman Cohn's *Pursuit of the Millennium*, for numerous examples if this in millenarian sects and the Waco incident etc., from modern times).

7 Communication, action and ritual

So, the ethico/religious is a more complete language than art or science, but it must include the empirical and the realm of feeling as essential aspects of its completeness. Both empirical fact and the value that art enables us to discriminate are necessary to our humanity in the need for communication. It's not language that differentiates man from the animals. (p. 51) It is in the *need* for communication that we become *persons*, and this need is our only natural adaptation for survival, for the child in his helplessness is adapted to be cared for and to this end must communicate.

Communication is, obviously, the basis of thought, that necessary component of action. Science shows us the most efficient means, whilst art should refine our ends, but religion (ethics) centres both in the rational context of the aim for universal communion and the need for freedom whereby each of us can become fully ourselves by mutual revelation of one to the other: (When we allow ourselves to be seen self-deception dies). The ultimate Other of relationship, through which we can gain complete self-transcendence can only be, for Macmurray, 'an infinite person, Who is at once the Father of men and the Creator of the world.' (p. 59) It is, we are told, 'the problematic of personal unity – that is, of community – which gives rise to religion', and in this sense religion is practical, valuable and rational.

Equally practical, and perhaps a necessary supplement to, or aspect of, Ethics, at the heart of all religions, is 'the form of ritual or ceremonial activity: … this activity is itself the primary religious reflection' (p.55). It is at least a profound reminder of the importance to our nature of communion, if we are to become rational, sensitive and loving human beings.

Ritual has, necessarily, the form of action, is public and interpersonal and not just contemplative.

It involves thought, of course, and it involves emotion, because all human action involves both of these. But since it is itself action, it unifies these, as scientific and artistic reflection cannot do. These remain at the level of ideas and images, and because of this they remain opposites, and even as modes of activity, antagonistic. And no religious expression which stops short of action, which remains merely intellectual or merely emotional can ever be satisfactory, because it can never escape ambiguity. The meaning of religion can only be unambiguously expressed in action. (p. 55).

It is very interesting that in this context Polanyi too invokes the importance of festivities and ritual. He compares the arts with these and points to their artificial nature as their means for stepping outside the stream of the quotidian. He quotes Helmut Kuhn, who writes: 'When we celebrate and solemnize the passage of our life, we confirm thereby the whole natural order, of which human life

with its cycle of birth and death forms part'. Polanyi continues: 'Subjects that lie deepest in our existence are most fitly recalled in our affiliation to a comprehensive and lasting framework much better than a form we simply improvise for the occasion' (*Meaning*, p.118). He continues:

> The destruction of formal occasion in the name of authenticity has the effect of diffusing our existence into scattered details, deprived of memorable meaning. Only through our surrender to such occasions do we find ourselves affiliated to a comprehensive, lasting framework, which gives meaning to our life and death and to the myriads of separable events in between. Otherwise we do not see the universality that we share with others.

(Macmurray might have written this.) He continues that without such ceremonies '[e]ach of the numberless events in our lives is then adventitious, and the whole is inchoate and merely a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing' (p.119). It is this that describes what I have been saying about some modernism when it chooses to make art, and even the world, over again from nothing.

It seems to me that great art is capable of grasping these issues and making them live by shining a particular, even peculiar, light on them for a particular age and circumstance, but it should never presumes to replace or fragment them. It is still possible, of course, for religion to refine itself, and art has a place here, but the fundamental structure of the Form of the Personal cannot be changed unless we become less than human. The superman would either be a monster, or someone who would be more, rather than less, human than us.

8 Love and the distinction between fantasy and reality

The Form of the Personal lurks everywhere but is seen most clearly in the example Macmurray himself uses in *Persons in Relation*, Chapter Four called *'The Rhythm of Withdrawal and Return',* where he states that this dialectic is the 'full dynamic expression of the form of the personal, as a positive which includes and is constituted by and subordinates its own negative.' And '[t]he withdrawal is for the sake of the return: and its necessity lies in this, that it differentiates the positive phase by enriching its content. Without the negative there would be no development of the positive, but only the repetition *ad infinitum* of an original undifferentiated identity.' (pp. 90-91) He then invitingly argues 'In this … we may find the answer to many of the questions which puzzle the moralist…' (p. 91)

One puzzle that it resolves, at least for me, is that it puts fact and value into the correct relationship, by giving *logical* priority to the latter, whereby it is shown that logic owes its rationality to it; and in this way shows the logical priority of that most central notion for ethics, morality and, dare I say it, *religion*: I mean, of course, **love**.

We gain our personhood in the separation from our mothers, and love enables this to happen. This is where, from the very commencement of existence, the ethical is established.

Macmurray shows how the negativity between mother and child is necessary so that the child can make the distinction between reality and fantasy. As he says, there comes the time when the heaven of stability and predictability has to end. For example, mother might say: 'Now come on Johnny, show me that you can walk', and leaves him tottering in the middle of the room with no support. Johnny thinks: 'She's abandoned me! She hates me! I hate her! Etc.' Yet if he walks, he gains praise and a cuddle – and he realises Mum loved him after all and she 'abandoned' him out of love. If he falls, she catches and cuddles him – and he realises Mum still loves him, that her intention was good and because he now trusts her, he is probably willing to have another go. The important outcome is that he realises that the fantasies of hate and fear were just that: fantasies; and that what goes on in his head might be mistaken. He can, in short, make the distinction between reality and fantasy by comparing them in his own experience!

What this enables *us* to realise is that it was the fact of Mum's love that made this fundamental distinction possible. It is the positive that enables us to distinguish the negative. Yet, if the love, the positive, was absent the distinction would not be possible, and the child would be lost in a fantasy of fear and paranoia. This shows that reason, based upon this distinction between the real and the false, is dependent in an absolutely fundamental way, on love. In short, it could be said that love, the ethical, puts science and art in their places and makes them both possible: it is logically the case that logic is based upon love in order to be logical. The upside-down notion of the Logical Positivists: that the world as we know it can be reconstituted from sense-data, or the *Tractatus* notion that only Science and logic can tell us what is the case – or that Ethics and Aesthetics are to be found only outside or at the limits of the world, are shown to be, indeed, upside-down.

Yet the withdrawal, the negative, is absolutely essential to show what is possible and impossible, to create the necessary differentiation for appropriate and sophisticated action, whilst the withdrawal into greater differentiation is guided and motivated by love and trust.

In fact science and art themselves are reductions of religion's completion, but can operate only in the context of that completion. Outside that context they

would collapse into nonentity.

We know that reason is the ability to act in relation to what is the case and, as Macmurray argues in the first chapter of *Reason and Emotion*, there is a distinction to be made between rational reasoning and irrational reasoning, with the latter, by common consent being said to be caused by emotion. Yet, as he says, emotions can also be rational or irrational, with the former enabling us to act in accordance with what is the case. There is a world of difference between the fear of the paranoid who *feels* that his wife is trying to kill him and the fear of the man whose axe-wielding wife is taking a swing at him!

Here, once again, there is a surprising logical priority that reverses the usual prioritising of reason over emotion. Macmurray writes:

It is not that our feelings have a secondary and subordinate capacity for being rational or irrational. It is that reason is primarily an affair of emotion, and that the rationality of thought is the derivative and secondary one. For if reason is the capacity to *act* in terms of the nature of the object, it is emotion which stands directly behind activity determining its substance and direction, while thought is related to action indirectly and through emotion, determining only its form, and that only partially. (*Reason and Emotion*, p. 26).

I believe this too shows love is the most rational of the emotions and creates rational agents, and why the ethico-religious has an existential and logical priority over art and science, and why it is to it that they owe their rationality, now capable of distinguishing the true (science) and the beautiful (art). In short, it invents them out of the necessity to relate to what is ever more clearly, and for this *it* puts them to work, and from this comes the agent, the person, agency and action.

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POLANYI'S INDETERMINACY THESES

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Key Words

Polanyi, Quine, indeterminacy, underdetermination of theories, theories, measured data, observation

Abstract

It is a basic and recurrent theme in Polanyi's texts that justification of knowledge essentially involves personal judgments. '[T]acit operations play a decisive role … in the very holding of scientific knowledge.' (KB: 105) This presupposes that observable facts cannot justify or falsify our theories solely on the basis of the rules of rationality. The acceptability of theories – from the simplest to the most complex ones – is *not determined* by logic and observation. This claim is essential for Polanyi because it is to make room for personal judgment. It may also bring Quine's indeterminacy theses (Quine 1990a) in one's mind – and this association is not completely unfounded. As, for example, if the acceptability of a theory is not determined by the rules of rationality and observations, then there is probably more then one theory that is acceptable in the light of logic and observations. In this paper I will reconstruct and analyze Polanyi's indeterminacy theses and the arguments invoked to support them. Finally Polanyi's resolution for the indeterminacies will be considered.

1 Empirical underdetermination

Polanyi is not interested in the epistemological problem of underdetermination as such. Rather, he attacks the idea of the empirically-methodologically grounded science in order to reveal an essential gap in its foundations where tacit knowing comes in. 'The avowed purpose of the exact sciences is to establish complete intellectual control over experience in terms of precise rules which can be formally set out and empirically tested.' (PK: 18) 'It is thought that in science facts alone count' (Polanyi 1947/97: 216) He has a twofold challenge against this orthodox picture. First he argues that observable data do not determine the theoretical relations accounting for them. The second argument derives from the truism that measured values never exactly match the calculated ones.

1.1 Empirical data do not determine their theoretical relations

Polanyi proceeds from a mathematical model. Suppose we have two measurable parameters x, and y, and having measured them on various occasions the set of pairs of measured values ($a_1 b_1, a_2 b_2, …a_n b_n$) was the result.

Can we decide form a series of points … whether there is a function [$y = f(x)$] and if so what it is? Clearly we can do nothing of the kind. Any set of pairs of [x] and [y] variables is *compatible with an infinite number of functional relations* between which there is nothing to choose from the point of view of the underlying data. To choose any of the infinite possible functions and give it the distinction of a scientific proposition is so far without any justification.

[S]uccessful prediction … only adds a number of observations, the predicted observations, to our series of measurements and cannot change the fact that any series of measurements is incapable of defining a function between measured variables. (Polanyi 1947/97: 216, italics added and the mathematical notations are slightly modified.)

The thesis is that several functions can describe the same set of data and that underdetermination cannot be eliminated by increasing the amount of empirical data. Theoretical functions are underdetermined by all possible data. Polanyi's example intuitively supports this vividly. Imagine dots representing the measured values in a Cartesian coordinate system. It is always possible to draw more then one curves – actually infinitely many curves – connecting these points. A more solid theoretical support can be given this thesis by means of the mathematical theory approximation. Both the intuitive picture and the mathematical background entail that the different functions describing the same set of data are logically incompatible. (That is, they cannot be transformed into each other under sufficiently strong conditions for the transformation.) Thus Polanyi's thesis of the underdetermination of theories reads: infinitely many and logically mutually incompatible theoretical functions can describe the same set of observation data, these functions are underdetermined by all possible data.

This is exactly Quine's celebrated thesis of underdetermination (Quine 1975, 1990a, 1990b) – restricted to quantitative theories only. The more general statement of this thesis says that logically incompatible and mutually intranslatable but equally adequately comprehensive theories of the world are possible, or in other words there are empirically equivalent systems of the world. (Quine 1975)

Underdetermination emerges, as Quine points out, because theoretical claims go beyond observations. They talk about entities and connections that are not empirically accessible. As a consequence of this the

logical relationship is asymmetrical between theories and observations. Theories imply observation sentences but not on the other way round. Observation sentences or empirical data do not imply the theoretical claims that establish their connections. Observation sentences and logic do not determine empirical theories, hence the underdetermination.

However an interesting qualification is needed here. Only theories with infinite observational consequences generate epistemologically interesting underdetermination. For if a theory applies to a finite set of observation sentences then the theory can be given a finite formulation in terms of the conjunct of these observation sentences. This theory formulation is uniquely determined by the observation sentences, leaving no slack for underdetermination.

It should be noted that the thesis of underdetermination claims the existence of rival and incompatible theories and not that *any* theory can be devised for a class of observation sentences. Because one-way logical relationship must hold for an empirically adequate theory: the observation sentences should be its logical consequences.

Critics of this thesis accuse its proponents of being misled by the intuitive picture of different curves connecting the same set of dots. Sure, if only a *finite* number of dots are available to represent the observable values then infinitely many different curves can connect them. But the representation of all possible data would be the points representing the measurable value for all points of the *x*-axis. In this case, however, there is only one continuous curve connecting all the points and it is precisely the one constituted by the infinite set of points itself. Consider an *analogue* measuring instrument, for example, a thermograph registering the temperature of its spatial vicinity in time. If this thermograph operated from the beginning of the Universe till the end of it, then it would produce a single 'theory', that is, a single function of temperature in time without any underdetermination. Critics may be right at that. The thesis needs further qualification. Nevertheless the case in point cannot eliminate all instances of underdetermination. For most of the scientifically interesting theoretical connections – if not all of them – can be tested by the observation of discrete events, and, in such cases, there is no chance – in principle – to perform continuous measurement (e.g. particle collisions). The phenomena that can be studied in principle only by measuring discrete values is subject to underdetermination without further qualification. Or, in other words, underdetermination is not the result of shortage of data in such cases, but rather inherent in the logical relationship between theory and measurable data.

The thermograph example may be misleading also in a second sense. The problem to be illuminated by the example is *not* the problem of induction. The point is not that the thermograph can *produce* a 'theory' connecting the measurable values of temperature and time. It is rather that no different alternative functions can be proposed to account for the measured data equally well because there is one and only one going through all the measured points, and it accounts for the measured data better then any other conceivable. This is true even if this curve probably does not succumb to symbolic formulation in terms of a *mathematical expression*, $y=f(x)$. Nonetheless the function as a mapping of the values (points) of *x*-axis into the values (points) of *y*-axis is defined by the curve drawn by the thermograph in a mathematically faultless way. However, it would be hard to use a function defined graphically by its diagram in science, and it would be absurd to consider it as part of a theory. A theory should admit linguistic (symbolic) formulation, (No matter how the notion of a theory is defined, a syntactic or a semantic view is adopted). So the curve on the paper should be described by a mathematical formula and this takes us back to the mathematical theory of approximation and the underdetermination reoccurs, because the curve drawn by the thermograph can be approximated equally well by different and logically incompatible functions (e.g. by Taylor or Fourier series.) Thus the amended thesis sounds like this: any theory admitting linguistic (in particular mathematical) formulation is underdetermined by all possible observable data.

1.2 No exact match between measured and calculated values

The relation between theories and observations are even more complicated than that. The underdetermination of theories by all possible empirical data is about the *logical relation between* theoretical and observation *sentences*, that is, between the values of the observable parameters and the possible theories including those observable parameters and supplying their values. Different and contradicting theories can include exactly the same set of observable parameters assuming exactly the same values in each of the theories. But how do we observe the values? How are the 'formulae' applied to 'the facts of experience'? (PK: 18-19) Instead of discussing the logical relations between theoretical and empirical *sentences*, Polanyi invites us to investigate the empirical input itself. The observable data are always supplied by measuring instruments in quantitative theories, and the theoretically calculated value of a measurable quantity never exactly matches the actual reading of the instrument (PK: 19). Therefore observations can neither automatically falsify nor confirm a theory. There is

no epistemic rule to tell us what sort of difference should be enough to repudiate the theory. It is a personal judgment, says Polanyi, that decides whether the observations are to be interpreted as confirming or falsifying the theory. The difference between the observed and the calculated values are interpreted as measurement error in the first case and as systematic error in the second. The conclusion of Polanyi's argument is that logic and measurements (observations) can not judge the empirical adequacy of a theory. 'In consequence of such random errors we can only proceed from the probable values of initial data to probable values of predicted magnitudes, and since no strict relationship exists between these two sets of figures, the process remains to this extent indeterminate.' (PK: 19)

But how would this lead to underdetermination? My suggestion is this. If there is no exact match between the calculated and the measured values of observable quantities then different sets of calculated values of observable quantities can produce similarly acceptable approximations to a given set of measured data; where the different sets of calculated values are supplied by different and logically incompatible theories. In other words, *empirically different theories* can be devised to account for – that is, to approximate – the same set of observable data *equally well*. This thesis may be dubbed, for convenience, the underdetermination of theories by measured data.

According to what sort of standard would the empirically different theories perform 'equally well'? Since there is no single universal rule for approximation, different conditions may be set for the rival theories. Reasonable conditions could be, for example, that the maximum or the average of the difference between the calculated and the measured values be less then a given value.

Let us have a closer look at this thesis because certain provisos need to be made here. This kind of underdetermination does not emerge if we have a qualitative theory predicting only qualitatively sufficiently different observations. Neither does it emerge, if a quantitative theory supplies observable quantities with discrete values separated by intervals that are out of the range of measuring error. For instance, precision is not a problem for IT (digital) measurement. If there is no signal then the potentiometer says something around 0V, if there is, then it points to somewhere around 5 V mark. Even if the potentiometer never says exactly 0 or 5 V, there is no slack to be interpreted between the reading and the predicted value of the theory, because the theory predicts signal or the lack of it. Thus the underdetermination by measured data is less general then the former kind of underdetermination. It applies only if the observable

quantities of a theory are finer grained then the range of the maximal measuring error.

However this is not a serious theoretical limitation because if our total theory of the world has at least one continuous (or fine grained) observable parameter then it is subject to the underdetermination of this kind.

We should clearly see the scale of the underdetermination if data is available in abundance. Suppose we have two continuous observable quantity, and the theory predicts that when $x=3$, then $y=2$. Testing the theory we set the value of the system's x-parameter to be 3 by using an x-gauge pointing at 3 as precisely as possible and then we read the y-gauge. The y-gauge will never say exactly 2. But as the measurement is repeated the values read on the y-gauge will scatter around a mean. (Provided that the variance is indeed due to measuring error.) The less the standard deviation is, the sharper the mean comes out. If the theory is good then one possible candidate of the mean will be 2. Of course the scattered values read on the y-gauge will never tell exactly around what theoretical mean value they are scattered around. (Because the same problem reoccurs with the definition of the probability function: no set of measured value will fit exactly one and only one Gauss function.) But the less the standard deviation (variance) is, the smaller the range is from which alternative theoretically predicted values for y can be chosen. For any such alternative theoretically predicted value should also be a possible candidate for the mean of the standard deviation. If it is possible to make repeated measurements for every measurable (a_i, b_i) pairs, then empirically only insignificantly different $y=f(...x...)$ functions will approximate the set of data equally well. Repeated measurements of the same observable quantities can thus substantially reduce the rationally acceptable alternative theories (functions) predicting different values for the same parameter. Mathematics, however, cannot fully eliminate the underdetermination but can only reduce it.

However theories including functions with certain kind of instability or singularity around $x=3$ will resist the narrowing-down of the range of the possible theoretically predicted values by repeated measurements. Say, for example, the function $y=1/|x-3|$ will produce enormous scattering on the y-gauge while we try to set system in a way that the x-gauge points to 3. Therefore the scattering and the variance of the measured values of y will not assist the choice among the possible functions. But these considerations are relevant to our problem just the other way round. Obviously, we are not concerned with the problem of how to guess the appropriate function from measured values in a single point. (It is an absurd problem anyway.) Our problem is how

to choose one from the functions supplying different *y*s for some *x*s. We have a hypothesis about the candidates in accordance with scattered measured values of *y* in *various x*s. If the measurements of *y* in *x*=3 show enormous scattering compared to the measurement of y in other *x*s, then it will tell us that some of the functions (e.g., the function y= 2/3x) are much less likely candidates to account for the measured values.

The second kind of underdetermination is a matter of degree while the first is not. Being a logical relationship between observation sentences and a theory, the first kind of underdetermination either holds or not. In the case second kind, however, it may be dubious at times whether what we see is within the measuring error or not. But on other occasions it may be clear that the difference between what is observed and what was predicted by the theory is clearly significant, and the result calls for serious consideration.

Up until now we have supposed the abundance of measured data. What if we have only limited access to measured values because of the nature of the available experimental setup? If to keep all but one of the measurable values fixed is not possible because of the nature of the system measured, then no scattering around a particular theoretically calculated value can arise. This is the case in astronomical observations, one of Polanyi's favorite examples,. We cannot fix time in order to measure the spatial coordinates of a planet repeatedly at a particular time coordinate to narrow down the acceptable theoretical predictions for the position of the planet. Both time coordinate and the spatial location of the planet are changing. Only one measured spatial position is available for each value of *t*. (Obviously we can measure the position of a planet by different instruments at the same time. But in such cases the interpretation of the scattering gets even more difficult.) We know that the measured space-time coordinates approximate the calculated values within measuring errors, but having no exact rule as to *how* the calculated values are approximated by the measured ones. Therefore it is possible to approximate the measured values by empirically (and of course also theoretically) different functions.

The access to data is limited theoretically in another way, namely, there is no access to data within measuring error, and sometimes measuring error in principle cannot be reduced under certain values. As a result of this we have no chance to decide by measurement whether space-time is continuous or only dense. (That is whether the cardinality of space-time points is like that of real or only that of rational numbers.) Because our measuring instruments can produce only rational numbers as they are based on ratios. (Newton-Smith

1978) Despite the fact that measured values can in principle be represented already by a theory about a dense space-time, it is generally supposed that space-time is continuous.

To summarize, the underdetermination of theories by measured data springs from measurement errors, and claims that *empirically different theories* can be devised to approximate the same set of measured data *equally well*. This underdetermination plays a decisive role if we have limited access to data or if we theorize about quantities beyond measuring error. Qualitative theories are not vulnerable to this kind of underdetermination. If a quantity can be measured repeatedly on the same instrument while all the other parameters are kept fixed, then the underdetermination of this kind can be substantially reduced. As in this case the variance of the measured value can seriously limit the rationally acceptable theoretical functions.

2 The indeterminacy of the extensional semantic values

The discussion above supposed that the meaning of the terms and sentences applied in a scientific theory is well defined and raises no problem concerning the application of the theory. However, Polanyi thinks that the definition of the semantic values of the terms and sentences are undermined by mechanisms similar to the ones discussed above. '[T]he process of applying language to things is also necessarily unformalized: that it is inarticulate. Denotation, then, is an art, and whatever we say about things assumes our endorsement of our own skill in practising this art. This personal coefficient of all affirmations inherent in the use of language…' (PK: 81)

Three arguments can be reconstructed from Polanyi's texts to support the indeterminacy of *extensional* semantic values, that is the reference (denotation) of terms and the truth values of sentences.

The first one says that there are no explicit rules to determine how language refers to the objects of the external world. For it is impossible to state linguistically – that is explicitly – how to apply language to what it refers to, because either any such rule would presuppose itself or its application would require further explanation and so on ad infinitum. He refers to Kant (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A.133) that 'no system of rules can prescribe the procedure by which the rules themselves are to be applied' (KB: 103).

This argument, however widespread it is, fails to make his case. There is indeed a category difference between a rule and its application, but as Wittgenstein convincingly points out (e.g., Wittgenstein 1958 §§201-219) there exists no gap between the two to be bridged by the rules of

application. To understand a rule *is* to know how to apply it, to know what counts as following or violating it. For rules are our standards of correctness. Thus if we have rules, then we have their application and there remains no indeterminacy here: they do determine the correct use of language, including the correct application of predicates and sentences.

The second argument can be stated like this. Even if this infinite regress is set apart, there remains the problem of the variety of the reference of a predicate unmanageable by definitions and rules. Because '*in applying our conception of a class of things we keep identifying objects that are different form one another in every particular*' (M 51) (Italics is original). Therefore Polanyi seems to conclude that '[t]here is an ultimate agency which, unfettered by any explicit rules, decides on the subsumption of a particular instance under any general rule or a general concept.' (KB: 103) And 'striving to eliminate the indeterminacy involved in subsuming a presumed instance under that class' seems to have been misguided. (M: 52)

According to this argument the lack of rules, explicit or implicit, springs from the vagueness generally inherent in language. Not necessarily all concepts are vague in a language, but most empirical concepts allow of borderline cases, and no rule can define the referential content of such concepts without vagueness, in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. Borderline cases require a decision whether to be included in the reference class of the predicate or not. Certainly not *all* application of a vague predicate is like this. Even a predicate with vague borderline cases generally has also clear-cut cases of application. Thus the indeterminacy of referents is restricted only to the borderline cases. This implies that the truth value of some sentences may also vary according to whether the borderline cases are included in the reference class of the predicate or not. Such indeterminacy often emerges in recording the reading of an instrument. For example, if the pointer of an analogue *a*-gauge points close to 3, should we write '*a*=3' in the report of the experiment or should we refuse to identify the value of *a* with 3, and try to determine more exactly the position of the pointer between 3 and 3.1?

Polanyi's third argument for the indeterminacy of extensional semantic values rests on his holism. He uses the analogy of a text to illuminate how linguistic units are interrelated and how they are related to what they refer to.

> Three things will have to be born in mind: the *text*, the *conception* suggested by it, and the *experience* on which they may bear. Our judgment operates by trying to adjust these three to each other.' 'Thus to speak a language is to commit ourselves to the double

indeterminacy due to our reliance both on its formalism and on our own continued reconsideration of this formalism in its bearing on experience.' (PK: 95)

Thus it is always possible to reinterpret our language in different ways in the light of new evidence. Polanyi ventures the bold claim that all observation is subject to this kind of reinterpretation.

> Since the world …. never exactly repeats any previous situation … we can achieve consistency [of repeated use of terms and sentences] only by identifying manifestly different situations in respect to some particular feature.' 'First, we must decide what variations of our experience are irrelevant to the identification of this recurrent feature, as forming no part of it, i.e. we must discriminate against its random background. Secondly, we must decide what variations should be accepted as normal changes in the appearance of this identifiable feature, or should be taken, on the contrary, to discredit this feature altogether as a recurrent element of experience.' (PK: 79-80)

These two decisions may be easy to make in some cases of observation by virtue of the rules of the language-game called 'observation' leaving little indeterminacy behind. But on other occasions the established practice does not assist us much, and leaves substantial indeterminacy behind, for instance when we are faced with unaccepted observations.

Semantic holism not only supports the indeterminacy of semantic values for Polanyi, but it also has an interesting bearing upon epistemic holism. He writes:

> Any contradiction between a particular scientific notion and the facts of experience will be explained by other scientific notions; there is a ready reserve of possible scientific hypotheses available to explain any conceivable event. Secured by its circularity and defended further by its epicyclical reserves, science may deny, or at least cast aside as of no scientific interest, whole ranges of experience which to the unscientific mind appear both massive and vital. (PK: 292)

Thus Polanyi evidently combines semantic holism with Duhemian epistemological holism. (Duhem 1906/54, Ch. VI, and also Quine 1953/63) Epistemological holism is the tenet that scientific statements are not separately vulnerable to adverse observations, but only jointly as a theory. Again this is underlain by the logical relation between theoretical claims and observation sentences. No single hypothesis can imply observation sentences, but only a conjunction of them. Therefore if an observation sentence proves to be false, then at least one of the premises that entailed it, must be false. But it is not determined by logic and evidence which of them is to be blamed: the hypothesis tested or

some other premises employed in the inference. Which one to take to be false is exactly the matter of how the truth values are distributed over the sentences, and thus it comes down to the indeterminacy of the extensional semantic value of sentences.

In sum, Polanyi thinks that the description of what is observed always involves indeterminacy. There is no single determinate way how to apply our words to what they refer and it is not determinate in the light of observations whether an observation sentence is true or false.

3 The relationship between the indeterminacy theses

A three-storeyed system is unfolding from Polanyi's texts.

1. It is not determined without ambiguity how to put observations into words. Different and mutually inconsistent observation sentences may be held true about a particular observation or measurement. (indeterminacy of extensional semantic values)
2. Even if we have settled for some observation sentences as describing accurately what we have seen, these observation sentences will not exactly match the observation sentences derived from a theory – at least, as far as quantitative theories are concerned. Hence *empirically different* and mutually incompatible theories can approximate the same set of measured *data* equally well. The theoretically derived observation sentences are underdetermined by measured data. (underdetermination of theories by measured data)
3. Even if the observation sentences to be derived from a theory were specified still more, and logically incompatible theories could supply the same set of observation sentences. (underdetermination of theories by all possible observable data.) There are incompatible but *empirically equivalent* theories.

The underdetermination by all possible observable data (3.) supposes the one-way logical relationship that a theory has observation sentences as logical consequences *and thereby* a theory predicts certain *determinate empirical experiences*. That is what Polanyi's other two theses dispute. Because the relation between logically implied observation sentences and actual observations is 'under-determined' or rather is not determined. It is not determined whether what I see bears out the prediction of the theory or it does not. This dilemma springs from two separate factors. The first reason is that no measured value of a parameter is exactly equal to the theoretically predicted one (2.). The second factor is the indeterminacy of the meaning of

observation sentences (1.). Therefore, as a consequence of these two factors, you always have to decide whether observed value bears out or challenges the theory. The first and the second thesis make it possible to accept *empirically different* theories that are equally adequate to the actual observations.

Each of the theses above generates a new slack in the decision procedure about the rationally acceptable theories by multiplying the reasonable theoretical options as we try to select a theory empirically adequate to the sense experience we have.

These three theses are logically independent of one another, each may arise without the other two. They also supplement each other. The underdetermination generated by one comes on the top of the underdetermination generated by the others. Eventually they cover the entire logical relationship between the sensory input and the theoretical output.

Arguing against empiricists and critical rationalists (and probably against all foundationalists) Polanyi tries to show what sort of gaps are in the flow of information from the sensory input, from a phenomenon to the theoretical account of the same phenomenon.

4 Resolving indeterminacies

Polanyi does not claim that the theoretical alternatives are decisive, or interesting in all cases. The point is not that we would have completely different picture of the world, if we accounted for the experience we actually have by some other palatable theory. Certainly, it may be the case too, but this is not Polanyi's problem. Rather his concern is the very existence of the gaps in the theory-choice that goes unnoticed in the practice of science because they are bridged by the personal coefficient of knowing:

> It is the principle that matters; and in fact the slight gap between theory and instrument readings turns out to be thin only in the way the edge of a wedge is thin – a wedge that will be thick enough at its base to completely separate 'knowledge' from 'detached objectivity'. Personal, tacit assessments and evaluations… are required at every step in the acquisition of knowledge – even 'scientific' knowledge (M 31).

Personal contribution fixes what is left undetermined by logic and experience. In order to see how knowledge gets determined, let us have a closer look at Polanyi's conception of knowing.

Knowing is understood on the analogy of the pattern recognition of Gestalt psychology. A pattern that is to be recognized, acquired, known or understood – e.g. a face, some skill, regularity in nature, etc. – is more than the sum of its parts. The

parts are integrated into a holistic form. The parts of a recognized whole possess meaning only in their contribution to the form, that is, they are subsidiary components of the whole. When focusing our attention on a whole, we are only subsidiarily aware of its parts. Of course, it is possible to switch the focus of our attention to a particular part, but this also changes its semantic and cognitive status. It is not attended as a subsidiary component of the former whole any longer, but as an independent whole. According to Polanyi, this structure characterizes all kinds of our cognitive efforts including both propositional and nonpropositional knowledge (knowing that and knowing how) (PK: 56) The selection of the relevant subsidiary components and their integration are the constituents of tacit knowledge and they determine all of our knowledge, including our theories as well. Polanyi mentions several subsidiaries influencing the theory-choice: our tacit knowledge of our body, the accepted scientific tradition, the research skills acquired in our apprenticeship etc. They are the main factors in general to determine the theory-choice.

But how they do their job? What exactly determines the theory on a particular moment of decision, and how it does? These questions cannot be answered because subsidiaries and their integration are *logically unspecifiable*. (PK: 56-57) Knowledge represented by the focal whole, is the result of two interrelated components: the subsidiaries and their integration. They are subsidiaries and integration *only* with respect to the focal whole. But the focal whole alone cannot determine these two interrelated components for there are many possible combinations of these two factors to construct the same focal whole. It is possible to counterbalance the modifications of the available subsidiaries by the appropriate modifications in the integration process and *vice versa*. Metaphorically, the same stimuli, information, data, situation etc. (the 'same' subsidiaries) can be integrated into different focal wholes, and different stimuli, information, data, situations, etc. ('different' subsidiaries) can be integrated into the same focal whole. The famous ambiguous pictures (Rubin vase, Leeper's ambiguous lady, etc.) may serve as an example for the first case and the recognition of a face under different circumstances, for the second. As it was pointed out earlier it is possible to focus on a given particular that was formerly a subsidiary in a context, but in a focal position it is already a different cognitive object. As the structure and the function changes also the meaning of the particular changes. 'Subsidiary awareness and focal awareness are mutually exclusive…. Our attention can hold only one focus at a time and … it would hence be

self-contradictory to be both subsidiarily and focally aware of the same particulars at the same time.' (PK: 56-57)

Even granting all this to Polanyi we may conclude that the decisive factors and the mechanism of the decision for a particular theory are unspecifiable, that is we do not know them. But despite of our ignorance they are *ontologically* determinate and they are determined by our biological structure, experiences, upbringing, social circumstances etc. This assumption, however, runs contrary to Polanyi's ontology suggesting the hierarchical-holistic structure of reality. He thinks that logical unspecifiability is an ontological notion. It is not only a claim about what we can know, but also a claim about the structure of the world.

The hierarchical-holistic ontological structure applies to reality in general and, thus, to knowing man in particular. First, according to the emergent holism, a whole possesses properties and structures that are absent from the constituting parts. For instance, what a machine is, cannot be defined in terms of its parts, but only in terms of its structure functioning as a whole. Therefore a machine is ontologically different from, and not determined by its parts. Secondly, according to type emergence, a machine is not only a different entity, but it is also ontologically different in kind. While the properties of its material are governed and explained by the laws of physics and chemistry, the machine itself cannot be understood by virtue of these kinds of laws. We need a structural-functional description to define what a particular kind of machine is. In such cases, a new *type* of entity emerges. The emergent type of entity is not determined by the constituting entities neither by their laws. But these lower level laws are satisfied by the emergent entity, they serve as boundary (necessary) conditions for it. (See, e.g., PK, Part IV, and TD, Ch 2.). The higher level laws determine the functioning of the emergent entity within the playground left open by lower level laws. Reality is regimented by a multi-layered type-hierarchy beside the part-whole hierarchy and this structure of emergence characterizes knowing as well. A knowing human being is itself an emergent type. As knowing persons, we are determined by the emergent structure of knowing that is governed by the (Polanyian) principles of personal knowing. The laws of physics, biology and the values of our culture stake out the boundary conditions for our functioning as knowing being, but they fail to determine our knowing. This is the ontological basis for the logical unspecifiability of the subsidiaries and their integration. Our beliefs, skills and actions are not fully determined by the deterministic structure of the physical, biological or even social reality.

Well, then what determines our theories? They are

clearly not indeterminate as they appear in science, therefore, something must determine them. It is the person as an integrated, *irreducible,* emergent whole who makes the theory-choice by accepting it. It is not a capricious decision however, because the person integrates not only her mind and body but also her professional and cultural tradition, and she is guided by her intellectual, social and cultural commitments. While neither the person herself nor her decision is determined by all these factors. This freedom saturates all acts of knowing with responsibility.

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DISCIPLINARY DIVISIONS AND PETTY ACADEMICS:

THREE REMINISCENCES AND ONE RUMINATION IN MEMORY OF RICHARD RORTY (1931 – 2007)

Giorgio Baruchello

Abstract:
This philosophical memoir commemorates the life and achievements of Richard Rorty (1931 – 2007), popular American intellectual and leading figure of contemporary postmodern thought. It explains the importance of Rorty's role in the author's own understanding of academic philosophy, both as a set of customary theoretical issues and as the setting for socio-political, budgetary and personal unpleasantness. Casting 'Rorty-esque' doubts on the plausibility of strict disciplinary divisions, the author highlights how perplexing is any sharp separation between philosophy and the social sciences.

1

The death of Richard Rorty leaves today's intellectual world without one of its protagonists. Widely read, translated, cited and interviewed, Richard Rorty represented for the past twenty years a remarkable example of *popular intellectual*, analogously to Russell and Sartre in previous decades. It is not clear whether Rorty's popularity was due to the genuine attempt on his part to emulate his illustrious predecessors, or was rather the involuntary result of the ostracism that he suffered from the American philosophical community. Eventually, vexed by the unfriendliness of colleagues that refused to consider him 'one of them', Rorty had even changed his academic affiliation, stepping outside 'philosophy' and into the 'humanities', whilst describing himself as an expert in 'social criticism'.

On their part, professional philosophers, mainly in his native country, had been criticising him since the 1980s as 'vague' and 'non-philosophical' for his refusal to adhere to the highly technical jargon of official 'analytic' academe. Rorty had toyed with this jargon for years, abandoning it later because inadequate *vis-à-vis* the existential, ethical and political relevance of philosophical activity (possibly with the sole exception of John Rawls). He had even theorised an opposition between 'relevance' and 'rigour', whereby the intellectual must accept a certain degree of vagueness if she wants to reach the hearts, and not just the minds, of her audience. As Chaïm Perelman had been repeating with limited success before Rorty himself, the wise rhetoric of Aristotle and Vico – not the unwise one of Gorgias and Gingrich – had to be rediscovered by philosophers and by scholars in general. An excessive emphasis on 'rigour', they concurred, makes the intellectual's endeavour likely to turn into an ivory-tower enterprise.

Rorty's approach is reminiscent of the grammarians of Chartres, who, in the name of Christian *charitas*, opposed in vain the infatuation of the young medieval universities of Europe with logic and knockout dialectic. Indeed, Richard Rorty, an ethnocentric atheist and a theorist of post-religious society, was never ashamed of admitting that his commitment to political liberalism as a tool for reducing cruelty in the public sphere was contiguous to the long-standing Christian tradition of universal social solidarity and ecumenical acceptance. And ecumenical was his thought also in another important respect, as it embraced influences and contributions from very diverse fields. Rorty's works are the 'home' for a surprisingly rich array of references, including Newton and Nabokov, Geertz and Orwell, Heidegger and Hacking, Foucault and Quine.

True to his pragmatist inspirers, Rorty believed all disciplines to be nothing but attempts of the human being to face, and hopefully resolve, difficulties arisen in our environment. There is nothing essentially different amongst history, physics, psychoanalysis and astrology. Disciplinary divisions are super-imposed, sometimes for pragmatic reasons, other times for political reasons, occasionally for moral reasons, in order to separate and prioritise those difficulties that we wish seen resolved, serve the interests of a ruling group, or praise those researchers that we admire as examples of integrity.

The ostracism encountered amidst American philosophers pushed Richard Rorty beyond the boundaries of professional philosophy and beyond the boundaries of his native country. His prose became progressively more and more accessible, richer in anecdotes and witticisms, and less and less identifiable within one disciplinary field. His works started targeting, and appealing to, non-philosophers, attaining popularity amongst

academics and non-academics interested in the humanities, in politics and in the social sciences. In particular, he was received with warmth and sincere curiosity in Continental Europe, especially in Italy and France, where being interdisciplinary and able to reach the general public are considered to be virtues. Continuing the experience of the Enlightenment, *filosofi* and *philosophes* are expected to take part in the ongoing political debates of their countries. Moreover, Rorty's neo-pragmatism echoed in several ways Vattimo's *pensiero debole* [weak thought] and Lyotard's postmodernism; therefore, its reception in the Old World was not difficult to achieve.

Rorty belongs to the likes of Sextus Empiricus, Erasmus, Montaigne, Voltaire and Santayana. These all are thinkers who, in different times and guises, challenged the dogmas of received wisdom, yet avoiding life-indifferent scepticism. They all attempted to develop pragmatic and life-sensitive responses to the many sorrows of the actual human being, whilst resisting the temptation of turning philosophy either into elitist escapism or into abstract justification of the status quo, its injustices, its painful habits and praxes, and its ruling elite. The sufferings of humans and, sometimes, of other living creatures, were their starting point and their paramount concern, not the quest for certainty, scrupulous demonstration, or victory in argument. Unsurprisingly, they are commonly recalled as *humanists*, for they posited the earthly condition of the human being at the core of their thought.

2

I encountered the work of Richard Rorty in Genoa, Italy, as a young philosophy student. In those days, I was trying to come to terms with the 'fathers' of post-analytic philosophy (Quine, Davidson, Putnam) in an academic setting, the Italian universities of the early 1990s, where the analytic tradition was yet to establish itself firmly. Then, the 'daring' students and some of the younger teachers of the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy formed a group attracted by the fairly 'new' analytic philosophy and, by extension, the even 'newer' post-analytic trends. Clear amidst them was the appeal of 'hardcore' formulae, linguistic hair-splitting and of the intriguing ramifications in the English-speaking fields of artificial intelligence, mathematical logic, cognitive science and biology. The more 'traditional' group of students preferred instead the well-established teachings of ancient, medieval and modern philosophy, which led often to the exploration of German- and French- speaking 'classics', whether old or recent, from Leibniz and Descartes to Jonas and Deleuze. My interests covered both areas, cutting across both groups of students and mentors. Yet, as I am about to explain,

Rorty made me opt for the former, although in a rather indirect manner.

I encountered Richard Rorty in person, once again in Italy. It was the summer of 1997 and I had the opportunity to indulge with him in a long, pleasant day of conversation on all sorts of topics at the Rockfeller Foundation of Villa Serbelloni in Bellagio, on the Como Lake. Rorty was more modest and composed than I expected. After reading his written work, full of wit and drama, I had formed in my mind the picture of a rather complacent and histrionic man, prone to sharp gibes and excited story-telling. Instead, his tone was calm and demure, his humour infrequent and inessential to the topic being discussed, his speech articulate and careful in elucidating the reasons *pro* and *contra* whichever thesis we were debating. His mind was clearly and powerfully analytic, although his evident yet unpretentious erudition allowed him to be synthetic as well. In the meanwhile, the sun kept shining in the sky, sometimes pleasantly, other times mercilessly, as customary of Italian summers, its light revealing the architectural beauty of the patrician mansion that hosted us. We dined together *al fresco*, carrying the conversation further, while enjoying the kind company of Rorty's wife and other guests of the Foundation. Dusk approached, yet the temperature remained sufficiently warm to allow the chilled white wine served at the table to be a perfect companion to the discussion. Unfortunately, the chef was not a native of the area, I believe he was a young man from the United States of America, and the meal prepared did not seem to take full advantage of the local produce. Actually, it looked nice but had hardly any taste: my disappointment in that respect is still vivid in my mind!

Apart from resulting in an interview published by the journal *Iride* of the Gramsci Institute of Florence, that memorable day proved decisive in determining the topic of my laureate thesis, which I devoted entirely to Rorty's thought and defended the following year at the University of Genoa. Specifically, I concentrated on how Rorty's criticism of Western 'representationalism' was logically and ethically intertwined with his defence of political liberalism. In order to do this, I had to familiarise myself further with the 'analytic' tradition, which he reproached so forcefully – and this is how Rorty made me opt for the 'analytic' group in an indirect manner.

After completing my studies in Italy, I kept in touch with Richard Rorty by e-mail, fine-tuning the text of the interview to be published. Also, I was considering the possibility of studying with him at the University of Virginia, if ever accepted in their graduate programme, which happened in the year 1999. In the meanwhile, however, Rorty had

decided to move to Stanford and I, left without the desired link there, opted for another destination, i.e. the University of Guelph. Better funding, direct admission into the doctoral programme, and the fact that they had contacted me by phone in order to convince me to join their lot told me that I would have fared better in Ontario than in Virginia. I spent three years in Canada, the time needed to obtain a PhD title. My sojourn in that vast, beautiful country was a most revealing experience, which helped me to understand the rather bizarre climate of philosophy departments on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean and the sort of unpleasantness that must have plagued Rorty's professional life to the point of making him change affiliation.

3

The divide between 'analytic' and 'Continental' philosophy had never been a real issue while I studied in Italy, perhaps because of the limited self-assertion of the former or simply because of the lack of meaning of the term 'Continental' on the Continent, where more significant distinctions are drawn by reference to specific schools and traditions (e.g. phenomenology, Thomism) or to the language in which philosophers write (e.g. Latin, Rumanian, Russian). Things were different in Canada and, as I was soon to ascertain by way of conferences and conversations, in the United States of America.

There, the divide between 'analytic' and 'Continental' philosophy meant a great deal to a good number of people: belonging to a faction; knowing whom to side with on committees and other internal bodies; realising whom to snare at or to dismiss as intellectually naïve or aimless; keeping lists of friends and foes; spotting and co-opting good students before the adversary did the same.

The philosophy department at Guelph was not even a particularly bad case. Most of the time, the philosophers working there forgot about factions and allegiances, cooperating wonderfully within a rich, diverse, stimulating array of courses and activities. Harmony was not at all a rarity, but it lasted until the time for hiring new staff came about. Then, as though someone had unleashed their angry spirits, they started clubbing verbally at one another, exchanging nasty e-mails, and spreading rumours against their perceived adversaries. The young ones seemed more rabid than the older ones, probably due to higher levels of testosterone in their body or to the need for approval by the older colleagues, who retain the terrifying power to turn tenure into an unattainable dream.

There were exceptions, namely philosophers who regarded themselves as mere philosophers: curious minds exploring rationally anything that stimulated their interest. Still, they were exceptions and, as such, they resulted odd or suspicious. Not knowing which faction to join, and taking both 'analytic' and 'Continental' courses, I ended up working with one of these exceptions, a brilliant Marxist scholar in the process of becoming Canada's green *maître à penser*.

At the same time, I had several opportunities to discuss and write about Richard Rorty, whose thought had penetrated deep within my perception of reality, philosophical as well as non-philosophical. Almost immediately, I realised that he was not welcome. Predictably, the 'analytic' philosophers disliked him candidly and deeply, for Rorty kept telling them that they, quite frankly, were wasting their time. Less predictably, the 'Continental' ones disliked him too. Why this was the case is not yet fully clear to me. Perhaps Rorty had simply been too successful; and success breeds envy, which is then rationalised into some critical argument. Perhaps he could not be pigeon-holed to their satisfaction; as a re-discoverer of the only truly American philosophical school and self-proclaimed 'neo-pragmatist', Rorty could not be enlisted in their 'army', which was 'Continental' by definition. Whatever the reason, I was encouraged in making my essays about him more critical than they tended to be in their first draft, where I usually acknowledged the value of Rorty's contribution to whichever relevant topic I was exploring and assessing. Analogous advice I received from blind referees commenting on papers submitted for publication to professional journals. Overall, a streak or fashion of 'anti-Rortyanism' was sweeping across philosophers.

I do not intend to deny that there are good reasons to disagree with Rorty on a number of issues. In truth, I have written a good deal on aspects of his thought that I found unconvincing or even contradictory. Still, what I wish to point out is that I encountered an opposition to his thought that resembled more resentment than disagreement, thus obliterating or at least underplaying the many noteworthy teachings that can be drawn from his intellectual production. Therefore, I wish to conclude by highlighting and applying something that can be learnt from Rorty, namely the interconnectedness of all disciplines on genealogical, practical and moral grounds.

Although never contrary to disciplinary divisions as temporary arrangements for organising the training and the application of the human genius, Rorty denounced the repeated historical attempts to set hierarchies amidst them and prioritise one for its special ability to tell us what the world is *really* like (e.g. theology, philosophy, poetry, physics), whilst all disciplines are only, in his view, instruments that we use when trying to cope with the environment surrounding us. Moreover, he was perplexed by the way in which academic bureaucracy created further

artificial divisions amongst disciplines that share much ground, thus contributing to the fragmentation of the enterprise called 'human knowledge' *via* the systemic entrenchment of professorial fiefdoms, self-serving titles, politically-motivated preferential funding and assorted ransoms.

4

For the past four years, I have been teaching at my university history of ideas, critical thinking, contemporary history, pedagogy, penal theory and ethics across three or four faculties, the main one being the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences – two faculties in one by itself, hence my uncertainty about their number. Regularly, I have met students telling me that, to their surprise, they had realised that several issues debated in their favourite field of study, whether biology, anthropology or constitutional law, had already been and/or were still discussed by philosophers. Not to mention the numerous times when they had been required to study the work of philosophers *tout-court*, whether Hobbes in jurisprudence, Marx in sociology, or James in psychology. As unavoidable and disturbing as this experience may have been, they had discovered something very important, i.e. that the existing disciplinary boundaries were less precise than academic bureaucracy, widespread social consciousness, and governmental policy had led them to assume before commencing their university studies.

Richard Rorty would have been proud of these students, whose intelligence had not been stifled entirely by received views, educated prejudice and repeated disjunction of disciplinary terms in official curricula (e.g. 'human' vs. 'social sciences', 'humanities' vs. 'sciences', 'arts' vs. 'sciences', 'hard' vs. 'soft sciences', 'natural' vs. 'human sciences', 'philosophy' vs. 'social sciences'), each of which periodically blinds those students' instructors, administrators and politicians. Let us examine more closely 'philosophy' and 'social sciences', for instance. Can there be any tenable essential distinction between them?

A *caveat* is required before answering this question: I am not going to develop an extensive, finely-referenced argument. As stated in the title, this text is a collection of reminiscences and an ensuing rumination *in memoriam* of Richard Rorty. I wish to share with the readers of *Appraisal* few 'Rorty-esque' and, to some extent, 'Polanyi-esque' considerations, in order to acknowledge explicitly, at last once, that Rorty could be marvellously spot-on.

We can then start with the etymology of the term 'philosophy', namely the combination of the Greek *philein* i.e. 'to love' (*philia* referring especially to brotherly love and friendship) or 'to have an interest in' (consider contemporary English words like 'bibliophile', 'philanthropy' and 'hydrophilic') and *sophia* i.e. 'knowledge' (especially of the 'disinterested' type) or 'wisdom'. The two following standard definitions should therefore sound uncontroversial:

A.   *love of knowledge*
B.   *love of wisdom*

The relevance of this 'love' for 'knowledge' and 'wisdom' is further revealed by the Latin etymology of 'study', i.e. *studium*, meaning 'passion', 'keenness' or 'fondness'. The 'amateur' is the person who is moved towards certain instances of 'knowledge' or 'wisdom' by *amor* i.e. 'love'. Contemporary Italian translates 'amateur' into *dilettante*, i.e. she who amuses herself, which was the term used by Leonardo da Vinci to describe himself: *un grande dilettante* [a big amateur]. 'Professionals', on the contrary, seem to be moved towards the same goal also, if not even exclusively, by something else, e.g. greed, fear, habit, lack of alternatives, vanity, will to power.

Another possibility to define 'philosophy' is by trying to capture the meaning of expressions like 'what is your philosophy?' or 'the philosophy of our institution / association / company is…' In this case, we can arguably infer that 'philosophy' means:

C. *expressing the ultimate rationale(s) of a given entity*
D. *expressing the ultimate value(s) of a given entity*

Alternative renderings are possible, but let us work with these four hypotheses and move on to the definition of 'social sciences'. The encyclopaedia most commonly cited by my students, the 'infamous' *Wikipedia*, states:

E. *The group of academic disciplines that study the human aspects of the world.*

Believe it or not, the definitions available in 'respectable' encyclopaedias do not differ much (e.g. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*: 'any discipline or branch of science that deals with human behaviour in its social and cultural aspects').

Given definitions A and E, then the social sciences are nothing but a branch of philosophy, for 'social sciences' are possible only by loving, or having an interest in, a certain type of knowledge (in effect, the whole scientific enterprise falls under the same umbrella).

This conclusion should not surprise us, for physics, chemistry and biology were called, at least until the early 19th century, 'natural philosophy', as they constituted examples of philosophical inquiry in the realm of particular natural phenomena (and not of super- and sub-natural phenomena or nature in general). 'Natural sciences' has subsequently become the most common label for the same disciplines, although as recently as in 1963, the physicist Clifford Ambrose Truesdell founded the

Society for Natural Philosophy at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

In addition, from a historical perspective, most sciences, and *all* the social sciences, have developed within the rich fold of activities called 'philosophy'. Eventually, they have crystallised into the disciplines with which we are now familiar, yet not because of the abandonment of the original 'love of knowledge', but mainly because of the constitution of modern universities, the consequent division of intellectual labour amongst professional researchers, and the resulting rigid distinction of specific disciplines, which in today's academies go from theoretical physics to business and administration.

The modern 'academisation' of knowledge has progressively introduced stiffer and stiffer boundaries, criss-crossing the 'universe' of knowledge to which 'universities' should be dedicated. The same process has generated the modern expert or specialist, who often knows very little of what goes on outside her narrow area of investigation. In so doing, universities have made the existence of the *grande dilettante* not only a rarity, but something unreliable and perplexing, because inconsistent with the official 'pigeon-holes' reified during the 19th and 20th century. In other words, Leonardo da Vinci and René Descartes would struggle to get an academic position in any of today's major universities. Although original and well-meaning, they would lack the required academic credentials. Analogously, the *Book of Tao*, Lucretius' *De rerum natura* and Galileo's *Dialogo sui massimi sistemi* would be unlikely to be published as scientific works, for alien to the 'pigeon-holes' of today's scholarship.

It must be said that, at least in part, this process of 'academisation' was unavoidable, because of the complexity of certain types of research, requiring years of training to be pursued effectively. In part, however, it was also due to the promotion of disciplinary boundaries as structures of power – e.g. claims to expertise, academic titles, career prospects, scholarly reputation, public recognition, hefty contracts, self-definition and definition of others. One of the last *grandi dilettanti* of the Western world, Arthur Schopenhauer, wrote an entire book against this process (*Ueber die Universitaets-Philosophie*), which he saw as detrimental to the interdisciplinary cross-fertilisation required for true genius to blossom. This book has never been a best-seller amongst professional academics.

Given definitions C and/or D and E, philosophy becomes one of the social sciences, if and insofar as it pursues the study of the human aspects of the world.

In particular, philosophers who study objectively (i.e. whose conclusions are accepted inter-subjectively as plausible descriptions and/or explanations of phenomena) and rigorously (i.e. who follow the rules of logic and concurred methods of rational investigation) human phenomena in the attempt to determine their ultimate rationale and/or value, are social scientists. Ethicists, political philosophers, philosophers of the mind and of language clearly fall in this category of researchers. Even when focussing on normative issues, these philosophers observe, describe and use empirical evidence to assess their hypotheses, adhering to the rules of logic and to concurred methods of inquiry, some of which are amongst the oldest and longest-tested (e.g. Socrates' dialogical method).

I mention the notions of 'objectivity' and 'rigour' since they constitute the two criteria employed by Italian philosopher, physicist and mathematician Evandro Agazzi ('Analogicità del concetto di scienza. Il problema del rigore e dell'oggettività nelle scienze umane', *Epistemologia e scienze umane*, 1979). These criteria allow us to distinguish between reasoned cognitive endeavour and potentially unreasoned cognitive endeavour, whilst still being as open as necessary to avoid the paradoxes arising from stricter definitions (e.g. definitions placing emphasis on 'positive' observation, description and cataloguing leave out the creative genius of scientific innovation i.e. science at its best; definitions placing emphasis on induction or experimentation leave out logic and mathematics i.e. two fundamental instruments of scientific research; definitions placing emphasis on uniformity of method leave out the actual practice of science in the world's laboratories i.e. what scientists do, which is not always 'methodical'; definitions placing emphasis on predictive ability leave out numerous descriptive disciplines, sub-disciplines and important stages in scientific research).

Agazzi's approach is not animated by the desire to expunge certain disciplines from the fold of 'science', which is something that 'hard' scientists may be prone to do *vis-à-vis*, amongst others, 'soft' scientists, despite the efforts by these 'softies' to mimic physics and chemistry and use formulae and statistical computations in their research, even when unnecessary.

In response to 'hard' scientists, 'soft' scientists could side with the 18th-century Neapolitan polymath Giambattista Vico and argue that only the formal and social sciences (which in his case would be today's humanities) can be actual science, not physics, chemistry and biology. This is the case, according to Vico, because the formal and social sciences deal with creations of the human spirit, hence phenomena whose reasons and/or motives for being the way they are can be determined with

enough confidence by the human inquirer. Instead, when it comes to the phenomena studied, say, by the physicist, we may be able to say 'how' they work, but not 'why'.

Also, one might be tempted to integrate the definition *E* by adding that 'actual' sciences employ certain specific methods of investigation, especially mathematical, quantitative and statistical ones. This may sound like a plausible integration, which should strengthen the 'scientificity' of one's discipline, as though such methods were the essence of science. Yet, it must be taken *cum grano salis* – if not more than just a grain.

First of all, these methods have changed through time, hence one should modify the qualified definition whenever the methods change – what an inconvenience. Secondly, these methods are not followed by all 'actual' scientists under all circumstances. Nobel Prize physicist Percy W. Bridgman once stated, 'No working scientist, when he plans an experiment in the laboratory, asks himself whether he is being properly scientific, nor is he interested in whatever method he may be using *as method*' ('On Scientific Method,' *Reflections of a Physicist,* 1955). Thirdly, these methods have been used, amongst others, by philosophers and have often developed within philosophy (e.g. analysis and infinitesimal calculus). They may not be the most common tools of their trade today, but they are not unknown to them (e.g. Ardigò, Bergson, Deleuze).

Finally, both 'hard' and 'soft' scientists seem often to forget the very 'soft' elements that are present in each scientific discipline, e.g. creative genius, the deductive elements of inductive science (viz. mathematical theorems, the *a priori* determination of the sub-atomic particles to be studied experimentally), the inductive elements of deductive science (viz. the material origin, expression and reviewing of mathematical theorems), the assumed absolute validity of pseudo-absolute stipulations (viz. our units of measurement of space, time, mass, etc.), and the tacit faith in the existence of truth, material and/or immaterial beings, mutual understanding, and their continuity in time.

Given definitions B and E, the social sciences are philosophy if and insofar as wisdom animates them, whilst they depart from each other whenever wisdom is absent from the former.

Unlike the amateur, the 'professional' seem capable of pursuing knowledge without love. Whether they and not the amateur or *dilettante* may thus reach 'wisdom' is an interesting question, for it leads us to consider the difference between 'knowledge' and 'wisdom'. A knowledgeable person, indeed even an accomplished specialist, is not necessarily a wise person. What makes us wise, then?

Let us reply, for the sake of brevity, with a reference to the teachings of Icelandic philosopher Páll Skúlason, who claims that 'wisdom' consists in a blend of three fundamental 'ingredients': knowledge, moral integrity, and life experience. It follows that youth is likely to be unwise and, more importantly, that there cannot be wisdom without knowledge, whilst there can be plenty of knowledge without wisdom.

If Páll Skúlason is correct in his understanding of wisdom, then we must assess whether individual researchers are enriching their knowledge of human affairs (i.e. 'mere' social science) with moral integrity *and* life experience. In fact, in order for wisdom to be absent from the social sciences, hence disqualifying them as philosophy, it is the person, not the discipline, that counts. This consideration is commonly exemplified by scientists and researchers that have 'sold themselves', or that are pursuing 'maverick science', or that 'have no shame' and 'no morals'. Intellectual inquirers that bully, cheat, lie, manipulate, prevaricate, scheme, and are generally immoral on the workplace, can therefore belong to the family of social scientists, but not to that of philosophers (which does not imply that so-called philosophers be always true philosophers, i.e. lovers of wisdom).

In this perspective, the widespread tendency of 'hard' and 'soft' scientists to disqualify each other and, jointly, to kick out of the scientific pantheon those whom they dislike, e.g. humanists and logicians, looks very suspicious. If we consider the etymology of the term 'science', after all, it would be plain silly to take sides: 'science' derives from the Latin verb *scire* i.e. to know by means of study and/or meditation. Whether this knowledge is then 'hard' or 'soft' adds little to the fact that it is knowledge. 'Hard' and 'soft' are much more relevant terms when talking of nougat, mattresses and male organs. Do not take this remark about male organs as a vulgar joke. As rude as it may sound, it is common English parlance to name 'cocky' the supercilious and 'pricks' those who bully others into exclusion. Perhaps, this is the way to follow when we try to understand why scientists and researchers may often wish to expunge fellow scientists and researchers from the pristine, supreme and better-funded disciplinary precinct that they long to see established. Rorty's example in considering the human being as people, in their ordinary environment and with their far-too-familiar sorrows and problems, would support such an approach.

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MARKETING MANAGEMENT
AND POLANYI'S THEORY OF TACIT KNOWING

Jere Moorman

A corporate senior manager once asked me if I could help his company prepare a marketing plan that would enable them to better communicate with their five thousand customers. I answered something like this: 'Of course, only first tell me – in communicating with your customers now, what is it that you are not hearing'.

It is axiomatic in the field of marketing that marketing managers must keep their ears to the ground. They must sense change in the market as it is occurring. These changes are more often not self-evident. (The main trouble with self-evident truths is that they aren't self-evident.)

Scientist-philosopher Michael Polanyi argues persuasively that there is no impersonal test for truth. The marketing manager must monitor the market, live with it, work with it. Oftentimes changes do not show up in the numbers and statistics until it is too late. As businessman John Sculley puts it: 'No great marketing decisions have ever been made on quantitative data'.

Marketing managers must develop an intuitive sense of the market. They must work with customers and dealers and listen to them. (Every good marketing manager knows that every time you think you've 'paid your dues' in terms of listening to the customer, a renewal notice is not far behind.) Customers may open the door to relevant knowledge, but the marketeer must enter skilfully in order to get the nuance of the message. Good marketing managers should be judged by their questions rather than by their answers. Marketing is an art of drawing sufficient conclusions from insufficient premises. To be guided in one's decisions by the present and to prefer what is sure to what is uncertain (though more attractive), is a narrow rule of procedure.

Marketing managers must not only listen to their customers and dealers, they must really listen. Information is not meaning. A bare customer assertion is not necessarily the naked truth. As philosopher Mortimer J. Adler puts it, 'The telephone book is full of facts, but it doesn't contain a single idea'.

Nothing in marketing is so astonishing as the amount of ignorance it accumulates in the form of inert facts. Impersonal knowledge is an alienated, non-participating form of knowing; with such knowing the marketing manager is more of a passive spectator than an active knower. The more the

marketeer wants the truth according to the world of theoretical reflection, mistaking the tangible for the real, the worse he will get the truth of the life-world.

Information's pretty thin stuff, unless mixed with the context of experience. Competent marketing management has to do with a capacity for evaluation of uncertain hazardous, and conflicting information. Says futurist John Naisbitt – 'We are drowning in information but starved for knowledge'. Market research will always tell you why you can't do something. It's a substitute for decision making, for guts. Statistics are no substitute for judgment, says Henry Clay. Keeping their ears to the ground is the only way marketing managers will spot changes in the market in time to adjust.

The discerning marketing manager develops an inner knowledge that is more like a feeling which guides him in his recognition of changes in the market – a sort of tacit knowing, a knowing of more than he can tell; and a telling that means more than he says. The discerning marketing manager has a knack for being able to appraise the good from the irrelevant facts; he has an element of personal appraisal of orderliness and wholeness that is not reducible to the inert facts that are available for his scrutiny. This tacit knowing of the discerning marketing manager is experiential, internalised and difficult fully to explicate. Such discerning, tacit power is an unaccountable, inarticulate component in perception and knowledge, a basic unreflecting awareness of things, quite different from the clear-cut awareness he has when focusing his attention directly on them.

Such tacit knowing is a category of knowledge that may be distinguished from explicit or 'publicly available' knowledge of the type found in printed texts. Poet T. S. Eliot laments:

Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information.

Where is the marketing manager who is able, skilfully, to keep his ear to the ground in the rapidly changing and highly competitive market place of products and ideas?

An ancient sage was asked: 'How do you judge the value of lanolin?' The wise man replied, demonstrating how you plunge both hands deeply into the fleeces and roll the fibres between your finger as if you were judging the fabric of a suit, 'Why, you just feel it'. An experienced typesetter at the Oxford University Press was setting up a text of

the Rig Veda, an ancient Hindu sacred text. He knew no Sanskrit, but he was able to point out where he thought there must be a mistake in the text. How could he know? He had got used to the regular patterns of the arm movements that he made as his hand moved from one compartment to another to pick up the type, and he took notice of a movement that was different. He became, in a sense, a connoisseur of the meaning of the Rig Veda: able to discern 'differences that make a difference.' He realised that this particular movement must indicate a combination of letters so unusual that is was most unlikely to be anything but an error, and he was right. There was explicit reasoning in his conclusion, but what led him to notice the mistake was his bodily awareness of a complex and varied rhythm, and of a sudden change in this rhythm. An inexperienced typesetter concentrating on each letter would not have noticed, for he would not have felt the pattern to which this movement was an exception. This man could be said to have been indwelling in his arm movements and attending from them to something outside which he believed to have meaning. He did not know the meaning, but he sensed it when the pattern of movements lost contact with it.[1] The experienced typesetter had developed the valuable skill of appraisal and discernment – good judgment and the ability to keep his ears to the ground.

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Note:

1. Drusilla Scott, *Everyman Revived – The Common Sense of Michael Polanyi*, Lewes*, The Book Guild, 1985. p. 71.
   Editor's note: I was told the same story by Dame Veronica Wedgwood (a friend of Polanyi) at a Convivium conference in 1978, possibly the same source.

BOOK REVIEWS

Michael S. Jones
The Metaphysics of Religion: Lucian Blaga and Contemporary Religion
Madison and Teaneck, NJ, Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2006; ISBN 10-0-8386-4100-8.

This is the first book in English on Lucian Blaga (1895-1961), Romania's principal philosopher, a leading poet, a playwright, and a diplomat before being appointed in 1938 to the chair of philosophy of culture, especially created for him in Cluj in his native Transylvania. It has been published before any of Blaga's philosophical works have been completely translated into English. Readers of *Appraisal* are among the few in the English-speaking world who have read anything about his philosophy.

The author spent nearly two years in Romania, and, having learned Romanian, was able to read all of Blaga's philosophical works, plus books and articles upon them. He studied at West Chester University, Calvary Baptist Theological Seminary, and Temple University, and is now an associate professor in philosophy at Liberty University, Virginia. It is a little surprising that, with such a background, he should write such a sympathetic study of Blaga's highly heterodox metaphysics and commend it as providing some answers to long-standing problems in theology and metaphysics and, in particular, within contemporary Anglo-Saxon philosophy of religion.

The latter occupies Part II of this study, while the slightly longer Part I is devoted to a general introduction to Blaga the philosopher, and the principal aspects of his philosophy – his philosophy of philosophy, metaphysics, epistemology and philosophies of culture and religion – which omits only his philosophy of art and his account of values, themselves mostly restricted to artistic and aesthetic values. In this exposition there is inevitably a noticeable amount of repetition because all the themes of Blaga's philosophy intertwine with each other and elements of at least some of the others recur in all them, as can be seen even by someone, such as the reviewer, whose very limited Romanian enables him to read only the titles of the sections in each book.

Part I alone is of great value in giving the first detailed and almost comprehensive account of Blaga's philosophy in English, along with an extensive glossary of his key terms. Blaga, especially in his earlier books, was a poetical philosopher, and some of his vocabulary can be off-putting, for example his key terms 'cunoastere

paradisiaca' and 'cunoastere luciferica', literally, 'paradisic' and 'luciferic knowledge', latter renamed prosaically as 'Type 1' and 'Type 2 cognition', and, so I have been told, treated more as two complementary 'moments' of all cognition than as distinct forms.

Particularly valuable is the full explication of these two forms of knowing along with the others and with associated themes. What is both of general importance and of particular importance in his metaphysics and treatment of religion, in Blaga's account of all these forms of knowing and their ramifications, is his stress upon 'mystery' and 'creativity'. In 1930, while English-speaking philosophy of science was still mostly preoccupied with naive inductionism or forms of Positivism, neither of which did not deign to study the actual history and practice of science, Blaga seized upon the great changes that were occurring in physics and, in particular, upon the conflict (antimony) between the corpuscular and wave theories of light. Roughly speaking, paradisic cognition is exemplified by the steady accumulation of knowledge within established methods, frameworks and conceptions, and so it brings more things to light and thus reduces the number of mysteries, whereas luciferic cognition, and its sub-forms of plus, zero and minus cognition, is exemplified by the discovery of things that cannot be assimilated by the established procedures and theories. It reveals things that are 'cryptic', hidden (to the prevailing approach), and not merely unknown. It proceeds by the creative imagination and formulation of new conceptions, such as the 'transfigured antinomy' of de Broglie's 'wave-particle' theory of light.

On the metaphysical level, man's role in the universe is precisely that of living in, 'integrating' and revealing mysteries by creative imagination in all the spheres of culture such as the human and natural sciences, the arts, religion and philosophy. Hence his distinction between the categories of understanding (more or less Kantian) and 'abyssal' ones, which varyingly specify the former, as in different conceptions of space of time. Complexes of abyssal categories form the varying 'stylistic matrices' which are the source of all cultural creations, including the natural sciences and their historical phases and transformations. Consequently, 'style' is itself a universal feature of human activity and is not confined to the arts. But man can never attain 'positive-adequate' cognition, that is of things as they really are, but only a 'quasi' or partial cognition along with a 'negative' cognition that is the realisation that, while something can be known

about its particular objects and reality generally, full and adequate knowledge of them is not permitted to humanity. In that way, the progress of knowledge can also be a deepening of mysteries, an awareness that there things yet to be known and, indeed, that we can never properly know. (For these reasons Blaga has sometimes been identified with post-modernism. But he neither repudiates metaphysics, and philosophy generally, nor regards them as arbitrary constructions. They, and the other human attempts at cognising reality, can attain some truth at least, some 'quasi cognition'.)

Especially relevant to the book's focus is Blaga's metaphysical explanation for this: the activity of 'Marele Anonim', usually translated as 'the Great Anonym', although the author prefers 'the Great Anonymous' and sometimes the alternative 'Fondul Anonim' or 'the Anonymous Fund' (better 'Source' or 'Foundation'). Blaga uses 'anonymous' in order to make clear that his own account of reality is itself only a partial and speculative knowledge that is consistent with the facts of experience and goes someway to explain them at the highest level. Generally, he holds, metaphysical constructions can be refuted but never proved by experience, and are themselves the acme of philosophy and of man's never-ending quest to reveal mysteries. His account of the origins of the world is in terms of a continuing and non-diminishing emanation of 'divine differentials' which combine and recombine to produce the changing variety of things that we experience. But, in order to preserve cosmic order and to prevent chaos, the Great Anonym exercises 'transcendent censorship' to limit human cognition, and 'stylistic brakes' to limit all cultural activity within particular stylistic forms, in order that finite beings do not attain perfection and thus become able to challenge the Great Anonym, and to give unlimited scope to human creativity and an enduring role for man in the cosmos.

In religion, as a cultural creation, man reaches out to all existence and especially to 'the ultimate elements or co-ordinates of existential mystery in general'. But the Great Anonym has arranged, as previously explained, that man can never know anything clearly and fully, still less the Great Anonym himself. And, it seems, any revelation of himself to man to overcome these limitations, would upset the balance of the cosmos. Nevertheless, even though, like everything else, religion cannot attain the certainty that has at times been claim for it, it is justified simply as the reaching out to the source of all mystery. Likewise theological reflection, which he often cites as examples of luciferic cognition and its sub-forms, is also an expression of human creativity, and thus is not so wholly different from other modes of thought. Man's destiny is confined to the perpetual task of revealing mystery in this life

and world. As elsewhere, Blaga builds his philosophy of religion upon and illustrates it with, many empirical examples.

In Part II the author applies and occasionally expands his summaries of Blaga's philosophy generally, and his metaphysics and philosophy of religion in particular, to the nature of the philosophy of religion, religious language, religious knowledge, the justification of religious belief, the existence and nature of God, religion and or versus science, interreligious communication and religious pluralism. In each of these he presents a brief summary of classical and of contemporary Anglo-Saxon problems and proffered solutions, and then suggests what Blaga also has to offer with respect to these themes. Occasionally the last appears to be somewhat thin. But one very significant application is that of Blaga's accounts of luciferic knowledge, as already noted above, and the essentially metaphorical nature of all language. The author points out that Blaga (rightly) rejects any sharp distinctions between religious and 'ordinary' language and cognition. All language, Blaga claims, is metaphorical because, on the one hand, concrete reality cannot be adequately expressed in the abstractions of language, and, on the other, man lives within the horizon of mystery which can never be wholly revealed. Metaphor is the only way these deficiencies can be reduced. Blaga distinguishes between 'plastic' and 'revelatory' metaphors. We use the former the better to express some empirical fact by substituting another term for the usual one and thus transferring its meaning. This requires some similarity between what the terms are applied to, and the malleability, 'plasticity', of the metaphorically applied term. With the latter, in contrast, we seek to reveal a hidden mystery (one hidden from existing forms of thought and in expressible in existing language) and thus to express what could not otherwise be expressed, and, in turn, to enlarge our understanding. Revelatory metaphors suspend the meaning of the original term and replace it with the second, and are used when their objects are dissimilar. One could add that 'plastic' metaphors are little more than the merely decorative 'figures of speech' as traditional grammar has treated them, whereas 'revelatory' metaphors are genuine ones which, in Piaget's and Polanyi's terms, accommodate or adapt thought and language to novel realities, as opposed to assimilating the latter to the former, the 'cutting-edge' of thought and language, as Collingwood put it. Hence there is no utter incompatibility between 'ordinary', including scientific, language and religious language referring to that which transcends all finite existence and he language used for it.

It is to be hoped that the publication of this book will promote interest in Blaga's philosophy in the

English-speaking world, and result in the translation of Blaga's philosophical works into English.

R.T. Allen

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Simon Critchley,
Infinitely Demanding. Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance
London, New York, Verso Books, 2007, 168p.
ISBN-13: 978-1-84467-121-2, £17.99

This is a powerful and intriguing book about our tragic Promethean views of human condition in philosophy, ethics, and politics. Nowadays, philosophy, politics, as well as the hope for ethical commitment, all start with disappointment. The author places in disappointment the origin of philosophy, in opposition with wonder, you see. But there is not a complete opposition between the two since, so many times, disappointment brings us straight into the arms of wondering, thinking and acting. How to fill our best ethical disposition with passionate intensity is Critchley's structuring vector for the volume.

Simon Critchley finds the missing link between politics and ethics in commitment, participation, active nihilism and direct democracy. His ethical subject has still a Promethean nature, though, since the motivational deficit at the heart of liberal democracy becomes his source of empowerment for committing oneself and pursuing a 'politics of resistance' (another phrase for the practices of direct democracy). After Nietzsche and nihilism, the author interprets the difficulty of assessing the question of meaning in this general context of philosophical and political disappointment. He points out that we experience now a sense of disappointment mainly given the corrosion of established political structures, the current political management of fear and the violence of our unjust world still defined by the 'horror of war'. Thus one of the key questions of the book is 'What is justice in a violently unjust world?' (p.31) Re-establishing justice is an ethical task that should be undertaken by the ethical subject from below, too (or first of all?). This is a Promethean (Sisyphean?) task, hence the title, *Infinitely Demanding*.

The argument of the book investigates subjective commitment to ethical action, maintaining that 'ethical experience elicits the core structure of moral selfhood, what we may think as the existential matrix of ethics' (p.9), since only with such a matrix of ethics people can confront the present political situation.

The author states, 'The main task of this book is responding to that need by offering a theory of ethical experience and subjectivity that will lead to an infinitely demanding ethics of commitment and politics of resistance.' (p. 3)

The book is structured in four chapters – the first presenting a theory of ethical experience, the second about the structure of an ethical subject, the third comments on happiness, humour and conscience and the forth construes political subjectivity and action after Marx – and an appendix (on crypto-Schmittianism, that is, the management of fear in Bush's America).

Simon Critchley starts from an outline of the mechanisms of ethics, explaining the interplay between approval and demand, deriving from such considerations a model of subjectivity. There are always ethical demands around us.

The demands we approve as ethical subjects have to trigger undertaking action. In his ethical theory the reader finds a brilliant critical interpretation of Marx: he values Marx's socio-economic insights on capitalism, while he rejects Marxian oversimplified view of class structure. Political organisation, radical action and direct forms of democracy should consider political subjectivity in the perspective opened by the Gramscian concept of hegemony and its interpretation given by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, in order to answer the current political disappointment. Critchley situates at the heart of a radical politics what he calls the *meta-political* ethical moment that provides the motivational force (the 'propulsion') into political action. 'If ethics without politics is empty, then politics without ethics is blind.' (p.13)

Politics begins in disappointment and injustice triggers ethical action. 'We cannot sit back and hope that the structural contradictions of capitalism will do the job of political transformation on our behalf. We cannot reduce the sphere of the political to the socio-economic, as is suggested by the crude base-superstructure model with which Marx flirted in the 'Preface' to *The Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* and which became an article of faith for Engels and the Marxism of the Second International. On the contrary, to borrow a term from Husserl's late work, it is a question of reactivating the *political* dimension of Marxism, a dimension that will require all our capacity for political invention and imagination' (p. 98).

Ethics appears as a disruption from below of the political decisions made (from) above. It challenges the status quo in an ethical politics of resistance. 'Politics is the manifestation of dissensus, the cultivation of an anarchic multiplicity that calls into question the authority and legitimacy of the state. It is in relation to such a multiplicity that we may begin to restore some dignity to the dreadfully devalued discourse of democracy.' (p. 13)

Politics is to be perceived after Marx (yet, not necessarily against his critics of capitalism) as the

space of dissensus 'fuelled' on by the ethical subjects (instead of a space of consensus). His comments on women's rights clearly illustrate this perspective: 'As such, the political rights of women are a powerful example of politics as the conflictual questioning of consensus and opening of a space of *dissensus* (...)' (p. 110)

The argument of the book is soundly articulated. The interpretations of Kant, Hegel, Marx, Freud, Laclau, Levinas, and Badiou are concise and thorough. His comments on lesser known authors, such as Ejler Knud Lřgstrup, are informative, clear and relevant.

Yet, having to ask myself if dissent and 'true democracy' understood as distancing from the state can prove either vigorous and efficient enough in this process of invigorating democracy, I emphasise that the ethical thrive has to be stronger than complacency and more powerful than the present dictatorial superego imperative 'Enjoy!', as described and interpreted in the work of Slavoj Žižek.

On the other hand, I find the phrase 'politics of resistance' awkward, since Critchley does not talk only about resistance in front of the political status quo, with his 'politics as interstitial distance within the state', but he emphasises the importance of radical and ethical action. In my opinion, 'politics of dissent' or the 'politics of involvement' would have been more suitable phrases. It is also strange that he chooses to refer in passing to the ironist as the same as the immoralist (p.19). His view, slightly explained to the reader, is that for the ironist as for the immoralist, 'the implications for action are held at a safe ironic distance rather than becoming internal to the dispositions of moral self-hood. It is a case of excessively weak approval. But this opens onto a more far-reaching objection, that of the immoralist who might approve of statements such as "make poverty history" or "famine relief is essential", but do nothing about them' (p.19). The stance is odd, since in the Rortian argument the ironist looks at the world with a discursive sensitivity for the suffering of the others, and not with an ironic distance, such a distance being reserve for the self-hood, which is in my opinion, ultimately, a strong element in his perspective on human solidarity and in my view solidarity always implies undertaking (ethical) action.

Critchley's ethical model is powerful and persuasive. I'll remind you: 'My point is twofold: first that the model of ethical experience provides a way of approaching morality in terms of an affirmation or approved demand that hopefully elicits what I called above the existential matrix of ethics. Second, ethical experience furnishes a possible account of the motivational force to act morally, of the way in which a conception of the good *can* move the will to act' (p. 19). This does not imply that it is compulsory for a person to act ethically once the demand was approved. The demand may be very well approved and the self may still act in bad faith. At this point, the argument should be developed considering other complex aspects, such as the possibility of (cynically) following personal and limited interests, while simulating an ethical answer to an approved demand. How should one evaluate the selfish acts with ethical consequences? How should the philosopher include the ambiguities and the dualities about the ethical actions into a coherent model? Say, for instance, in the case of the politician, there is always pretence that it *must be an ethical demand* calling forth the will to act, and that pretence is often suspicious. This is a kind of secondary consequence of the imperative of maintaining the free activity of the self within the moral realm. The possibility of bad faith is implied by the possibility of moral commitment ('Bad faith is the long shadow cast by our commitment', Critchley says somewhere.) Is being suspicious politics of dissent?

After reading Critchley's argument I decided that is remarkable and clarifying and attempted to apply it to a concrete case in Romanian politics, Petre Roman, former Prime-Minister of Romania, the president of a 'pocket party' of left-wing orientation, made a social covenant with the social category of pensioners, legitimated by the initiative that the party shall send their representatives to the Parliament, instead of the party members, offering the pensioners the possibility to act as members of the commission discussing their social interests. From the perspective of the ethics of commitment, P. Roman, has identified an ethical demand and he has answered to it: the pensioners are impoverished and trapped inside an undignified situation that should not be perpetuated. Applying this model, one can see the politician as an ethical person. On the other hand, given our experience with the political games somebody else could see the politician as a cynic, using this social category for votes that shall ensure the 5% needed to enter the Romanian Parliament. Ethical subjectivity triggers ambiguity, amplifying our endless quest for self-realisation.

Henrieta Şerban

CONFERENCE REPORT

International Conference on Persons

Asheville, North Carolina, USA
July 31 - August 4, 2007

Having attending the 2001 Conference in Gaming, Austria, and the 2005 Conference in Warsaw, I was eager to go to the next which would be in America, as usual. It will almost certainly be my only visit to those held in the USA.

Asheville is a pleasant town in the Blue Ridge mountains, which expanded towards the end of the 19th C. as a health resort, and where a Vanderbilt built the largest private house in the USA, an imitation of a Loire chateau. Recently, the town has re-invented itself as an artistic centre.

As might have been expected, the attendance was primarily American, with, from Europe, only myself, Jan Olof Bengtsson from Sweden, Fr Gacka and two colleagues from Warsaw, plus an Italian lecturing in EU law at Hull.

Because of most of the sessions consisted of papers given in parallel, and because I had already booked to leave Asheville on the morning of the 4th, to which the conference had since been extended, I can report directly on only a third of the papers. But most had already been published on the website, which helped me to make my selections of which to attend.

A notable change from the other two conferences which I have attended was the greater number of papers related to contemporary Analytic philosophy and its treatments of the constitution, identity and continuity of the person, and especially to Derek Parfit and his Humean dissolution of the person into a series of states such that the present is not, in any sense, identical with its forerunners. (What would Parfit say if someone refused to return something borrowed from him on the grounds both that the other person is not now the one who borrowed it and that Parfit is not now the one who lent it? But have when empiricist philosophers ever allowed reality to intrude upon their theories?) To my disappointment, the discussion of these topics tended to remain within the terms set by Parfit and those with similar views, and did not sufficiently rise to a radical questioning of their basic assumptions.

Other traditions were also represented: Aquinas' ethics as a personalist system; Aristotle; Max Scheler and Foucault together on power; Italian personalism; the person in Indian thought; Borden Parker Bowne (the Father of American personalism); pantheist tendencies in William James; virtue ethics; Cardinal Wyszynski; Kant and Moltmann; Gabriel Marcel and a contemporary feminist; Emmanuel Mounier's personalist (and agrian) economics; Charles Taylor, plus Polanyi, on an authentic self; and pratical questions such as 'Advance Directives' to others not to keep oneself alive in stated circumstances, and the decision of the German Supreme Court that shooting down an hijacked plane to prevent it from crashing into a building with great loss of life, would be illegal because it would violate the human rights of the passengers.

There were four plenary sessions: one on the contemporary place of liberal (i.e. general) education in American colleges, and three on Jan Olof Bengtsson's *The Worldview of Personalism*, recently reviewed in *Appraisal*.

Most of the papers will be published in *The Pluralist*, the successor to *The Personalist Forum* (see 'Journals received', below).

One thing that had not changed was the warm and friendly welcome extended to all, and the genuine and co-operative engagement in discussion free from any eristic and point-scoring. I look forward eagerly to the next one, in 2009, somewhere in Europe.

R.T. Allen

JOURNALS RECEIVED

*Members of the SPCPS (i.e. individual subscribers to **Appraisal**) can borrow copies from the Library.*
Please contact the Librarian.
*The full contents of **Revue Romaine de Philosophie**, **Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia**, and*
***Prospettiva Persona**, are displayed on the members' pages of the SPCPS website www.spcps.org.uk*

Tradition and Discovery

Ed. Phil Mullins, Missouri Western State College, St Joseph, MO 64507, USA;
mullins@missouriwestern.edu;
www.missouriwestern.edu/orgs/polanyi/.
TAD is now available on line.

Vol. XXXIII 2006-7

No. 2
'Polanyi vs. Kuhn: Worldviews Apart', Martin X. Moleski, SJ
'Michael Polanyi and Thomas Kuhn: Priority and Credit', Struan Jacobs
'Public Recognition, Vanity, and the Quest for Truth: Reflection on 'Polanyi vs. Kuhn'', Aaron Milavec
'Darwin, Kuhn, and Polanyi: A Comment on 'Polanyi vs. Kuhn: Worlds Apart'', Richard Henry Schmitt
'The Polanyi-Kuhn Issue', Maben Poirier
Book Reviews
Joel R. Primack and Nancy Ellen Abrams, *The View from the Center of the Universe*
Francisco J. Ayala, *Darwin and Intelligent Design*
Brian D. McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*

No. 3
'Tacit Knowledge: A Wittgensteinian Approach', Zhenhua Yu
'Comprehension and the 'Comprehensive Entity': Polanyi's Theory of Tacit Knowing and Its Metaphysical Implications', Phil Mullins
'Signals, Schemas, Subsidiaries, and Skills: Articulating the Inarticulate', Walt Gulick
Book Reviews
R. Melvin Keiser and Rosemary Moore, eds. and commentators, *Knowing the Mystery of Life Within: Selected Writings of Isaac Penington in their Historical and Theological Context*
Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*

Polanyiana

Eds Martá Fehér and Éva Gábor, Stoczek u. 2, H-1111 Budapest, Hungary;
polanyi@phil.philos.bme.hu; www.polanyi.bme.hu/
Alternate issues in Hungarian and English
Vol. 15 Nos. 1-2, 2006
'Polanyi's presagement of the incommensurability concept', Struan Jacobs.
'The cognitive functions of emotion', R.T. Allen
'Indeterminacies by Polanyi', Tihamér Margitay
'A note on Michael Polanyi and the Congress for Cultural Freedom', Peter Coleman
Polanyi's lecture series 'Meaning: Lost and Regained' from the Polanyi Archive. (***This is the first of what will be a regular publication of material from the archive**.*)

Humanitas

National Humanities Institute, PO Box 1387, Bowie, MD 20718-1387 USA; www.nhinet.org/hum.htm
Vol. XVIII, Nos. 1 & 2, 2005
'Leo Strauss, Willmoore Kendall and the meaning of conservatism', Grant Havers
'Strauss and the Staussians', Paul Gottfried
'Leo Strauss and history: the philosopher as conspirator', Claes G. Ryn
'The unraveling of American constitutionalism: From customary law to permanent innovation', Joseph Baldacchino
'*In the Clearing*: Continuity and unity in Frost's Dualism', Peter J. Stanlis
'Sentimental hogwash? On Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*, Daniel J. Sullivan
'Classical precariousness vs. modern risk: lessons in prudence from the battle of Salamis', Ernest Sternberg
'Herder: on the ethics of nationalism', Richard White
'Have we lost humility?', Kari Konkola
Vol. XIX, Nos. 1 & 2, 2006
'American culture: a story', Bruce P. Frohnen
'Burke's higher Romanticism: politics and the sublime', William F. Bryne
'The legacy of Peter Viereck: his prose writings', Claes G. Ryn
'Irving Babbitt, the moral imagination, and progressive education', Glenn A. Davis
'Joseph Conrad's moral imagination', James Seaton
'Mysticism in contemporary Islamic thought: Orhan Pamuk and Abdolkarim Soroush', John von Heyking
'Michael Polanyi, Alistair MacIntyre and the role of tradition', Mark T. Mitchell
''The tears of Priam: reflections on *Troy* and teaching ancient texts', James J. Dillon
'John of Salisbury, the *Policraticus* and political thought', Quentin Taylor
'Richard Rorty's postmodern case for liberal democracy: a critique', George Bragues
'Locke the hermenaut and the mechanics of understanding', Michael T. Berman

Modern Age

Ed. George A. Panichas.
PO Box AB, College Park, MD 20740, USA
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Personalism

Ed: Rev. Prof. C.S. Bartnik, ul. Bazylianówka 54 B, 20-160 Lublin, Poland. personalism@wp.pl.
www.personalism.pl. Separate English and Polish

versions of each issue.

No. 8, 2005

'From the rights of human persons to the rights of nations', John Paul II.

'Magisterium Ecclesiae on evolution', John Paul II

'The notion of the angelic person', St Gregory the Great

'The significance of *person* in theology', Joseph Ratzinger

'From the dignity of the persons to the dignity of a nation', Czeslaw Stanislaw Bartnik

'Itinerancy '84', Bogumil Gacka

'Italian personalism', Robert Skrzypczak

'Personalism of the Slavs', Pavol Macala

The Pluralist

Ed. Randall E. Auxier, Philosophy Dept, Southern Illinois University, Faner Hall, MC-4505, Carbondale, IL 62901. USA

www.press.uillinois.edu/journals/plur.html.

3 issues per year.

Volume 2, No. 1, Spring 2007

'On Being a Human Being', E. M. ADAMS

'Philosophy and Civilization: An Introduction to the Life and Thought of E. M. Adams', ARREN A. NORD

'The Import of Uncertainty', SANDRA D. MITCHELL

'Naturalism and the Problem of Consciousness', TODD MOODY

'Spheres of Power, Spheres of Freedom: Practical Lessons from Jewish Neoplatonism', C. WESLEY DEMARCO

'Blood to Ink, Bread to Dust: Transformative Jewish and Christian Legends of the Middle Ages', ELIZABETH HERMAN

Volume 2, No. 2, Summer 2007

'Royce's Practice of Genuine Ethics', FRANK M. OPPENHEIM

'Royce and Communitarianism', SIMON KELLER

'Royce's State of Nature', GRIFFIN TROTTER

'Royce's "Conservatism"', RANDALL E. AUXIER

'Thoughts on Randall E. Auxier, "Royce's 'Conservatism'"', JAMES A. GOOD

'Mixed Loyalties: A Roycean Interpretation of Public Reason', JON MORAN

'Am I My Brother's Keeper? Royce and Dewey on the Community's Responsibility for the Lost Individual', ALBERT R. SPENCER

'Communities, Traitors, and the Feminist Cause: Looking Toward Josiah Royce for Feminist Scholarship', KARA E. BARNETTE

'Moral Identity and Moral Education: A Roycean Proposal for School Choice', SEAN RILEY

'Tragedy and the Sorrow of Finitude: Reflections on Sin and Death in the Philosophy of Josiah Royce', MATHEW A. FOUST

'Commentary on Mathew A. Foust, "Tragedy and the Sorrow of Finitude: Reflections on Sin and Death in the Philosophy of Josiah Royce"', KENNETH W. STIKKERS

'The Detached Individual, the Dangerous Pair, and the Spirit of the Community: Josiah Royce on the Metaphysics of Mediation', CHARLES ANTHONY EARLS

Revue Romaine de Philosophie

Editura Academiei Romane, Calea 13 Septembrie 13, Sector 5, PO Box 5-42, Bucharest, Romania; edacad@ear.ro; www.ear.ro. Articles in English, French and German.

Revista Portugesa de Filosofia

Praca da Faculdade 1, P - 4710-297 Braga, Portugal; jvila-cha@facfil.ucp.pt; www.rpf.pt.

Articles in Portuguese, Spanish, English, French, Italian, German.

Prospettiva Persona: Trimestrale di Cultura, Etica e Politica

Centro Ricerche Personaliste, Via N. Palma, 37 - 64100 Teramo, Italy; www.prospettivapersona.it

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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; 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).