

APPRAISAL

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Michael Polanyi, John Macmurray

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Michael Polanyi: the importance of personal contributions in science

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Editor: Dr R.T. Allen

20 Ulverscroft Rd, Loughborough, LE11 3PU, England

Tel.: 01509 552743; E-mail: rt.allen@ntlworld.com

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This issue's new and less recent contributors:

Dr Eleanor Godway, (B.A., M.A. Cambridge; Ph.D. York University Canada) has taught at York University, Canada, and in the U.S.A. at Alfred University, Earlham College, and since 1987 at Central Connecticut State University where she is Professor of Philosophy. She has published two articles on Macmurray, and several on Merleau-Ponty and other Continental thinkers, and co-edited a book (with Geraldine Finn) *Who is this 'We'? Absence of Community* (Black Rose Books, 1994). Her current project is a full length study of John Macmurray.

Dr Stefan Fothe is a university researcher and lecturer at the Department for Vocational and Business Education and Training at the University of Linz in Austria. His research is focussed on the pedagogical consequences of Polanyian thought, in general, and of the distinction in focal awareness and subsidiary awareness, in particular. Hence, in his PhD research he developed a Polanyian perspective on experiential exchange among social workers.

Dr Endre Nagy is Professor of Sociology at Semmelweis University (2008-), Budapest. He worked in Institute of Political Sciences of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (1970-1976), Department of Sociology (1976-1985), was head of the Department of Sociology in University of Pécs (1986-2005). He was also professor of sociology at Pázmány Péter Catholic University in Budapest (1999-2005). Books: *A közigazgatás kutatásának tudományos irányzatai (Scientific Orientations in Public Administration)* (1986), *Erény és tudomány (Virtue and Science. Essays in the History of Hungarian Sociology)* (1994), *Szociokalandozások (Adventures in Sociology)* (2003), *Kis Prométheuszi Pillanatok (Small Promethean Flashes)* (2006).

Dr Norman Sheppard, FRS, was an Assistant Director of Research in Spectroscopy in the Chemistry Department of the University of Cambridge and Fellow of Trinity College, latterly a Foundation Professor of Chemical Sciences of the University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK (now Emeritus). He has long had a special interest in the work of Michael Polanyi, whom he considers to give much the best account of the nature and practice of the sciences. He has never understood why Polanyi appears to be cold-shouldered by the other philosophers.

EDITORIAL

Simon Smith

The articles in this issue come from last August's International Conference on Persons. This was my first conference and I'm in a sharing mood, but feel free to skip to the joke at the end if you're not.

Sans students, Nottingham campus is quite pretty. If you can get in. My GPS, which refused to let me anywhere near a motorway on the drive from Southampton, spent twenty minutes insisting I drive through a gate that was really a wall. It had been a long drive and, to be honest, I wasn't sure what to trust: the wall or the GPS. In the end, I opted for a postman. Once inside the campus gates, a winding road led me to Derby Hall where a very nice lady gave me a name badge and a key and told me where to put my bag.

Student halls: it's been a while. Ah, the memories; well, flashbacks really. Actually, the rooms were far nicer than the unsanitary pit in which I used to sleep and occasionally study. No mould on the walls, no scrabbling behind the skirting boards, no terrible, insistent, sound of beating heart from beneath the floorboards. The décor was charming: early 'Wormwood Scrubs', I think. Having put my bag where advised, I followed my nose down to the dining hall.

Lunch was an excellent opportunity to meet lots of very interesting people. And to eat lunch. Richard Allen quickly found me and made me welcome. He also introduced me to a tall American named Tom Buford who asked if I'd heard of Charles Conti. As it happens, I have. Charles guided me through my undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral studies. What I didn't know was that Tom and Charles knew each other from way back. In fact, the personalist conferences had originally been their idea. And apparently, they were eating tacos at the time. Auspicious beginnings indeed. Levity aside, talk of food here isn't insignificant. There's something basic to personalism in the simple act of breaking bread, or in this case, taco shells. If we have an eye for imagery, it might tell us everything we need to know about the kind of connections wherein persons are shaped and learn to shape others. Something like that was the subject of my paper.

That also turned out to be great fun. The audience was small but generous. My slot corresponded with one of the week's 'big hitters': Dr Allen himself no less. So the size of the audience wasn't surprising. But you know what they say: it's not how big it is, it's what you do with it that counts. And I think I did quite well. Thoughtful and probing questions were asked and, hopefully, answered. And I was allowed to make some wild claims that I haven't a hope of justifying.

In the evening, there was a bar, which Richard implored us to use. I've never known a philosopher need imploring to use the bar. The shower, yes; but not the bar. My first philosophy tutor thought a pint of beer a fine philosophical aid. And, being an enthusiastic student, I did exactly what you'd expect. Turns out, nine pints of beer are not nine times as fine. They are, however, an excellent way to bring discussion to a sticky end.

Nottingham was far more educational. I've always thought philosophy should be educational: we share ideas; we learn from one another. Not everyone agrees, I know. Some think it's about beating people over the head with a thesis. But this felt like a real exchange: open discussion, everyone listening to everyone else. And there was plenty to listen to. I didn't expect one gathering to accommodate so full a spectrum of philosophical interests.

It was also quite inspiring to find that no one was in charge – except by default – and no one really wanted to be in charge. The sole concern is to carry on talking, exchanging ideas, working together. Things need doing to ensure that happens and, we're all invited to help out by doing them. And that was all.

Well, not quite. I was also gifted the funniest gag I've ever heard. If you skipped a bit, welcome back. Sincere apologies to whoever told me this, I've forgotten everything but the fact that it's not actually a joke. It's a headline from the satirical newspaper, *The Onion*. And it's simply this: Jurisprudence Fetishist Gets Off On Technicality (Issue 33. 19, 05.20.98: www.theonion.com/content/node/35350). Even the bad old Sheriff would have laughed at that.

THE CRISIS OF THE PERSONAL: MACMURRAY, POSTMODERNISM, AND THE CHALLENGE OF PHILOSOPHY TODAY

Eleanor M. Godway

Abstract

Since Descartes, philosophy has given priority to the Subject as Thinker, and made sense of things first according to the Logic of substance (cause and effect) and then of organism (function in a living system.) These logical forms are no longer adequate: philosophical reflection must now address the crisis our culture is facing, which requires action. By taking the Self as agent Macmurray challenges us to come up with a new 'logical form', i.e., for the 'Personal', since only persons can act (do this, not that, and succeed or fail.) The personal involves a necessary unity of positive and negative: thinking and knowing are negative, constituting and sustaining the positive, action, without which they are meaningless. Merleau-Ponty's application of Husserl's invention/discovery of the phenomenological reduction makes room for this problematic feature by uncovering the immediate experience of the Other in action. The 'natural attitude' which takes the (impersonal) scientific perspective as objective and rational exemplifies the risk inherent in the personal, and is a kind of 'bad faith' (as explored by the existentialists.) Being in relationship with other persons is constitutive of the possibility of rationality. By linking these insights with some more recent Continental philosophy (Luce Irigaray, Derrida's deconstruction) we get a new model for epistemology (meaning and truth) as contingent on trust, such that we could envisage the World-as-one-action.

Key Words

John Macmurray; Subject; Self as Agent; logical form of the personal; the negative; phenomenological reduction; Merleau-Ponty; 'natural attitude'; 'bad faith'; solipsism; Irigaray; Derrida; deconstruction; epistemology; friendship.

1. Introductory: Macmurray and 'modern' philosophy

For Macmurray the task of philosophy is to reflect on experience as a whole. Philosophy, unlike science (which is more properly understood as a number of 'specialized sciences') is concerned to express and interpret the universe² not as a totality, as in say field theory, but such that we come closer to understanding ourselves as part of the world, of the whole of what is - as, in immediate experience, we know ourselves to be. He sees himself as following in the footsteps of a tradition which stretches back to

the Greeks, but in particular includes the 'moderns': Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Hume, Kant, Hegel, etc., and unlike some other twentieth century philosophers³ he understands the history of philosophy as absolutely necessary to philosophy's conception of itself. The work of an individual philosopher is not only a response to and an expression of the time in which that philosopher lives, it can also, as a result of reflecting on it, contribute to, indeed help mould, the attitudes and assumptions which come to prevail in the surrounding society, during and after that time. Thus philosophy has a cultural role which may affect all our lives: that is, history in the making. Perhaps this was more obvious in the past before philosophy became an academic discipline, but Macmurray is convinced that philosophy today is perhaps even more crucial as our western civilization, and with it the earth itself, faces a crisis of unprecedented magnitude. In this essay, then, I will outline how Macmurray's philosophical discoveries make for a particular reading of the history of philosophy, which may in turn open up a sense of where philosophy needs to go now, as we enter the third millennium. For this my strategy will be to develop some of his ideas in conjunction with insights from Continental philosophy, in particular phenomenology, a style of philosophizing initiated by Edmund Husserl, interpreted and in some ways radicalized by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In conclusion I will be suggesting connections with the work of two contemporary post-modern thinkers, Luce Irigaray and Jacques Derrida.

Philosophy then, is a reflective activity and it is called for, as all reflection is, when life presents problems which make it difficult or impossible to go on as we were. According to Macmurray, action is primary and thought secondary, its role being to guide and correct action. When we are doing something, we are thinking as we act, and often the two aspects are effectively indissoluble. But there may come a point when we hit a snag, so to speak, when our action is interrupted and we have to stop and think. We have to withdraw from our engagement with the world and reflect about the situation, imagine different ways of addressing our problem, and consider the consequences of choosing one of them. If our reflection is successful we may be able to go back to the real world with a sense of knowing how to handle ourselves and what to do

next. But if putting the conclusion of our reflection into practice does not help, and we continue to be frustrated, then we must perhaps recast the terms in which we understood our problem. Take, for example the collapse of the Mediaeval world view⁴ and the development of science. Traditional patterns of thinking no longer made sense, and there was need for radical changes in the way people construed their existence and the world they lived in. Modern philosophy arose at this time, as Descartes and others tried to give form to a conception of reality which would be adequate to the new situation. While no-one today would argue for Cartesianism as such, there are a number of elements of Seventeenth Century metaphysics still around, albeit sometimes 'unexpressed and half conscious, implicit in [our] ways of behaviour...'⁵ They have become taken for granted habits of thought. But in spite of, or perhaps because of, the overwhelming success of the scientific method in so many fields, we are getting to the point where the limitations of that metaphysics are becoming apparent to more and more thinkers. Macmurray sees us, as a species, at a crisis point in history, in the face of which we need philosophy to make it possible for us to reflect anew on what we are and what we are doing. He calls for a new way of thinking, a break-through analogous to Descartes', to enable us to articulate what is at stake and then we may find a way to understand and deal with this more and more confusing reality. Thus, as I shall try to show, his effort becomes part of what has come to be called 'post-modernism'. Macmurray gave his Gifford Lectures (delivered 1953 and 1954, first published 1957 and 1961⁶) the general title 'The Form of the Personal', and in them he addresses what he identifies as the 'crisis of the personal.' He describes the various new approaches to philosophy which were current in his time (phenomenology, existentialism, logical analysis) as struggling, each in its own way, with the inadequacies of traditional patterns of thinking. I believe that it is his analysis of these patterns that is one of Macmurray's major contributions to philosophy, and it is worth spending a little time seeing how they work. To keep our reflection relevant and consistent we must make use of symbols to represent what we are thinking about (*I.U.* ch II) and combine these symbols in a systematic and consistent fashion so that our conclusions will help us resolve the real world issues that made withdrawal from action necessary in the first place. He identified this feature of reflection as the 'unity pattern' (*I.U.*) and later more generally as the 'logical form' (*S.A.*) and his diagnosis of the philosophical problem of our time as the need for a new one to address today's reality which is even

harder to deal with than that faced by Descartes and his contemporaries. We must find and learn to think according to a 'logical form' that would enable us to reflect on our experience as persons (*S.A.*, p 29). Descartes succeeded in articulating the 'logical form of substance', which made sense as philosophy's response to the development of physics, and it provided continuity with the traditional privilege accorded mathematics which as Macmurray says 'proved adequate for the scientific determination of the material world.' (p 33). But the problem it eventually raises is that what is not so determinable becomes, as he puts it, unknowable. If the one who reflects on the material world is 'immaterial' (Descartes' 'mental substance'), the activity of thinking obviously cannot be understood in material terms.⁷ If we do try to make sense of the self according to a physical (mechanistic) conception, we must end in scepticism, as became clear to Hume. The development of the biological sciences led to the emergence of a new logical form first sought by Rousseau and Kant and eventually recognizable in the dialectic developed by Hegel, which would be adequate to organic life. ⁸ But even as the Cartesian (mathematical/mechanical) unity pattern had to make room for one which could account for the logic of birth, growth, and decay, in due course it seems we were bound to need a way to reflect on human reality, to try to come to terms with *our* existence as persons. Physically certainly we are 'matter', and biologically alive, but we are more than machines or organisms, (cf. *S.R.E.*, pp. 101, and 119) and to the extent that we fail to realize this, our lack of self knowledge may – indeed perhaps already does – spell disaster. Hence, the crisis of the personal.

Macmurray does not offer us a full blown system developed in accordance with the required unity-pattern. Rather, he sees himself more as diagnosing the crisis and indicating some features of what may be needed to meet it. I actually think that such a system may not be possible or desirable, and to the extent he hankers after one, he may be more caught up in old habits of thought than he realizes.⁹ Be that as it may, his insights into the workings and short-comings of the earlier (modernist) logical forms, and his sense of what is essential about the personal are important and revealing, and they do, it seems to me, converge in significant ways with the continuing trajectory of what has come to be known as Continental Philosophy. Central to his perspective, and already at odds with much of traditional philosophy is his insistence on the primacy of the practical over the theoretical. 'Primary knowledge,' he says, is 'knowledge as a dimension of action,' which he contrasts with 'reflective activity which

intends the improvement of knowledge' (*P.R.*, p 77.) Thus, as mentioned already, we stop and think when for some reason what we are doing is not going well, and it was going to take a while before there seemed a need to reflect philosophically about ourselves. But by the Nineteenth Century the sources of a philosophical impulse 'in the stresses and strains of personal life' (*S.A.*, p 29) were making themselves felt in such thinkers as Nietzsche and Kierkegaard,¹⁰ philosophers who are now recognized as forerunners of twentieth century existentialism. Macmurray's approach has been called existentialist,¹¹ partly because of his insistence on agency, and there are other affinities between his work and that movement; I will be referring to some of them later. Meanwhile I want to go a little further with Macmurray's account of the sources of this crisis and indicate his approach to addressing it.

2. The emergence of logical form: knowledge and the role of the negative.

Philosophy's traditional concern has been with an epistemology which privileges theory over practice (thinking over action or experience), an ordering which Macmurray insists on reversing. He writes

All thought presupposes knowledge. It is not possible to think about something that you do not already know' (I.U., p 6, italics his)

This is primary knowledge which

is first and foremost that immediate experience of things which is prior to all expression and understanding (p. 7)

And the paradigm case, as one might call it, is not knowing a fact (that such and such is the case) but knowing another person. Not only does this fit with the common-sense insight that knowledge, if it is knowledge, cannot be mistaken, it is also an effective illustration of the difference between knowing someone, and knowing about her, which would be reflective knowledge. If I do know her, then it must be the case that she knows me: this (personal) knowledge is inherently relational. So, again as in common sense, knowledge refers beyond oneself, or as Macmurray often puts it, to the Other. But reflective knowledge, not being immediate, cannot attain the certainty of immediate knowledge, that is knowledge of the Other in action. (*S.A.*, p 168) We are born into personal relationships: our existence is social from the very beginning; and the baby's response to its mother marks its dawning ability to distinguish between Self and Other. In fact I become aware of (my) Self at the moment I become aware of an Other (not-self) responding to me: *I* am in communication with *you* ('I-thou' precedes 'I-it.'¹²)

This first encounter with the negative, the not-I that lets me be I, is the matrix of the personal, and at the same time 'the germ of rationality' (*P.R.*, p 61.¹³) Gradually I will begin to distinguish separate Others who are not the generic 'you', and then, by further discrimination or abstraction, the elements of my world which do not respond to me, which are not persons. Some of these are things which apparently take no account of me, but I become interested in them to the extent that I can manipulate, act on or use them. And often unless I affect such a thing in some way it does not change, it continues to be how it was, where it was, etc. (Macmurray's term for this is 'the continuant,' *S.A.*, ch. 7.) This is of course relative to me, to what I expect or want from it, and so we may come to see, in Macmurray's phrase, 'the World-as-means'. Conscious attention to things in this way is a mode of reflection which when developed and carried out systematically becomes science. (*P.R.*, p 198.) That it is not the only mode of reflection, nor even the most important one, is intrinsic to Macmurray's thought: scientific knowledge *is* knowledge, but not the whole of knowledge. It made sense, though, that it would be the first mode of reflection to be fully worked out. It is obviously very useful - and easier to cope with than the more problematic modes which develop out of emotional or personal life. This seems to be the case with the child's development¹⁴ as well as the history of our society's ability to reflect on itself.

Philosophically, then, regarding what we experience as matter, as stuff to be worked on, led to the notion of substance, and its logic is such that positive and negative exclude each other (*S.A.*, p. 96.) It cannot be the case that A and not-A, *viz.* \sim (A. \sim A). This kind of logic, which has been developed to allow for inference from premises to conclusion, functions like mathematics (pp. 93 f); Macmurray has no more quarrel with it than he has with mathematics as an abstract discipline. It is valuable and reliable within its limits. But what he is concerned with is what he calls the logic of representation, 'a logical form for the representation of the actual unity of the object to which our thought refers' (p. 95); and if the mathematical unity pattern is regarded as the most adequate for the representation of Reality, it would be taken as adequate to represent the Self. As we have noted this is in fact what Descartes supposes: he describes himself as a 'thinking substance', and so is born what Macmurray called 'the vicious dualism between mind and matter' (*I.U.*, p. 57.) It seems as if the exciting new discoveries due to scientific method, especially when interpreted from the theoretical stand point of traditional philosophy, made this metaphysical assumption irresistible - and with

Descartes' 'I think therefore I am', the Subject of modern philosophy is born. Setting aside for the moment Macmurray's challenge to the priority of the theoretical (replacing 'I think' with 'I do'), this thinking substance has to be the negative of the world it thinks about. While Descartes' body, as extended substance, appears to take up space, change in time, be subject to cause and effect, he himself, as Mind, is immaterial, outside space and time, and can have no intelligible relationship with that body or with anything else.¹⁵ (In Gilbert Ryle's telling phrase, he is the 'ghost in the machine'.) It is possible that his body doesn't even exist, and he would never know. These paradoxes are addressed by Spinoza and Leibniz, who are more consistent than Descartes, but as this thinking substance is treated mathematically and logically, it becomes more and more remote from any experience. Although change may seem to take place in this 'substance', it will happen according to a plan which has nothing in common with the material world, on which it cannot act at all. There is no future, everything that will be is already completely accounted for, and our sense of freedom is a matter of our ignorance. While it may seem that empiricism was the rebuttal of rationalism, Locke, Berkeley and Hume did not in fact directly question the form of representation. They did lose interest in the logico-mathematical issues, but they also applied the same logic of substance to their experience of the material world. In a kind of see-saw movement, the Object was given precedence over the Subject, which then began to disappear. Science became the study of a series of events which have no meaning in themselves while the activity, indeed the existence, of the scientist as agent (or thinker) became less and less comprehensible, and as we have seen Hume finally came to the conclusion that this line of thought must end in scepticism. However, the metaphysics of substance has persisted past what has been touted as the death of metaphysics, and mind-matter dualism, with priority given to matter, is endemic in much of what passes for 'objective' thought today.

Macmurray saw Kant as a bridge-figure not, as is sometimes said, because he reconciled rationalism and empiricism, but rather because he opens up a way to envisage the organic unity pattern. Macmurray lays considerable stress on Kant's relation to the Romantic movement, and regards the Third Critique as a counterweight if not a revision of the First.¹⁶ The Romantic movement was a reaction against the dominant mechanistic logic; it was an expression above all of feeling, a celebration of life. From the perspective of the logic of substance it was subjective and irrational - but it demonstrated part of

what was missing from that logic. While the logical form of substance enables us to reflect on how things work, and so extend our knowledge of the World-as-means, the logical form of the organic enables us to reflect on how it feels, and to refine our contemplative appreciation.¹⁷ Thus Kant's *Critique of Judgment* gives an account of our experience of the sublime and the beautiful in terms of the experience of disinterested satisfaction ('purposiveness without purpose') according to patterns of thought which transcend (or escape) the rigidity of the categories of the *Critique of Pure Reason* - a substance ontology *par excellence*. The organic model is perhaps most fully developed by Hegel, who gave us a new version of human reality, in terms of an over-riding 'super-personal' destiny.¹⁸ The images that predominate are those of struggle as in the fight between master and slave (the central motif of the dialectic), and eating and digesting, as well as growth and development (the bud becomes the flower, which becomes the seed.) According to this pattern, positive and negative engage each other, they affect each other, and each is transformed and absorbed into something new which could not have come into being without the contribution of both. (A.~A) ? H. Thus living things grow and change in accordance with a teleology which will make sense of their development over time. As we come to understand things according to this unity pattern, we would, says Macmurray, be acquiring knowledge of the World-as-end (S.A., p. 194.), and it will give us insight into *motive*, while knowledge of the World-as-means gives us a handle on *cause*. ('I feel', while an improvement on 'I think' is not yet 'I do.')

This mode of reflection is still inadequate to our reality as persons: the world view it generates is impersonal (which was Kierkegaard's main criticism of Hegel.) For teleology, the impetus towards a whole greater than the sum of its parts, although not mechanical, still lacks the personal contribution, namely intention and choice which make it radically different from the *telos* of the organism because they account for the ways an agent responds to changing situations. (Macmurray saw the influence of the organic unity pattern in the rise of totalitarianism in the Twentieth century and its refutation in the misery of those caught up in it.¹⁹) Sartre, I believe, was struggling to find his way out of this logical form (cf. n. 11), but he conceived human reality (*Dasein*) as the (unfulfillable)

project to metamorphose its own For-itself [consciousness] into an In-it-self-For-itself and a project of the appropriation of the world as a totality of being-in-itself (B.N., p. 784.)

Eleanor M. Godway: *The Crisis of the Personal: Macmurray, Postmodernism, and the Challenge of Philosophy Today* i.e., to absorb what negates us, as an organism takes in its food.

Macmurray's new take on epistemology is succinctly stated in his thesis:

All meaningful knowledge is for the sake of action, and all meaningful action for the sake of friendship. (S.A., p. 15)

The logical form which will make sense of this will allow us to represent the way the negative works in personal life: 'a necessary unity of positive and negative' (p. 98), which we all experience but find it very hard to reflect on. I think part of the appeal of the other two modes of reflection is that they *are* impersonal, they do not implicate us personally. They address themselves to matters of fact, as if all had already happened, whereas the field of the personal is the arena of choice (doing this, not that): it is concerned with matters of intention, and is therefore problematic. Neither the logic of substance nor the logic of organism can make room for *action*, which for Macmurray is what constitutes personal existence. And what we do affects the future, indeed, inaugurates *this* future instead of any alternative, and this will be a future we all have to share. The mode of reflection that is called for must envisage 'the World as one action' (as opposed to 'the World as means' or 'the World as end' of the other two modes), and make clear the need for the (positive) intention of friendship. We are all at risk if we make the wrong choice: and the possibility of making the wrong choice is constitutive of action as such. We could not succeed unless we could fail. We could not act rightly unless we could act wrongly. Thus the positive is constituted and sustained by the negative (see n.13.)

To return to the theme with which this section opened, our (first) primary knowledge is the immediate experience of relationship with another person. Relationships with other people are matters of intention (as opposed to matters of fact), and thus inherently problematic. When we care about someone we are vulnerable: the positive (love) includes and is constituted by the negative (fear.) (P.R., pp. 62 and 66.) Action (rather than reaction) is possible when we succeed in subordinating the negative to the positive - we know what we are doing when we are able to take account of the risks. We need others, to be ourselves; we have to be able to trust, both ourselves and each other, in face of the unpredictable.

3. A philosophy of immediate experience: introducing phenomenology

What Macmurray calls for then is a philosophical practice which reflects his discovery that action is the positive which includes and is sustained by

thinking as its negative, and the point of action (what gives it meaning) is the possibility of friendship. Let us return to Macmurray's understanding of the task of philosophy: to reflect on the universe as a whole.

By the universe as a whole, one means the universe in that quality of completeness and wholeness which is given in immediate experience, the absence of limits and clear cut boundaries, the *qualitative infinity* which characterizes it in all its parts. It is this very wholeness and completeness which belongs to immediate experience always, and which is always absent from reflective experience that philosophy reflects upon and seeks to explain. *I.U.*, p. 12 (his italics.)

Would any contemporary philosopher subscribe to this account of what they are trying to do? Probably it would apply to the aspirations of the great systematic thinkers of the past, but no one now believes their hopes were realized in a way that works for us today. If the reasons for this impasse are those put forward by Macmurray, then perhaps there really is an important role for philosophy in our time. And was Macmurray truly alone in claiming this? He certainly thought so.²⁰ But meanwhile in Continental Europe there was a movement afoot which was developing in such a way as to converge with some of the insights Macmurray was exploring. Edmund Husserl's phenomenology seemed at first to be a kind of neo-Cartesianism, focusing as it did on the contents on consciousness. Three major works were titled *Ideas*, and another important text was *Cartesian Meditations*.²¹ Nevertheless, what may have seemed like a version of idealism, concerned with the Subject as opposed to its Objects, turned out to lead somewhere quite different. Husserl's invention/discovery of the *epoche* (or phenomenological reduction) eventually offered a new way to reflect on immediate experience, such that we are able to recover what Macmurray called its 'qualitative infinity'.

There is no need to try to follow the tortuous path of Husserl's phenomenology, or consider the various ways his approach has been interpreted or applied. I only want to draw attention to a few themes which may help put Macmurray's ideas into another context. In the late text, *Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*,²² Husserl gives an account of the

'crisis' which developed very early in modern philosophy and science and which extends with increasing intensity to our own day. (p. 16)

It would be stretching it to say that Husserl's 'crisis' is the same as Macmurray's 'crisis of the personal' but their accounts of its origin and effects are pretty close. Husserl explains how 'the mathematization of

Nature' which he saw as starting with Galileo, led directly to Descartes' dualism (Part II, §§ 8-12.) This dualism embodies a fundamental contradiction, namely the impossibility of acknowledging the relation of the scientist to the reality he is part of. Mathematical science is a 'method' which hides 'true being' behind a 'garb of ideas' (p. 51) such that the life-world where we really live, the ground (*Boden*) which supports all our activities is covered over and forgotten. The very success of the natural sciences (*Naturwissenschaften*) has contributed to the crisis for European humanity, as he puts it, because it is not matched by the wisdom of knowing what we are doing with them that we might have hoped for from insight into ourselves, from *Geisteswissenschaften*. Such 'psychology' as seemed available, if modeled on physics, suffers from the same contradiction. As Husserl saw it, this contradiction at the heart of twentieth century European culture was already spelling disaster in the 1930's, and if anything we are in worse shape today. Like Macmurray Husserl believes that we must address these issues with a new take on philosophy – and this is no light matter. If we are 'serious philosophers', he says and philosophizing is not to be confined to

merely private or otherwise limited cultural goals [...] in *our* philosophizing [...] we are *functionaries of mankind*. The quite personal responsibility of our own true being as philosophers, our inner personal vocation, bears within itself at the same time responsibility for the true being of mankind. (p. 17, italics his)

Thus Husserl has made a commitment like Macmurray's to call a halt to philosophy's business as usual, and try to reflect in a new way, and this for the sake of the future of us all, as we face a crisis of wholly new dimensions.

When I referred to phenomenology as a movement, I meant to distinguish it from a theory: it is a matter of experience, of a shift of focus, which we have to accomplish somehow for ourselves. As Husserl defends it in *C.E.S.* 'the *practical* possibility of [this] new philosophy will prove itself [...] through its execution' (p. 18, his italics.) He does not offer us yet another 'garb of ideas' but a way to try to set such garbs aside. His own discovery originally arose from concerns about 'psychologism' as applied to mathematics. He was arguing against a theory that mathematical thinking can be explained as the result of causal mechanisms (e.g. neural pathways) as opposed to conscious understanding. When the result of a mathematical calculation is 'recognized as true' (whether or not is it 'objectively' so), there is an identifiable experience the *Aha! Erlebnis* ('Aha! I

get it!') which he called the 'subjective correlate'. It is this 'subjective correlate' of the experience of evidence that becomes the domain of phenomenology. Access to it depends on learning to 'bracket' the 'objective' context in which it arises, so we can recognize and set aside the 'natural attitude' according to which we usually function in the world – the mode of thinking that Macmurray describes as making sense of the World-as-means.²³ By learning to recognize how we 'naturally' respond to the world we can overcome what Husserl called the naïveté of this attitude and start reflecting on what is actually given in our (immediate) experience without jumping at once to conclusions about the status or value of what it is an experience of. As I have implied already, this *epoché* or 'phenomenological reduction' is not, does not work as, a philosophical argument: 'getting it' is itself an '*Aha! Erlebnis*', a new kind of awareness, an awareness of just that 'qualitative infinity' Macmurray indicates. That is why I said 'start reflecting' because once we set about the task of noticing what is given it never does end. Husserl continually revised and reworked his texts as he came to recognize he was embarked on an 'infinite task'. This task is taken up by his successors, in particular, for our purposes, by Merleau-Ponty who focuses on the later works which have more emphasis on the life-world and embodiment than the conceptual issues of the first phenomenological accounts such as the eidetic reduction of *Ideas I*, which was to bring to light invariant 'essences' as they emerged from the phenomena.

For Merleau-Ponty

phenomenology is neither a materialism nor a philosophy of mind. Its proper work is to unveil the pre-theoretical layer (*couche*) in which both of these idealizations find their relative justification and are gone beyond (*dépassées*.)²⁴

And this 'layer' is our active participation in the world, that immediate experience (what Heidegger called Being-in-the World), to which Macmurray calls our attention. If early Husserl had a tendency to think of it as passive, in Merleau-Ponty as in Macmurray, it is active. Merleau-Ponty refers to *Ideen II* which

brings to light a network of implications beneath the 'objective material thing' in which we no longer sense the pulsation of a constituting consciousness. The rapport between my body's movements and the thing's properties which they bright to light [not a thinking 'consciousness' but] the 'I can' which is able to elicit these marvels. p. 166 (translation amended.) (cf. also *C.E.S.*, p. 106.)

This 'I can', like Macmurray's 'I do' is engaged with the world, forward-looking, vulnerable, open to

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disappointment or worse as well as the wonder of discovery. For both Merleau-Ponty and Macmurray touch is prior to (more real than) vision. ‘tactual perception is necessarily perception in action’ (S.A., p. 107) because it is at its core the experience of resistance – that is the ‘Other’, of what is not me, which makes clear where I end and the Other begins. Without resistance no action is possible. (p. 108.) Knowledge of the Other in action is certain, as Macmurray says, not of course in the sense that we have a guarantee that we can never be mistaken, but that what we go by is the experience of evidence, the coming up against the Other in a way that affects us.²⁵ Sceptics, and to a large extent analytic philosophers (especially epistemologists) who say, ‘and since that’s all we have to go by, admit it, we can never really know,’ have a model of knowledge as that of an isolated subject, not an agent, and because it has no relation to the Other, it is irremediably incorrigible (and solipsistic.²⁶) They are still held captive by the ‘substance’ ontology, which allows one no way of being constructively affected by the negative. But how can one break free of this mind-set, how does one ‘get’ phenomenology? In my experience it is, as Husserl said, this philosophy ‘proves itself through execution’ – that is only by doing it. Macmurray gives a vivid account of his skating lesson when he finally ‘got the feel’ of doing the Dutch roll backwards (*I.U.*, p. 5). He had to give in, you might say, and let himself be affected by the Other. Similarly, the phenomenological reduction is not exactly something you do, but rather something you undergo. So, when I introduce phenomenology to students I begin not with a definition but with an invitation to experience something they don’t expect. I get them to participate in a practical experiment.²⁷ I stage a particular kind of encounter with (tangible) objects of perception which will allow for an experience of the reduction, a practice case as it were, to familiarize them with the mental muscles needed and then they will be able to recognize and implement the dynamic involved. The point is to pay attention to the ‘phenomena’ I offer, to try to focus on what is presented as unfiltered experience, and immediately make a record of what that experience was like. I put assorted objects into paper bags: they are handled without being seen, they are supposed to be unrecognizable, and the bags are passed around the group. The idea is to learn to put aside could be ‘known’ about the object being encountered and concentrate on the experience, as if you had no idea what was being experienced. This way the ‘objective’ world, is ‘bracketed’ and you deal with only what is on the hither side of awareness (Husserl’s ‘subjective correlative’.) If you knew already what was in the paper bag that ‘objective’ knowledge takes you all too quickly into the world of common-sense categories, its use, what caused it to be that way, how it could be expected to behave under certain conditions, i.e. the World-as-means. This usual approach, the ‘natural attitude’, is what the *epoche* interrupts, renders problematic, to see what the reduction can reveal. I will say more about the natural attitude in the next section. Meanwhile a couple of things this exercise can bring to our attention.

Macmurray describes thinking as the negative moment: we think (reflectively) because we have to stop when what we are doing runs up against an obstacle, when our way forward is blocked, and we have to take stock, reorient ourselves. In this context, the point is purposely to introduce an experience of disorientation, to set aside the ‘taken-for-granted’ objectives of the natural attitude, to drop the selectivity of seeing the World-as-means or the World-as-end and try to open us to the World as that with which we are always already in relationship. The bracketing of the ‘objective’ world neither makes our experience ‘merely subjective’, nor does it take us out of the real world. Rather, it reminds us what that objective world rests on – Merleau-Ponty’s *couche*. The effect of this disorientation is a loss of focus which effectively removes any criterion as to what is relevant: indeed the idea is to pay careful attention to as much as possible of what is given (the phenomena) – especially what we ordinarily exclude without noticing. The experience is invariably richer than is afforded by our usual approach to what we perceive, because we try to tune nothing out. For some participants this gives a sense of freedom, of the adventure of discovery, of letting in something new and unexpected. But often there are others who resist; it makes them uncomfortable, even angry. People trained to value an impersonal objectivity and carefully structured observational processes are exasperated by the apparent ‘pointlessness’ which the exercise not only implies, but in effect requires. (This same exasperation seems to come up in response to some of Derrida’s ‘deconstructive’ writing, which I touch on in Section V.) It can be hard to forego the comfort of the familiar, the take-for-granted ‘business as usual’ of the natural attitude, knowing what to expect. Yet this is after all a venture into the realm of the personal, not without risk. And there can be a personal gain from insight into one’s own reaction, even before one compares notes with others on what was experienced.

At this point another dimension is introduced. If your experience is different from mine it can be that we thought we had access to the same bag but did not – and that gets clarified by further examination

of what was given (always without looking!). Or you really did have a different experience of what turned out to be the same 'original'. What then? In the atmosphere I try to foster, there is no constraint as to what you should have experienced. And, as each one gives his or her account, no-one's experience as honestly reported is to be discredited, though there may be wide variations. The relevance of hearing other people's versions of phenomena we thought we all perceived is that they enable us to go back again and check if our own experience of 'X' is enriched by trying to respond to it in another way. We become aware of the subjective correlate when our point of view is put in question, and it is then, of course, that we can learn something new. Perhaps it is not only persons that have a point of view, but it is as persons that we are able both to acknowledge our point of view and simultaneously allow it to be questioned - and this is a moment at which we become aware of ourselves *as* persons. And even if we now 'correct' our first impression, our first impression is still evidence as that, a first impression. The more points of view possible, the better; there *is* no one right view, and everyone's experience is to be valued. Remember this is an exercise in reflection, focused on immediate experience, and which is why there is always that sense of qualitative infinity.²⁸ The hope for 'one right view' is for the incorrigibility mentioned above - and no scientist would claim that his current version of the data he is working with cannot be revised: theory is always hypothetical.

I referred to the atmosphere that I want to create for this exercise...and this is related to discomfort or fear that may be occasioned by what I invite folks to do. What is needed for a successful experience is trust; trust in me, that I haven't put something horrible or dangerous in that paper bag; trust in oneself, that one can risk new ways of experiencing (and for some this takes more courage than for others); and trust in others, both that they will listen respectfully when one shares what one has put down as one's description of one's experience, and not be poised to judge or devalue it, and also that they too will offer their findings in a spirit of good will and open enquiry, without an ulterior motive, such as pleasing someone else, or competing with the others, but will honestly examine what they discover *is* their experience, and witness to it without reserve. The situation is inherently problematic, but if we are granted a shared 'aha!' experience we participate in what the phenomenologist call intersubjectivity²⁹ in action. 'The primary expression of reason,' Macmurray tells us (*P.R.*, p. 61) 'is the reference to the other *person*' (his italics.) In a kind of corollary

to his thesis which I quoted in the last section, in the experience of phenomenology that I have been describing, it is possible to rediscover the need for friendship in our search for truth. Relations with others *are* problematic, and here the willingness to be open to the point of vulnerability is a large part of what makes the experience real and thus not an isolated withdrawal into reflection such as Macmurray describes. We have been able to reflect together, and we can return to the world of everyday life more in tune with it and with each other.

4. The natural attitude: solipsism and 'bad faith.'

The 'natural attitude' is the name Husserl gave to the traditional (common sense) assumption that world is the way it looks to us. This naïve view has been refined during the course of the history of philosophy so as to be replaced by the notion of the ideal spectator whose perspective transcends the limitations of point-of-view, the one that is, to whom the world looks the way it 'really' is. It is this refined version which has long been taken for granted in our culture as the paradigm of Enlightenment (modernist) thought. In fact I suspect that to the extent we think we know (facts), we still tend to identify with that disembodied Subject, the knower disconnected from what is known. Merleau-Ponty put it this way:

It is natural to believe ourselves in the presence of a world and a time over which our thought soars, capable of considering each part at will without modifying the part's objective nature.³⁰

This high attitude thinking (*pensée de survol*) is what was aspired to as 'objectivity', and both Husserl and Macmurray recognized that when we are conscious of what it assumes, it becomes untenable. But its hold on us is hard to break: the phenomenological attitude is 'unnatural,' and the shift needed to effect the *epoché* requires an effort against the grain, so to speak, and then vigilance to avoid slipping back. What is at stake is the sense of the problematic which puts our point of view on the line. Indeed the early Husserl seemed unaware how much of the natural attitude was involved in his assumption that the transcendental reduction was the route to the Transcendental Ego in which all differences of perspective would be resolved (see n. 29.) Macmurray's account as I have tried to explicate it in conjunction with the practice of phenomenology seems in some ways more consistent, but I actually think that if Macmurray had had access to the phenomenological method, and the concomitant experience of divesting himself of the natural attitude, he would have had something of an antidote to the tendency he recognized in himself of still thinking in the old way (see n. 9.) My proposal is that we think of Macmurray's work as concerned

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Macmurray's account of the Self as a personal unity includes 'its capacity for self negation [...] the Self is constituted by a practical contradiction between its elements' (S.A., p. 98.) This is what allows for the integration of thought and action as we have seen, but it is also what makes possible a divergence between these, not in the sense of acting without thinking (which would not be acting - see S.A., p. 87) but in the way in which thinking 'theoretically' separated itself from action, as philosophy developed. For, although the natural attitude has what might be called a 'natural' etiology, it leads to paradoxes which may already be having disastrous effects in the real world. If this seems exaggerated Macmurray did not think so: his non-philosophical writings and activities were about the desperate need for realistic reflection which will enable us to act, to address the world's problems before it is too late to stop our self-destruction, (and I have already mentioned Husserl's concern expressed in *C.E.S.*) As long as the natural attitude allows us to give priority to the theorizing subject, the knower can seem detached from what is known, and in particular there is a temptation for scientists to feel they should regard their work as 'objective,' and not let themselves be affected 'personally' by what they discover or what they enable us to invent. Laws of nature, which scientists formulate and work at confirming by experiment, are, Macmurray says, descriptive of the Other (what is *not* them) as continuant, that is to say as process without agency, as for example movement in a straight line. This abstraction from the whole experience/relationship obscures the existence (actions, choices etc.) of all agents, both of the scientist observing, and of other human agents who might interfere or be affected. But we cannot go on treating the world as means, as if the ends were not our business. We are already making choices, even if we do not think we are. Indeed, as we contemplate what has happened to the world (what has been accomplished by our species) since Husserl's time, his alarm at the apparent unstoppable of the career of the the natural sciences, and at the lack of insight into humanity available from the *Geisteswissenschaften*, has been more than justified. We seem to be in the dire situation of the sorcerer's apprentice as we continue to unleash forces we cannot control - and I would attribute this to the logic of the natural attitude. Most scientists, even philosophers of science, do not think of themselves as working within an out-dated metaphysics: many are unaware of the effects of Cartesianism on the history of science. But at the back of this amazing socio-cultural construct which

is western scientific thought and procedure is an unacknowledged idealism. That is to say what the scientist knows (can explain) is taken as true in a way that experience (e.g. of the patient with unusual symptoms) is not. The mental construction takes precedence over the intrusive negation from the real world, that is until a new model is developed which can take account of the discrepancies. And these would be discrepancies in the continuant. (In Buber's terms, there would only be a change in the It-world, no breakthrough of the I-Thou. But Macmurray's articulation of the problem seems to give us more to work with than does Buber's poetic account.) 'The rationality of any mode of reflection lies in its reference to the Other' (*P.R.*, p. 181) and as is the tenor of both Macmurray and this piece of writing, ignoring the Other is not without very serious consequences. Scientific thought which forgets this may be guilty of what J. L. Austin referred to as:

Perhaps the original sin by which the philosopher casts himself out of the garden of the world we live in.³¹

And if, in embracing objectivity, scientists don't think of themselves as personally involved it is not surprising they are not aware of their own contribution to what is happening in the world. Oddly enough, Husserlian phenomenology has been castigated as solipsistic, because of its emphasis on taking (subjective) experience seriously (and perhaps because of the convoluted account of our perception of others in *Cartesian Meditations*.³²) My interpretation, on the contrary, is that through his diagnosis of the natural attitude he enables us to identify the cancer of solipsism at the heart of western thought. For Macmurray the thinker, knower or Subject is a negative moment in personal experience, an abstraction from the Self. If it is taken as the Self as such, as in our theoretical tradition, it must be conceived as totally isolated, not part of the world at all, locked into Descartes' *Cogito*. And if, which is impossible, my existence were that of

an isolated self, the existence of any Other would have to be proved, and it could not be proved. (S.A., p. 17)

One of the paradoxes of solipsism, of course, is that it is illogical to articulate it since that implies language and a community to argue with, so in a sense it can never be seriously intended as a theory. But that doesn't mean it has no meaning - indeed my point is that what it means underlies a great deal of what passes for knowledge. Merleau-Ponty says of solipsism, that if it were a true solipsism, it would not know that it is isolated, would be unaware that it is alone, would presuppose the absolute inexistence of

others.³³ And so of course it could not be challenged, not that is by the Other as a Self. (Strictly speaking, the Subject is not a Self, and that is why there is a problem in the first place.)

The capacity for self-negation, due to the 'practical contradiction' between the elements of the self, means that the integrity of the self can be compromised. Not in a clinical sense (although cf. n.15), but as Heidegger or Sartre would put it, in an ontological sense. The effect of this, for Macmurray, is seen in the example of self-deception, or in existential terms, 'bad faith.' In the natural attitude as I have been describing it, we are in bad faith to the extent that we regard changes in the world due to technology or economics as part of the continuant; we tune out what we are doing, our responsibility for our actions. From an objective ('scientific') point of view there are no actions, only events; no intentions, only causes. To think of ourselves as not responsible when clearly it is people who are doing stuff is a classic example of Sartre's notion of bad faith: treating oneself as In-itself, an object whose behavior is caused, rather than acknowledging the responsibility of being For-itself, with the openness to the future this entails. For Sartre the contradiction within the Self is fraught with anxiety³⁴ (as also for Kierkegaard and the Heidegger of *Being and Time*) which we are continually tempted to avoid in bad faith. But in Macmurray's terms, it would be the possibility of bad faith that sustains and constitutes good faith which is not, then, the rare and precious exception implied by Sartre. It is not essential to an existentialist position to be caught in the old dualism. Simone de Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty both appreciate the phenomenological descriptions in *Being and Nothingness*, but they regard them as documenting only the phenomenon of bad faith, and therefore not to be taken as a complete account of human existence. This brings me to a reflection on my earlier discussion of the practice of phenomenology. I have been implying that at least in some circumstances one who adopts the natural attitude is in bad faith. As a Subject that regards itself as detached from its objects, one would be abstracting from one's personal existence. What the phenomenological reduction calls for is an effort to undo that abstraction and in restoring the integrity of the person involved (as a participant in the phenomenological exercise I described, for example), reunite thinking and agency so as to be brought back into genuine interaction with the real world and other persons. By setting aside our presuppositions, we can open ourselves up to the richness of what there is to be experienced - which had previously been

edited to fit the limited 'objective' perspective. Doing phenomenology together generates an atmosphere of trust, because only when we are willing to let down our guard can all our discoveries be shared in good faith. But this is not a transformation of character such that everyone who participates suddenly becomes (existentially) authentic, and is responsive in an I-Thou moment. It is however the immediate effect of the bracketing of the assumption of causality, which was the framework through which (*pace* Kant) we thought we had to interpret everything. It is the acknowledgement of the personal. By simply getting people to pay attention to everything they experience without deciding what it is, what caused it, they are at once conscious of the way existence precedes essence - not in Sartre's somewhat heavy moral sense (Sartre, *Ex*) - but in the way Merleau-Ponty describes in *The Phenomenology of Perception*.³⁵ All of this was always going on but we have been encouraged to discount this level of existence and overlook it as irrelevant. Whereas in fact, it is, and has had to be the background from which the Subject/continuant perspective has been abstracted. All that is needed is for that abstraction to be recognized as such, and what I named as the bad faith of the impersonal ('natural') attitude could be addressed. I do not want to be taken as arguing that scientists as a group and the society which pays them to do their work are guilty of lying to themselves, as such. I am thinking more along the lines of what Lewis Gordon has called 'institutional bad faith'. In his *Bad Faith and Anti-Black Racism* ³⁶ Gordon explains how 'weak bad faith' is allowed to become the norm in a society, resulting for example in what is called 'unaware racism'. He also gives an illuminating account of the bad faith inherent in believing one is in good faith (pp. 50-63) - in Macmurray's terminology, somehow evading the contradiction endemic in the personal (the self existing through self-negation: 'I am not what I am and I am what I am not.')

It may be important to connect this discussion of good and bad faith with another context to which faith is relevant, namely Macmurray's discussion of religion. He thinks one of the main problems of our time is not the work of scientists themselves but rather the unthinking attitude of non-scientists (and of scientists while not engaged in scientific pursuits) who accord such authority to 'Science' that it has in effect become a substitute religion. When Merleau-Ponty refers to the same phenomenon, he calls it 'scientism.' (Interesting in this context is Husserl's comment that the phenomenological reduction can be experienced as a kind of religious

Eleanor M. Godway: *The Crisis of the Personal: Macmurray, Postmodernism, and the Challenge of Philosophy Today* conversion C.E.S., p. 112.) What is of interest here is not so much Macmurray's own religious position but rather the role of faith in the possibility of understanding the world according to the logic of the personal. As opposed to the World-as-means and the World-as-end, Macmurray envisages us as participating in the World-as-one-action and he identifies this attitude as religious.³⁷ Because, as personal, this is a matter of intention and not a matter of fact it is inherently problematic. While he himself is not a mystic (as evidenced in his *Search for Reality in Religion*), he believes rational religion will entail commitment to a conception of God which would express the highest aspirations of personal life, and God would be the Agent to whom we can attribute the intention we are to accomplish. I do not think this is bound to be the case; Macmurray's vision is, anyway, of a community of persons positively related to one another - and perhaps what matters is recognizing the World-as-one-action, and accepting it as *ours*.³⁸ But the link between the logic of the personal, phenomenology and faith surely has a spiritual dimension.³⁹

5. A new epistemology: the contingency of meaning and truth

The natural attitude is not simply self deception – but both owe their possibility to the problematic character of the personal: as its logical form must represent a necessary unity of positive and negative (S.A. p. 98), there is always that practical contradiction between the elements of the Self. The integrity of the Self is inherently at risk - it exists through self-negation. This may have an ominous sound, and as I suggested in my references to Heidegger and Sartre it could be taken that way. Then 'the crisis of the personal' would mean that the personal would always (and only) be experienced as crisis, as well as what I think Macmurray intended, namely, that we as persons are facing a crisis which we need to come to terms with, and for which we need to be able to develop the means for reflecting on what to do about what we are up against. But while there are dangers inherent in this precarious unity of the Self, as we have seen in the example of the natural attitude and its relation to solipsism, it is the relation, the tension, between positive and negative which makes it possible to become conscious, human and rational, at all; to become, a person, a Self. It was important for me to spell out the approach of phenomenology and introduce the concept of the reduction because by its means we can go back, as it were, and explore not only the constitution of the personal, but also its roots in the pre-personal and thus what goes into what we are, so that we may handle our current crises with some

insight into what we bring with us. The point of the reduction, as discussed above, is to enable us to set aside the natural attitude and to take account of our actual experience with as few taken for granted assumptions as possible. But though the change of attitude from the natural to the phenomenological can be recognized and its effects taken into account, what one learns from the reduction is not a once-for-all accomplishment. The works of the later Husserl and the career of phenomenology at the hands of his interpreters (and the existential 'dissidents') led Merleau-Ponty to conclude that 'the most important lesson which the reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction.' (*P.P.*, p. xiv.) In Macmurray's terms, the positive is always and only possible (accessible) when it is limited and sustained by the negative. And so whatever insight we gain into ourselves will always be both limited and sustained by what we do not know. In other words, something like the reduction needs to happen again and again, so that the Other, what 'negates' us, is not routinely made familiar and assimilated into a habitual, taken for granted, aspect of the Self. Whereas Macmurray saw how habit becomes the negative, an unconscious background that sustains the positive of conscious action, Merleau-Ponty is especially interested in the way new meaning emerges as a disruption, a dislocation of what has become routine, as a new form emerges against a background of what itself was once new meaning. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, he traces this pattern in movement, perception, emotion, speech, culture and art, morality, social life, politics and history. Meaning as positive, comes into existence against a background of what now no longer has meaning. At a pre-verbal level it may be a question of motives rather than intentions, and intentions themselves can become habits which form a background needed for new directions of activity, expressions of meaning. The phenomenological reduction can allow us to undo layers of what has been accomplished this way, and enable further horizons of experience, meaning and non-meaning, to come into focus.

Relations with other people are particularly important for Macmurray and Merleau-Ponty because, as both realize, human existence is inherently social. We become aware of ourselves by recognizing that we are not someone else, and that is why the pre-personal is important. Both Merleau-Ponty and Macmurray (*P.R.* p. 60) insist that there is pre-linguistic communication, and Merleau-Ponty describes what he calls *la vie à plusieurs*, ('undifferentiated group life' - or 'life lived by several',⁴⁰ that is, the infant's participation in social life before it has any sense of its own identity

or point of view. It discovers who it is by negation, as Macmurray would say. Husserl also, towards the end of his career, noted that the I-you, (first-person – second-person) relationship is the primordial beginning of human awareness (*E.J.*, p.14). All these explorations depend on the phenomenological commitment to follow the logic of the experience from within the relationship, to respond to the person-to-be and not assume either a causal (empiricist) or an intellectualist perspective (which would imply that the meaning/self/intention is already present in the child). The emergence of the next level of meaning is in a way ‘autochthonous’, it comes to be out of the tension in the situation, the vital energy between positive and negative elements which brings forth something that could not have been foreseen. The viability of each new birth of meaning is not guaranteed, there is no built-in promise of success though there is what one might call the direction of hope, towards the positive which takes shape against the negative, integration over disintegration. Merleau-Ponty says of the emergence of meaning, which he calls expression, that it is like a step taken in the fog, no one can tell if it will lead anywhere (*S.N.S.* p. 3). Neither is there any guarantee that a universal agreement will ever be reached: there is no over-arching logos to assure us that there will be a resolution of our difficulties. As the rationality of any mode of reflection lies in its reference to the Other, we are at the mercy of the Other, so to speak, in our effort *be* rational. As we must keep rediscovering, we are in the domain of the problematic.

I mentioned Luce Irigaray at the beginning of the paper because I have learned to do phenomenology differently because of her. She has helped me to handle being Other to men, to philosophy, and encouraged me to move beyond the taken-for-granted definition of woman as opposed to man. The part she plays in this tradition has opened up the possibility, indeed revealed the likelihood, that the experience of women may (for whatever reason) be different from that of men. She says that sexual difference may be *the* issue of our age,⁴¹ the one issue we must all think through, if we are to make it. I believe that she is bringing up the problematic of the personal in a way that Macmurray would endorse. In two essays,⁴² ‘The Personal Life’ and ‘The Virtue of Chastity’ he struggles with his awareness that women have not been seen as persons, and in his religious quest (*S.R.R.*) it is the ‘sex question’ that for him was one of the most important problems for the Church. And if we get to the point at which there can be a personal (mutually respectful) friendship without a power imbalance, I

believe both men and women will be able to rethink their relationship with each other and the world.⁴³ It is possible to understand our culture’s sexism as a reflection of mind/body dualism: men are ‘mind’ and women are ‘body,’ thus distorting the capacity of both men and women to come to terms with themselves and each other as persons. And both points of view are needed, so that, as in binocular vision, another dimension of truth may come into focus. There are analogous points to be made about racism and other forms of oppression. The perspectives of all must be taken into account for us to know where we are going. De Beauvoir⁴⁴ and Sartre (*Ex*) say that I cannot be free as long as any other human being is not: I cannot will my own freedom without willing freedom for all. I think that this insight can be integrated with Macmurray’s thought: to aspire to be fully human, a person, to be rational in Macmurray’s sense, is to commit to the human community, and then there can be concrete meaning in the idea of the World-as-one-action - the action of all of us together.

Finally something about Derrida and deconstruction. One thing about Derrida that has sometimes been misunderstood, I think by critics and fans alike, is how much he identifies with the phenomenological project. I have already suggested that his work can cause people to experience a sense of disorientation, such as happens in my exercise in phenomenology. Actually almost all his writing was intended to be understood within the *epoche*. (In fact I heard him say bemusedly, if people read him without knowing that, he doesn’t see how they could make sense of his work - it must seem nonsensical!⁴⁵) The point of the *epoche* was to develop a perspective from which to take account of ourselves and what we are doing. As we practice the *epoche* and keep undergoing the reduction we become more and more aware of how the contingencies of our situation have contributed to how we think of our Selves (as well as how we make sense of everything else.) Phenomenology does not remove us from the world, it makes clearer the ways in which we and the world are co-constituted. Post-modernism’s lack of faith in the Subject, is I think an inevitable result of our having had to realize how fragile our rationality is, and how irrational it is to rely on it. Deconstruction is a special kind of withdrawal, a process which lets us open the door to all the ways in which what we say and do has meanings we did not realize. Like the phenomenological reduction, it is not so much something you do as something that happens to you. You can resist it, but you can also allow it to affect you and both what you mean (consciously), what is

Eleanor M. Godway: *The Crisis of the Personal: Macmurray, Postmodernism, and the Challenge of Philosophy Today* meant through you (by the structures you are part of) and how you 'read' the meaning around you. You are implicated in all of these. And as all meaning contains meaning-less-ness as a constituent element, the security of Subject as detached knower is gone forever. Thus Derrida often writes in such a way that his writing deconstructs itself as we try to pull out of it a univocal meaning. He is struck by what Macmurray noticed, that we cannot tell the truth unless we can also lie; similarly words cannot be understood unless they can be misunderstood, and there is no final correct reading of any text or any situation. Remember Macmurray's point that the paradigm case of knowledge is knowing another person. In this context truth is not an issue of facts or even exactly honesty, but a true friendship is one which is open so both can grow, which can handle the problematic, deal with 'the undecidable in the face of which decision must be risked.'⁴⁶ And Derrida's phrase for the possibility of intending the world community, in which we are all positively motivated towards one another is the 'messianic structure'⁴⁷

One of my favorite interpreters of Derrida, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak describes deconstruction as 'a radical acceptance of vulnerability.'⁴⁸ This vulnerability is not weakness, or something to be regretted. It is the price of openness, the reference to the Other which is what makes it possible for us to learn anything at all. Acceptance of it means we respond to each moment profoundly aware that our response is never adequate, our words and values are all infected by what she calls catachresis.⁴⁹ The crisis of the personal is not one that can be overcome, so that we can resolve it and get on with the task of philosophy. It is the problematic situation that being a person *is*. Spivak has harsh words to say of those who practice 'crisis management', who seek to mask or evade the vulnerability we are heir to. (*P.C.C.*, pp. 95-112.) Postmodernism, then, is not comparable, and superior, to modernism, on some kind of linear scale, better able to take account of things overlooked by earlier efforts ('managing' the 'problems' of dualism, sexism, ethnocentrism, even logocentrism and onto-theology.) It doesn't replace modernism so much as enable us to see through it,⁵⁰ so that the negative constituent is not covered over, the risk is not denied, in all that we undertake to say and do, in this 'modern' world into which we have been thrust.

My reference to the challenge of philosophy, in the subtitle of this essay, like the phrase, crisis of the personal, exhibits (one might almost say catachrestically) an ambiguity in the meaning of 'of.' For Macmurray, philosophy herself faces a challenge, namely to find and articulate a logical

form adequate to the personal (as opposed to the logic of substance or the organic.) But also and at the same time, philosophy, as it begins to witness to the dilemmas of the post modern era, challenges us to acknowledge that we are persons, selves (not subjects), agents, and as such are ourselves the locus of the crisis, the turning point, the knife edge, where things could go either way. Derrida, *pace* many critics, believes he is on the side of reason, he too wants to save the Enlightenment: he is singularly aware of how gravely it is at risk. But it can never be saved once and for all. Such as we can salvage depends on acknowledging as much as we can of what we do not know that underlies our tentative grasp of what we think we know. Because Macmurray understands that awareness of darkness is due to recognition of light (as the negative constitutes and sustains the positive), there is a way out of the despair, the sense of anomie in some postmodern thought⁵¹. Although truth *is* problematic, should be written '~~truth~~', in friendship and in philosophy, it is that for the sake of which we take the next step.

Notes

1. I am grateful to Harry Carson for the encouragement to write this essay, and for extensive comments on earlier drafts.
2. *Interpreting the Universe*, first published 1933, reprinted by Humanities Press 1996, p. 11 f. Hereafter cited as I.U. (References to this and other texts are to later editions.)
3. Practitioners of what Macmurray called 'logical empiricism', who were developing what has come to be known as analytic philosophy. This school of thought has become dominant in many Anglo-American universities. See below p.17f, and n.26.
4. *The Boundaries of Science: a Study in the Philosophy of Psychology*. London: Faber 1939, p. 40 ff.
5. *The Structure of Religious Experience*, London: Faber 1936, p. 9. Hereafter cited as *S.R.E.*
6. Vol. I, *The Self as Agent* (henceforth cited as *S.A.*) and Vol. II, *Persons in Relation (P.R.)*, both republished by Humanities Books, 1991.
7. Such that a brilliant philosopher like Donald Davidson ties himself in knots with his 'anomalous monism'. See especially his *Essays on Actions and Events*, Oxford University Press, 1980
8. See *The Logic of Hegel*, trans. W. Wallace, Oxford University Press, 1959. He did not intend to offer an alternative to mathematical logic, which is based on the law of contradiction (or the excluded middle), but rather develop a way to identify an underlying structure of meaning, to make sense of life.
9. But cf. his caveat: 'The influence of the old assumptions is pervasive and unformulated. [...] It is

- only to be expected, therefore, that I have carried over much from the old order that should have been left behind and that my tentative theorizing will be found liable, at many points, to the objection that it still presupposes what it purports to reject.' (S.A., p. 14.)
10. Macmurray felt a close affinity with Kierkegaard, particularly as regards religion. Cf. *Search for Reality in Religion*, first published, London, Allen and Unwin, 1965; reissued London, Quaker Home Service, 1995; p. 24; hereafter cited as *S.R.R.*
 11. See John MacQuarrie's *Existentialism*, London: Penguin Books, 1972, esp. pp. 93 ff. Macmurray's evaluation was that although existentialism makes it a point to confront and express the crisis, it lacked the analysis and rigor needed 'to discover or construct the intellectual form of the personal, [because] the organic concept of the Self has not been overcome' (S.A. p. 145 n.), existentialism can come across to a large extent as a version of romanticism, emphasizing the plight of the isolated individual whose projects are 'doomed to frustration and...meaninglessness' (p. 222.) To the extent that he is right, existentialism can only be a reflection on reaction rather than on action; in which case, it would make sense for its general mood to be despair. As Sartre put it, 'Man is a useless passion' (*Being and Nothingness*, Washington Square Press, 1969, p. 784; hereafter cited as B.N.) As long as the crisis is seen as 'merely personal' in a narrow sense, it is not possible to see beyond it, to envisage a logical form adequate to the task set by the personal, for persons - for us, as 'persons in relation.' See p. 11 below.
 12. Macmurray is quite conscious of how close his ideas are to those of Martin Buber (*S.R.R.*, p. 24). See Buber's *I and Thou*, trans. W. Kaufmann, Scribner's, 1970, and *Between Man and Man*, trans. R. G. Smith, Macmillan, 1965. Also *John Macmurray, a Biography* by John E. Costello, Floris Books, 2002, p. 322. Hereafter cited as *J.M.B.*
 13. Macmurray expresses this 'logic' somewhat cryptically as the positive constituted and sustained by the negative, and refers to Kierkegaard's account of 'a dialectic without a synthesis'. See *S.A.*, p. 98 ff. We will come back to the place of emotion (motive) in this first and all subsequent experiences of knowledge at the end of this section. For an account of the mother-child relationship see *P.R.*, Chapter II.
 14. See for example *Thought and Language*, Lev Semenovich Vygotsky, trans. E. Haufman and G. Vakov, Cambridge, M. I. T, 1962, and *Learning How to Mean*, M. A. K. Halliday, London: Edward Arnold, 1975. Both these investigators document the development of the young child's instrumental thinking and speaking as at first separate from the already established way of communicating with others by expression of feelings, etc.
 15. Of course, people who really believe this and act on it are in serious trouble, and may be diagnosed as schizophrenic. (See R.D. Laing, *The Divided Self*, Pelican Books, 1965, p. 65 ff and *passim*; Laing also makes reference to Macmurray on p. 23.) Macmurray's comment is 'I think, therefore I am not'! (*Cogito ergo non-sum*, S.A., p. 81.)
 16. The first, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N.Kemp Smith, Macmillan, 1965; the third, *The Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. H. Bernard, Hafner, 1968. But Macmurray cites the second, *The Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. T. K. Abbot. London: Longmans, 1909, as giving priority to agency, even if he cannot make it consistent with his overall system. (See *S.A.*, ch II)
 17. 'The reflective element in contemplation is an emotional activity' *P.R.*, p. 35.
 18. In *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. B. Baillie, Harper and Row, 1967.
 19. Communism did seem to hold out hope, and Macmurray appreciated Marx for replacing the theoretical perspective with the practical call for change in the real world, but sees him still as caught in the logic of the organic (*S.A.* p. 97.) He put much effort into supporting Christian Socialism (see *J.M.B.*, almost *passim*, but especially ch.13).
 20. See *John Macmurray in a Nutshell* by David A. S. Ferguson, Handsell Press, 1992, p. 21 (and n. 68 p. 26).
 21. *Ideen I, II, and III*, originally written circa 1912, and extensively revised over nearly two decades. (*Ideen I*, English version, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book*, trans. F. Kersten, Martinus Nijhoff, 1983, hereafter cited as *I I*.) *Cartesian Meditations* trans. D. Cairns, Kluwer, 1988.
 22. Written 1934-37. Trans. D. Carr, Northwestern University Press 1970. Hereafter cited as *C.E.S.*
 23. Cf. *I.U.*, p. 57, where Macmurray refers approvingly to Bergson on 'the function of the intellect [which] is to deal with matter.' He is most likely thinking of *The Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. T. E. Hulme, Macmillan 1955.
 24. *Signs*, trans. R.C. McCleary, Northwestern University Press, 1964, p. 165. Hereafter cited as *S. Merleau-Ponty's*. debt to Husserl is discussed at length in the essay from which I have just quoted - 'The Philosopher and his Shadow', pp. 159 - 181 where he reflects on the 'unthought-of' element in Husserl's work, what one might call the qualitative infinity of the horizons that participating in phenomenology opens up.
 25. This is why Dr. Johnson kicking the stone in refutation of Berkeley's idealism, though it doesn't touch Berkeley's argument which still rankles in the history of philosophy.
 26. So there is no way to resolve the paradox of the 'brain in the vat', and according to Macmurray, this is a dead end, philosophically speaking, since 'the rationality of any mode of reflection lies in its reference to the Other' (*P.R.*, p. 181.) As long as epistemology seeks a 'foundation' for knowledge, it is stuck in a substance-ontology. Macmurray (like phenomenology) allows us to recognize (as the experimental scientist knows in practice) that factual knowledge is always open to revision.
 27. I developed this practice from an exercise used by Herbert Spiegelberg in the Phenomenology Workshop

- which I attended in St. Louis, MO. July 1971. See Spiegelberg's *The Phenomenological Movement*, Martinus Nijhoff, 1969, Vol II, ch. XVI, and Don Ihde, *Experimental Phenomenology*, State University of New York Press, 1986, for more background.
28. I regard this as a hands-on version of what Husserl describes as the method of 'free imaginative variation:' See I.I., sec.4, and sect.70.) Spiegelberg described as a 'baroque' philosophy, which brings forth more and more details and refinements – in other words, the opposite of reductionism, which leaves so much out. And as Macmurray explains, immediate experience is continually changing (I.U., p. 8).
 29. The route Husserl himself took (via various attempts at reduction) brought him to the recognition that what he originally called the 'Transcendental Ego' is better understood as 'transcendental intersubjectivity' (C.E.S.) The way the reduction can put us in touch with pre-predicative, pre-personal experience comes up in section IV.
 30. *Sense and Non-Sense*, H.L. and P.A. Drefuss, trans., Northwestern University Press, 1964, p. 93. (Hereafter cited as *S.N.S.*)
 31. *Philosophical Papers*, Oxford, 1979, p. 90. There are other links one might make between Austin and Macmurray, such as respect for ordinary language, and the general approach to clarifying what one is doing when one speaks. Cf. the whole gamut of 'performatives.'
 32. As more of his manuscripts are being transcribed and published, the emphasis on embodiment and the lived world becomes greater, beginning with *Experience and Judgment*, trans. J.S. Churchill and K. Ameviks, Northwestern University Press 1973. Hereafter cited as *E.J.*
 33. *Texts and Dialogues*, eds, H. J. Silverman and J. Barry Jr., Humanities Press, 1992, p. 165.
 34. *Existentialism*, trans. B. Frechtman, New York Philosophical Library, 1947. Hereafter cited as *Ex.*
 35. Trans. C. Smith, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962. Hereafter cited as *P.P.*
 36. Humanities Press, 1995, pp. 45-48.
 37. Macmurray was not a theologian, though there has been much attention given to his ideas by theologians. His account of 'religion' is focused on the kind of social bond which can enhance personal life by addressing the negative (fear), rather than a concern with defining God. See *P.R.*, Ch 7 and 10.
 38. See my forthcoming article 'The World as One Action', in *International Studies in Philosophy*, 40, 1, (Spring 2010.)
 39. Cf. my article 'Faith and Knowledge in Crisis...' in *Listening: a Journal of Religion and Culture* (a special issue on the topic 'Crisis of Faith in the Western World') Spring, 1992.
 40. 'The Child's relation with Others', in *The Primacy of Perception*, ed. J. M. Edie, Northwestern University Press, 1964, p. 119.
 41. *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. C. Burke and G. C. Gill, Cornell University Press, 1993, p 5.
 42. Originally talks given on the B.B.C. in the 1930s, and reprinted in *Reason and Emotion*, Humanities Books, 1962.
 43. See my article, 'Phenomenology and the Frontiers of Experience: Merleau-Ponty and Irigaray', in *Historical Reflections*, Vol. 19, no. 1, Winter, 1993.
 44. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. B. Frechtman, Citadel Press, 1996.
 45. At the Spindel Conference on Derrida and Husserl, Memphis TE, Sept. 1992.
 46. A condensation of Derrida's moves in a number of writings but especially in 'The Almost Nothing of the Unpresentable' in *Points...Interviews 1974-94*, ed., Elisabeth Weber, Stanford University Press, 1995.
 47. *In Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Routledge, 1994, Derrida, discusses 'messianism' (without a messiah) pp. 21, 28, 167ff - a matter of intention, not fact.
 48. *The Post-Colonial Critic*, Routledge, 1990; hereafter cited as *P.C.C.*, p.18.
 49. *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, Routledge, 1993, p 127. In the context cited, Spivak is applying it to 'woman', but as she discusses it there, it is apparent that it illustrates a theme which is almost ubiquitous in deconstruction. Let me here give you an earlier attempt by me and my colleague to come to terms with it: 'Catachresis means that there is no literal referent for a particular word; that its definition comes apart as soon as we begin to articulate it. This deconstructive awareness of the play of signification does not empty our language [and lives] of meaning, but rather precipitates us into a crisis of value which calls for an increased circumspection about values, and responsibility for what is done and said in their name.' *Who is this 'We'?* by Eleanor M. Godway and Geraldine Finn (Black Rose Books, 1994), p 2. One way this is conveyed by Derrida, following Heidegger, is to write the word crossed out, namely, ~~Truth~~, and refer to it as 'under erasure'.
 50. 'See through it' in at least two senses, namely, that we recognize its distortions, and that we accept it as part of what makes us what we are, appreciating that it is what has allowed us to see at all.
 51. Cairns Craig in *Intending Scotland* (Edinburgh University Press, 2009), chapter IV, 'Beyond Reason: Hume, Seth, Macmurray and Scotland's Postmodernity' situates Macmurray's thought in relation to such postmodernists. Central to his account is the influential text *The Postmodern Condition* (Jean-Francois Lyotard, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi: Manchester University Press, 1984.) While his essay is concerned with the history of ideas and literary analysis, Craig's insights are quite relevant here. If for Lyotard postmodernity is a 'condition', and, as Craig puts it, the authors in question have gone back to Kant's 'Sublime', it would seem they are caught in Macmurray's Organic (see p.10 above). (Perhaps some like MacIntyre are struggling towards the Personal (p. 177n.) but it is still in terms of an organic model.)

UNDERSTANDING AND BEING-IN-THE-WORLD IN POLANYI'S PHILOSOPHY OF KNOWING

Tihamér Margitay

Abstract

In this paper, I am going to discuss certain existential aspects of Polanyi's philosophy in the light of the Heideggerian existential hermeneutics as it is expounded in *Being and Time*.

Key words

Heidegger, Polanyi

1. Introduction

It has been pointed out by many that Polanyi's theory of personal knowledge and human existence is akin, in many and fundamental ways, to Heidegger's theory of understanding and being. See, for instance, Yu Zhenhua's recent and excellent paper on 'Being-in-the-World – in a Polanyian Perspective'. Indeed, Polanyi himself claims that 'All understanding is based upon our dwelling in the particulars of that which we comprehend. Such indwelling is ... Heidegger's *being-in-the-world*.' (Polanyi 1964: 10-11).

I shall argue that Polanyi is simply wrong claiming that indwelling is being-in-the-world. This is false not because of the differences in the niceties of their philosophies. Of course, there is no perfect conceptual correspondence in theoretical systems of such stature. I claim that the identity does not hold because of some *fundamental differences* of the two concepts. I will highlight three of them. Obviously, I do not deny that there are common points to Heidegger and Polanyi, and that it is illuminating and fruitful to reveal these points. I too, will proceed from the similarities and use this opportunity to introduce some of Polanyi's key concepts that will be necessary to support my thesis when I turn to the fundamental differences.

My method of exposition is as follows. I will interpret Polanyi in the light of Heidegger's *Being and Time*, and in order to observe the required length, it will be assumed that Heidegger's fundamental ideas are widely known, and they will be only briefly discussed. The second methodological point is that I will use the expression 'tacit knowing' as referring to the same thing under different descriptions as 'personal knowing'.

2. Background: Tacit Knowing

Let me summarize briefly Polanyi's theory of tacit knowing.

His theory *proceeds from* Gestalt psychology, and the paradigm example of knowing, for Polanyi, is pattern recognition. A pattern, a face, for example, is recognized on the basis of many of its details, but the

face is more than the sum of these details. The particulars are integrated into a holistic form, and they possess meaning only in their contribution to the form, that is, they are *subsidiary* components of the *focal* whole. When focusing our attention on a comprehensive entity, we are only subsidiarily aware of its parts.

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 a new focal whole. '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)

According to Polanyi, this structure characterizes all kinds of our cognitive and creative efforts including both propositional and nonpropositional knowledge (knowing that and knowing how) (PK: 56) That is, perception, observation, acquisition of skills, language use, learning, use of tools and instruments, craftsmanship, theorizing and verification of theories etc. etc. all have this same structure. (KB: 128)

The selection of the relevant subsidiary components and their integration are the tacit constituents of knowledge, and they determine our knowledge. Polanyi mentions various tacit components influencing the acquired pattern such as the details of the comprehensive entity, the physiological processes of our body, our previous experience, the skills we have, our language, the tradition we inherited, our social circumstances etc. In addition to these, our intellectual passions, our values, notably the commitment to truth have also a crucial role to play in the formation of knowledge.

As it is clear by now, knowledge is not passive representation. It is the result of the active contribution of the knowing person.

3. Hermeneutical Understanding and Tacit Knowing

Polanyi's tacit knowing resembles in many ways to the hermeneutical understanding described in *Being and Time*. Both are processes rather than results. Both are holistic and interpretative and make sense of the world. Polanyi emphasises, for instance, that we see some dozens of pebbles arranged appropriately *as* a message on the ground, and it is not in the physical arrangement of the pebbles itself.

(PK: 33-34, 36) And what we make of the physical arrangement of pebbles is the function of the tacit constituents, the interpretative framework we have. (PK: 57-8)

Both tacit knowing and hermeneutical understanding have a circular character. Two kinds of circle can be reconstructed from Polanyi's theory. According to him every knowing, especially every discovery starts with a problem. '[T]he efforts of perception are evoked by scattered features of raw experience suggesting the presence of a hidden pattern which will make sense of the experience. Such a suggestion, if true, is itself knowledge, the kind of foreknowledge we call a good problem.' (KB: 117) This foreknowledge guides our efforts to find further clues and a creative way of their integration. Then the discovery becomes part of the background knowledge that leads our next knowing efforts. This is the general circularity well known from hermeneutics. We revise our foreknowledge in the light of later results. However, this is not the only circularity for Polanyi as it is clear from his description of inductive discovery. 'Successful induction can be conducted only in the light of a genuine problem. An inductive problem is an intimation of coherence among hitherto uncomprehended particulars... . Such surmise vaguely anticipates the *evidence* which will support it and guides the mind ... to the discovery of this evidence. This usually proceeds stepwise, the original problem and the surmise being modified and corrected by each new piece of evidence, a process which is repeated until eventually some generalization is accepted as final.' (KB:131, my italics) This second circle supplies the evidence to justify that we understand correctly what is in front of us. This has two consequences. First, the understanding some particulars *as* something is self-justificatory and, second, the application of tacit knowing in general, is self-justificatory. The self-justificatory aspect of circularity is also implicitly present in Heidegger's account.

Finally, we should note a further common facet of tacit knowing and hermeneutical understanding. One of Heidegger's major contributions to philosophy is that he extends hermeneutics to ontology. Hermeneutics is not only the means of understanding texts and actions, but also central to ontology in two ways. Philosophers understand being, Dasein's being in particular by hermeneutics, *and* Dasein understands its being by hermeneutics as well. Furthermore, 'it is constitutive of the being of Da-sein ... that Da-sein understands itself in its being.' (Heidegger 1996:10, in Stambaugh's translation) 'True, it belongs to its [the Dasein's]

most proper being to have an understanding of this being...'. (Heidegger 1996:13, in Stambaugh's translation) Dasein's being is 'an understanding being', so to say, that is, it is a kind of being that understands itself. Consequently, hermeneutical understanding *is* Dasein's being.

The ontological aspect of tacit knowing is present also by Polanyi. 'As to man, we may say that his whole universe of feelings, just as his entire human intelligence, is evoked by the articulated heritage to which he is apprenticed.' (SM: 34-35) To put it simply, we learn, we understand the world by tacit knowing and then we are largely what we know. The knowledge and the existence of an individual have a two way relation. On the one hand, what we know constitutes the framework of our existence 'The knowledge of a comprehensive entity is an understanding, an indwelling' (SM: 65-66) On the other hand, existence is the framework of our knowing 'To this extent knowing is indwelling: that is a utilization of a framework for unfolding our understanding in accordance with the indications and standards imposed by the framework.' (KB: 134)

Indwelling by Polanyi is understood in the sense as we dwell in our body and as we extend it by tools. 'We use instruments as an extension of our hands and they may serve also as an extension of our senses. [e.g., a probe] We assimilate them to our body by pouring ourselves into them.' (KB: 131) Insofar as our existence is the framework of our knowledge, we dwell in this framework, that is, we dwell in all the tacit constituents that shape our knowledge.

4. Being-in-the-World is not Indwelling

Now, armed with these bits of Polanyi's theory, I am prepared to defend my thesis: Polanyi is wrong at that indwelling is being-in-the-world.

Firstly, for Heidegger there is an ontological difference between the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand entities. Only the concept of the former is involved in the concept of being-in-the-world. Being-in-the-world is a single phenomenon, within which Dasein's primary relation to its environment is *a practical* dealing with. Tools and objects are ready-to-hand for the Dasein, it uses them, cares about them etc. Being-in-the-world is a practical engagement with the holistic world of the ready-to-hand entities through actions. Being-in-the-world is the primary mode of Dasein's existence, and its relation to ready-to-hand entities is utterly not theoretical. Dasein cannot *know* (in the usual sense of the word) entities while existing as being-in-the-world. Entities as *object* of observation, research and knowledge, present-at-hand entities as Heidegger calls them, emerge just as a result of the

breakdown of the holistic structure of being-in-the-world. An ontological gap separates the ready-to-hand entities from the present-at-hand entities and Dasein's two modes of being corresponding to them. Knowing (Welterkennen) 'must be conceived as a *modification of the primordial Being-in*' '... in knowing (Erkennen), Dasein achieves a new *status of being*' ... 'Knowing (Erkennen) is a mode of Dasein founded upon Being-in-the-world.' (Heidegger 1962: 90, Macquarrie and Robinson's translation) Dasein has a fundamentally different relationship to the two types of entities that makes both ontological and epistemological difference. Our existence is different when we deal with present-at-hand entities instead of ready-to-hand ones, that is for example, when we do science instead of using tools. And it is also fundamentally different how we approach the world in the two cases.

For Polanyi, there are no such gaps. From the point of view of the structure of knowing, the craftsmanship in a workshop – Heidegger's favourite example for being-in-the-world – is exactly the same as abstract theorizing and hypothesis testing in a research institute, and our indwelling is exactly the same in both cases. There is no ontological difference here in our existence, neither in the way how the world we approach exists. Our indwelling is the same irrespective of what we are dealing with, and what we are doing, hammering or checking a mathematical proof. Neither is there any epistemological difference between the two situations: the structure of our knowing is the same. The same tacit knowing is at work in both cases.

(Note that Heidegger's 'being-in-the-world' is intimately tied to his criticism of the mentalistic bias of former philosophies. They assumed that conscious reflection constitutes our primary relation to the world. One may wonder whether that was the reason why the concept of being-in-the-world excludes conscious reflection.)

The second essential difference between dwelling in and being-in-the-world is obvious from that dwelling in constitutes our existence *only together with breaking out*. There is no counterpart of the notion of breaking out in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. By Polanyi, it is an essential constituent of our existence that we can break out of the framework we live in. 'The construction of a framework which will handle experience on our behalf begins in the infant and culminates in the scientist. This endeavour *must* occasionally operate by demolishing a hitherto accepted structure, or parts of it, in order to establish an even more rigorous and comprehensive one in its place' (PK: 196, my italics).

Polanyi characterizes the acceptance of a new framework as a dramatic change in our life. He says: 'Such an acceptance is a heuristic process, a self-modifying act, and to this extent a conversion. ... They [who converted]... live in a different world...'(PK:151) Even everyday learning processes bring about such radical changes. For instance as a medical student learns how to diagnose a disease, '[h]e has entered a new world'. (PK: 101) In the present context, it is fair to interpret being-in-the-world as the basic structure – the framework, if you like – of our existence. However, such phenomenon as changing this basic structure is not discussed in *Being and Time*. Dasein cannot break out of the world he is thrown into. Although Dasein always has a space of possibilities to act and to change its life, this space is rather limited, and it is determined by and always stays within the world Dasein inherited.

The latter remark already points to the third difference between dwelling in and being-in-the-world. It springs from the way they are related to tradition, society and authenticity. Let us discuss briefly them. Both Heidegger and Polanyi teach that we inherit – biologically and socially – the basic structures of our existence, and so, we are 'thrown into' them. It is part of our authenticity that we accept these structures as our own. Heidegger emphasizes the historicity of Dasein and the ultimate power of the cultural social situation in which we are thrown. The individual life means very little on its own to change this situation. We enjoy the open space of possibilities only within the framework given to us. The existential choice of *Eigentlichkeit* (mistranslated as authenticity) is not (as for Kierkegaard and Nietzsche) to go against this framework and change it, but only to give it our personal affirmation, to accept it as our own. (hence the world 'Eigentlichkeit' literally meaning own-ness) Heidegger's Dasein is and must remain conservative.

Neither does Polanyi play down the value and the power of the inherited socio-cultural framework, but he also insists that it is one of the basic features of our existence that we can change this framework. A passionate and committed search for truth is also part of our authenticity. Intellectual passion fosters learning and creativity when combined with commitment. And creativity 'changes the world as we see it, by deepening our understanding of it. ... Having made a discovery, I shall never see the world again as before. Major discoveries change our interpretative framework.' (PK: 143) Thus we are committed to do our best to know the world, and this process brings about revolutionary changes

occasionally. However, after the discovery, the creative researcher has to have her discovery accepted by the community. In this process he will be driven by persuasive passion, and the rest of the community will understand and accept her radically new insights by means of similarly passionate and committed search for understanding what she knows. Discovery and the spread of the radically new knowledge are governed by the same mechanism of tacit knowing. To this, Polanyi adds only that 'Proponents of a new system can convince their audience only by first winning their intellectual sympathy' (PK: 151) By learning the new knowledge, the converted people form a new community, and, thereby, social acceptance is accomplished. The radical change of the framework of our existence is achieved by the joint efforts of the creative individuals and the rest of the society together. Polanyi firmly believes that the community of authentic people can achieve such radical reform of their tradition. There is no such aspect of authenticity in *Being and Time*. There is no such social mechanism, and there is no room for such change of tradition either in Heidegger's account.

Now we have found three essential differences between dwelling in and being-in-the-world. I would suggest that the root of these differences is to be found – at least in part – in the exemplars the two philosophers had. Heidegger observed the German farmers, craftsmen and tradesmen in small villages and towns and their community. He took their life as paradigm exemplars of human existence, and he set up his theory about the being of man on the basis of these experiences. For Polanyi, the paradigm exemplar of the knowing person is the genius of sciences and arts, and his exemplary community is the community of the elite intellectuals in a British gentlemen's club. It would be hard to imagine greater differences between social groups at the beginning of the XXth century than the differences dividing Heidegger's farmers from Polanyi's scientists. If we conceive their theories as descriptions of the life of the particular social groups and not as a theory of human existence in general then their accounts can be true even if they contradict to each other.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, I have discussed three reasons why it is wrong to identify Polanyi's notion of indwelling with Heidegger's concept of being-in-the-world. They were the following:

1. There is no ontological and epistemological difference by Polanyi like the differences involved by the distinction between ready-to-hand and present-at-hand entities.

2. For Polanyi, dwelling in characterizes the knower's existence only together with breaking out, and breaking out is equally fundamental. However, there is no way to break out of the way we are being-in-the-world. *Being and Time* contains no concept for radical existential change, because there is no radical change in the fundamental frameworks of Dasein's existence.

3. Dwelling in and breaking, on the one hand, and being-in-the-world on the other, are related to tradition, community and authenticity in fundamentally different ways in Heidegger's and in Polanyi's philosophy.

Finally, I suggested a soft explanation for these theoretical differences. Heidegger's and Polanyi's theory concerning our existence differ so fundamentally because they had chosen different types of persons whose existence served as an exemplar for their theories. The far reaching consequences of this choice also permeate and are ingrained in the whole philosophy of Heidegger and Polanyi.

It follows from these divergences that Polanyi's equation is false and also that we have to be very careful when trying to establish analogies and similarities between Polanyian and Heideggerian concepts.

Department of Philosophy and the History of Science,
Budapest University of Technology and Economics
margitay@phil.philos.bme.hu

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TAKING POLANYI'S CONCEPT OF *TACIT KNOWING* TO EPISODES OF INTUITIVE ACTING

Stefan Fothe

Abstract

Within this paper Polanyi's concept of *tacit knowing* is applied to episodes of experts' intuitive acting. At first, the distinction between two kinds of awareness is briefly summarised. Then, tacit knowing's triadic structure is contrasted with points of time without this particular structure. Building on this analysis, the creation of triads is modelled. Here, two processes are suggested to be twinned: *emergence* and *amalgamation*. It is argued that due to its incapability of amalgamation, no semantic value emerges solely in focal awareness. Rather, all knowing is either tacit or rooted in tacit knowing (Polanyi). Hence, our knowing is *non-formal*. Finally, the concept of tacit knowing is applied to episodes of intuitive acting. It is argued that non-triadic approaches cannot explain convincingly the emergence of phenomenological entities. For this purpose, the idea of subsidiary awareness with tacit knowing as its modus operandi turns out as crucial. Though Michael Polanyi provides primarily an enquiry into the nature of *scientific* knowledge (Polanyi 1998, p. vii), his work can be applied more broadly to psychological and pedagogical enquiries. This paper offers an exegesis of his concept of tacit knowing to episodes of experts' intuitive acting.

Keywords

Michael Polanyi, tacit knowing

NB All diagrams are to be found on pp. 28-9.

1. Intuitive acting of experts

Think of a surgeon in the midst of a surgery, of a teacher interacting with an unsatisfied class or of a psychotherapist exploring a client's depression. In the attempt to theorise these activities on expert-level, one can immediately reject that they are mere reflexes and automatisms. Mastery is far too sensible and flexible. On the other hand, episodes could be theorised as double acts of (first) thinking and (then) acting. While Ryle's analysis (2000) rejects dualistic thinking on a theoretical level, it does not refute the empirical existence of double acts. For the named activities, however, this is implausible. In the reconstruction of their first-person perspective, subjects do not report planning or deliberative thinking.¹ Rather, they emphasise the impossibility to do so "when the heat is on" (Schön 1983, Eraut 1999).

Complementarily, Dreyfus/Dreyfus (1986) argue that intuitive modes of action develop with experience and hence expertise. Therefore, either the pressure to act hinders reflection, or subjects are sufficiently self-confident not to spend energy on supervising their own intuitions. In any case, subjects immediately follow phenomenological imperatives. They exercise what the situation "demands" from them without reflecting on the demand. The attempt to theorise experts' non-deliberative acting is built on the distinction between two kinds of awareness.

2. Two kinds of awareness

Polanyi claims the existence of two interdependent kinds of awareness. *Focal awareness* corresponds with the everyday notion of the term. Its contents (perceptions, intuitions, insights, etc.), however, do not emerge from nowhere. Polanyi argues—as a second kind of awareness—that we are subsidiarily aware of clues and tools on which we rely, which we trust blindly.² Whatever reaches our focal perspective emerges from what we are subsidiarily aware (e.g., knowledge, physical tools, mental frameworks, our body, etc.). "The characteristic feature of subsidiary awareness is to have a *function*, the function of bearing on something at the focus of our attention" (Polanyi 1965, p. 212; italics in the original).

"When focussing on a whole, we are subsidiarily aware of its parts, while there is no difference in the intensity of the two kinds of awareness" (Polanyi 1998, p. 57). Hence, the two are "definitely not two degrees of attention" (Polanyi 1961, p. 128). No kind is more important than the other. Rather, a *from-to structure* exists between them (Polanyi 1964, p. 141) which constitutes tacit knowing's intentionality. It is directed away from the *parts* (proximal term) towards the *entity* (distal term): from what is subsidiarily used to what emerges focally from this usage.³ Therefore, the distal term does not emerge on its own. Indeed, there would not be any distal term without the subject. Therefore, it is insufficient to claim that the *entity* emerges from *parts*. Rather, it emerges from *this* subject's proximal term. Tacit knowing's nature is *triadic*. (See Figure 1.)

In order to avoid a category mistake (Ryle 2000) it is crucial not to take the two terms as two distinct ontological objects. Rather, they are

different perspectives of the same phenomenon which enrich each other functionally and hence semantically. They are not two objects to be seen on different channels. Rather, the same object is seen "in stereo". This is analogous to visual perception: No matter the right eye or the left eye, each eye's perspective is two-dimensional. Together, however, they allow a three-dimensional perspective.

Regarding awareness, however, one has to mind that while both eyes are essentially similar, the two kinds of awareness are different. (Therefore, they are pictured vertically in Figure 1.) Hence, in contrast to the metaphor, no kind of awareness can exist on its own. If we wish to isolate the view of one eye, we close the other. However, we are unable to "close" our focal awareness to isolate what we are subsidiarily aware of, and vice versa. Hence, the different kinds of awareness, and their particular perspective, can only be inferred theoretically.

3. Two distinct points of time

Polanyi provides an analysis in terms of *particulars* and *wholes*. Thereby, particulars can be noticed in two different ways: "We can be aware of them uncomprehendingly, i.e. in themselves, or understandingly, in their participation in a comprehensive entity. In the first case we focus our attention on the isolated particulars; in the second, our attention is directed beyond them to the entity to which they contribute" (Polanyi 1961, p. 128). Both ways, however, are mutually exclusive (Polanyi 1998, p. 56). To become focally aware of something requires trust in everything one is subsidiarily aware of. To focus on what one is trusting is to destroy the original relation of the two terms. In order to elaborate this point I will distinguish explicitly between two points of time, and hence discriminate *things* from *parts*.

So far, the analysis has been concerned with *active* triads when a body of *parts* allows an *entity's* emergence. This point of time can be contrasted with *inactive* triads⁴ which exist at any other point of time; it may be that a subject has not yet understood or that she destroyed an active triad in the course of reflection. In active triads, the subject is focally aware of an *entity* and subsidiarily aware of *parts*. Hence, *parts* and *entity* can only jointly exist. In inactive triads, the subject is focally aware of *things* whose sum has no immediate united meaning. While *parts* exist in the light of an *entity*, *things* exist in darkness.

A formal logical gap exists between the two distinct points of time (Figure 2). The *entity* is different from the *things's* semantic sum. Subjects may or may not realise their overcoming of

logical gaps. If you read these words, you may not realise that there is a formal gap between black ink in certain shapes and what these mean to you. If you are engaged in problem solving, in contrast, you may realise a gap (state of "perplexity"; Polanyi 1998, p. 120) and celebrate your overcoming of it.

4. What happens on the way from inactive triad to active triad?

If a logical gap exists between two points of time, how to imagine subjects' overcoming of it? How to explain the emergence of new phenomenological entities? It is the concept of subsidiary awareness that bridges *things* (inactive triad) and *entity* (active triad).

Generally, to overcome the gap is to understand *things* as *parts* of an *entity*. At the same time, it is to discover the *entity* in whose light *things* appear as *parts*. Functionally, it is to create intentionality. All this is possible by a (re-) allocation of awareness: The subject is not (any longer) focally aware of *things* but looks beyond them towards what becomes the *entity*. At the end, within the active triad, no formal logical gap exists anymore. For she who understands, proximal term and distal term are just the same as "not p" and "q". The letters *are* the word. The logical gap disappeared because *things* are no longer *things* but became *parts* due to subjects' changed awareness of them. The semantic sum of *parts*, in turn, means exactly the same as the *entity*.⁵

Importantly, no inactive triad must exist at any time. For example, it is not the case that—when I look at a picture—I *first* see the shapes and colours and *then* I realise their united meaning. In this case I have never (focally) seen the shapes and colours as such (*things*). From the beginning I noticed them subsidiarily as *parts* of the picture (*entity*). Nonetheless, there are cases where one truly focuses on *things* at first.

If, for the argument's sake, we take an inactive triad to exist prior to the active triad, we can illustrate three aspects (Polanyi 1965, p. 212) which happen simultaneously.

Above all, recognition and thus understanding require a "letting go". He who cannot help but to focus on every bit of colour will not comprehend the picture. He will be caught in the analysis of *things* which will never become *parts*. In the words of Icelandic Nobel Laureate Halldór Laxness: "Anyone who is concerned only with the purpose of a thing will never discover its beauty." For the *entity* to emerge, one needs to look beyond the *things*. Only letting go allows a re-allocation of awareness and hence intentionality to develop.

This "vectorial quality" (Polanyi 1964, p. 141) is tacit knowing's **functional aspect**.

To look beyond *things* implies a change in our awareness towards them: We do not focus them anymore but become subsidiarily aware of them. This change of attention creates both "space" and "basis" for the *entity* to emerge in our focal awareness. This change from *things* to *entity* within the distal term is tacit knowing's **phenomenal aspect**.

In the light of the newly emerged *entity*, former *things* have become *parts*. The **semantic aspect** is meant to explain that *parts* are semantically enriched as compared to the *things* they were before.

Before moving on, I better remind myself not to mix up two claims: (i) Active triads are characterised by a from-to structure: from the *parts* to the *entity*. Between two points of time no from-to structure of this kind exists. (ii) A formal logical gap exists between two distinct points of time.⁶ Within each point of time, no gap exists.

5. Parts as amalgam of former things

The change from inactive triad to active triad is, in functional terms, the creation of intentionality. Phenomenologically, it is to understand. In order to explain the erection of active triads, two processes are suggested to happen jointly: *amalgamation* and *emergence*. The idea of amalgamation is necessary in order to model the creation of semantic value which happens on the way to active triad. Emergence needs a complement.

So far, I have plainly distinguished between *things* (inactive triad) and *parts* (active triad). A *thing* is merged "in a whole (or a gestalt) in which it is assigned a subsidiary function and a meaning in respect to something that has our focal awareness" (Polanyi 1998, p. 61). Hence it becomes a *part*. I now specify that *things* exist in configurations, whereas *parts* are melted into an amalgam. Configurations consist of distinct elements in explicit distance from each other ("salad bowl"). In amalgams, in contrast, no distinct elements exist ("melting pot"). Therefore, I have to adjust Figure 2:

Something must happen to *things* because their configuration is semantically less than the resulting *entity*. Otherwise there would not be a gap in terms of formal logic. Hence, to expect the proximal term to consist of a configuration of *parts* would contradict the semantic identity of distal term and proximal term. In particular, it would ignore tacit knowing's semantic aspect. Rather, the *entity* emerges from an amalgam of former *things* (= *parts*).⁷ Within the process of understanding, the configuration of *things* is

amalgamised to a body of *parts*. This process of descent is symbiotic with the emergence of something "new" in the second term. The *things* of the second term decrease in the first term. At the same time the distal term emerges from what decreases (Figure 4).

6. Unspecifiable subsidiary awareness

The explanation of the emergence of *entities* in one's focal awareness rests centrally on the assumption of a proximal term.⁸ So far I have argued that the proximal term does not consist of distinct *parts* but of an amalgam of former *things*. I now claim that it is not possible to inspect the amalgam. Clues and tools cannot be observed in themselves (Polanyi 1998, p. vii) because isolation changes their appearance to some extent (Polanyi 1961, p. 124). It is the semantic enrichment created in the course of amalgamation which cannot be preserved in the change of awareness towards *things/parts*. Hence, the concept of subsidiary awareness is inevitably hypothetical. Whenever reaching out for *parts*, we are thrown back to *things*. I argue along two lines:

1. *Reaching out, isolating and inspecting* are terms to describe approaches to focus our subsidiary awareness. This, however, is impossible because the two kinds of awareness are capable of different skills. While we are able to empathise the view of our right eye with our left eye, the different levels of awareness imply different *modi operandi*. Focal awareness is closely linked to explicit thinking, which is capable only of configuring *things* but not of handling amalgams. Hence, tacit knowing's unique skill to do so has no equivalent. Inevitably, explicit thinking cuts the amalgam into pieces and hence creates distinctness and explicitness that had not existed. Notoriously, it logically disintegrates a comprehensive *entity* to its relatively meaningless fragments (*things*; Polanyi 1965, p. 213). To trace the capability of tacit knowing in the language of explicit thinking remains logically patchy.⁹ Its virtues must remain unspecified and diffuse to our own focal awareness. Tacit knowing is tacit to explicit thought.¹⁰

2. The *entity* only exists due to the trustful reliance on *parts*. Reversely, *parts* always coexist with an *entity*. If the *entity* is affected, *parts* will be affected as well. In attempting to focus the amalgam exactly this happens: The original distal term is destroyed and therewith the amalgam. Already in Gestalt psychology it is claimed "[...] that the particulars of a pattern or a tune must be apprehended jointly [...]. If we discredit the usefulness of a tool, its meaning as a tool is gone.

All particulars become meaningless if we lose sight of the pattern which they jointly constitute" (Polanyi 1998, pp. 56–57). Since no term can exist on its own, they are mutually exclusive. Hence, either one focuses on the *entity*, or one attempts to focus on the *parts*—but gets *things*, i.e. *artefacts of parts*.¹¹

Due to the terms' different *modi operandi* and due to their interdependence, our knowledge of the first term is notoriously indirect. Hence, one cannot verify authentically whether or in which way *things* truly made their way into the amalgam, and thus base an entity.

Fortunately however, we do not need explicit analysis of the first term's nature in order to *make use* of its virtues. Rather, the amalgam must remain unfocussed, or in other words: *trusted*. The price of benefitting from it is to accept its unspecifiability to explicit thought. Any attempt to gain complete control of thought is self-contradictory and systematically misleading (Polanyi 1964, p. 156).

7. Episodes as acts of tacit knowing

We now can approach the initial question: How to theorise episodes of intuitive acting? Since Polanyi takes his tacit knowing concept as universal, it must be possible to apply it to our concern. In any case then, episodes are triadic in nature: They consist of a situation, an action and the subject.¹² Concretely, the action is the *entity* which results from this subject who is subsidiarily aware of this situation (*parts*). The subject acts by *looking beyond* the situation.¹³ (See Figure 5.)

Again, it is appropriate to introduce the argument by contrasting two distinct points of time. At one point, the subject focuses the situation ("analysis"; *inactive triad*). At a later point, she acts ("episode"; *active triad*). A formal logical gap exists between the two points of time. The situation does not force a certain action in terms of formal logic. Hence, action is a non-formal consequence of the situation.

To act is to integrate relevant situational elements (*things*) into *one* action.¹⁴ Hence, to integrate is to *amalgamise*. Accordingly, the distal term (the phenomenological imperative what to do) emerges from the amalgam of this subject in this situation.¹⁵ Decisively, we cannot claim on a theoretical level that actions correspond with distinct situational aspects (though it is empirically possible).¹⁶ Instead it may be the implicit consequence of all situational clues as well as subject's entire personal and cultural background or artefacts deriving from them.

Hence, the highly individual nature of acting is no surprise. It is not only possible to look differently

beyond the same *things* and hence to "see" different *entities* in them but to rely on different *parts*.

8. Implicit decision

Generally, it was claimed that no inactive triad need exist prior to an active. For example, it is normally not the case that we first see letters and then understand their united meaning. Rather, for the educated mind, the letters *are* the word, instantly. The same applies to episodes. It is not necessary to focus (to explicitly¹⁷ "analyse") the situation at first. Rather, it is possible to act immediately by being subsidiarily aware of the situation. Indeed, for intuitive acting we assume that exactly this is the case.

In the attempt to theorise, it would be a fundamental mistake to search for any explicit "decision" between analysis (*things*) and episode (*entity*). Admittedly, from a third-person perspective, a subject's acting can be seen as the rejection of all alternatives. Whatever one does, it *is* to reject other options. However, we must not mix up perspectives: The third person, for whom different options exist, concludes that the subject "apparently" voted for this particular option. ("Voted" implies an act of explicit thinking.) For her, it appears *as if* a decision took place. For the first person, however, there was no explicit decision, neither consciously nor unconsciously. When the heat is on, subjects neither reflect on options nor decide for one option nor plan their acting. To reify third-person perspective leads to a dead end, comparable to the idea of a "pineal gland" to connect body and mind (Descartes 1649, §§30–2). Those who do not consider subsidiary awareness face a serious problem: They see two ontological entities and hence have to relate these one to another. With only one kind of awareness in stock, however, one cannot explain the overcoming of the logical gap between analysis and episode. Unavoidably, dualistic thinking leads to the expectations of explicit decisions to explain someone's acting in a situation. Due to this overestimation, it is called *intellectualism*.

Polanyi's introduction of the proximal term opens the door to see two perspectives of one entity rather than two entities. In a world of two kinds of awareness, it is possible to overcome logical gaps by the allocation of awareness rather than explicit decisions.

9. Transformed in reflection—How we present our tacit knowing to our own focal awareness

Episodes are of triadic nature: Intentionality is directed *from* the relevant situation (subsidiary awareness) *to* the phenomenological imperative what to do (focal awareness). The imperative does not result from any *explicit* decision nor is it

deliberatively chosen. Rather, its emergence rests on a *re-allocation of awareness* which cannot be executed solely with our focal awareness. It is revealing that we tend to use passive expressions (“to have an insight”) rather than active ones (“to insight”). It appears obvious to common language that two kinds of awareness are involved. (It is less obvious in cases such as “to focus”, “to isolate”, “to analyse” etc.)

Explicit steps are limited to *allow* a re-allocation; to accept uncertainty. One will not come to act if one is perfectly focussed on the situation (*things*). Intentionality emerges only if the subject lets the situation go. One cannot force the virtue of tacit knowing but only accept its *fathomless-ness* to explicit thought. The fact that, from a perspective of focal awareness, the imperatives appear to be given, however, must not imply that they are externally given to us. We in fact create them ourselves with the virtues of tacit knowing.

However, how does our tacit knowing reach our focal awareness? It is enlightening that subjects report that the imperatives they follow derive from the *situation* (sic!). Here they *find* advice.¹⁸

We can conclude that the voice of the situation is indeed our own tacit knowing's voice.

From a perspective of focal awareness, we cannot become focally aware of our tacit knowing directly. It remains unspecified due to different *modi operandi* and the terms' mutual exclusiveness. Instead, we become focally aware of it *through the situation*. Analogically, water vapour is unspecified to the human eye. It needs to condensate on a cold mirror in order to become visible.

The virtues of our tacit knowing are *reflected* in the situation; however, they are not only reflected but *transformed* to a frequency noticeable to focal awareness, just as the water vapour underwent a transformation on the cold mirror. The drops we are able to notice are not the vapour. Hence, we hear a transformed echo of ourselves in the situation. In Figure 6, the triadic approach to model episodes is summed up and contrasted with non-triadic.

Department for Vocational and Business Education and Training
 Johannes Kepler University
 Altenberger Strasse 69
 4040 Linz, Austria
 Stefan.Fothe@jku.at

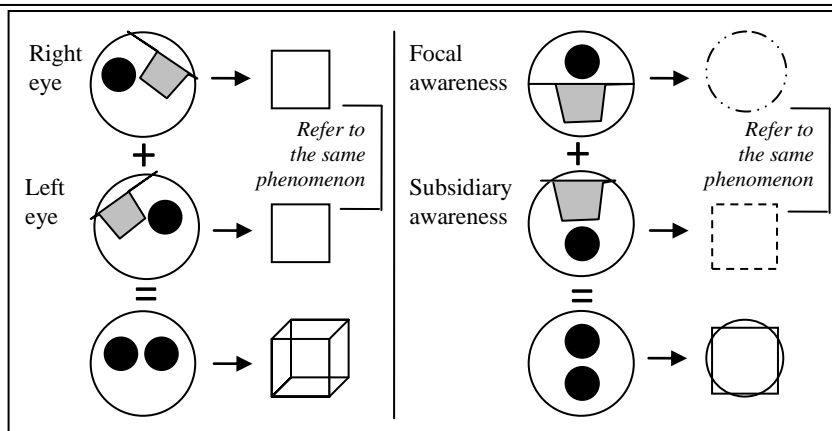


Figure 1: Focal awareness and subsidiary awareness as perspectives

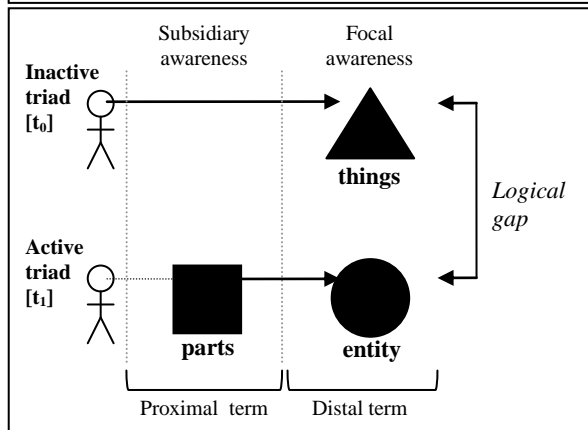


Figure 2: Inactive triad versus active triad (specified)

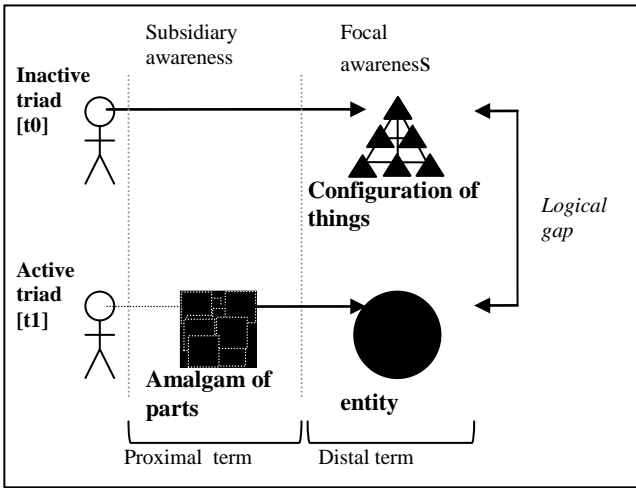


Figure 3: Inactive triad versus active triad

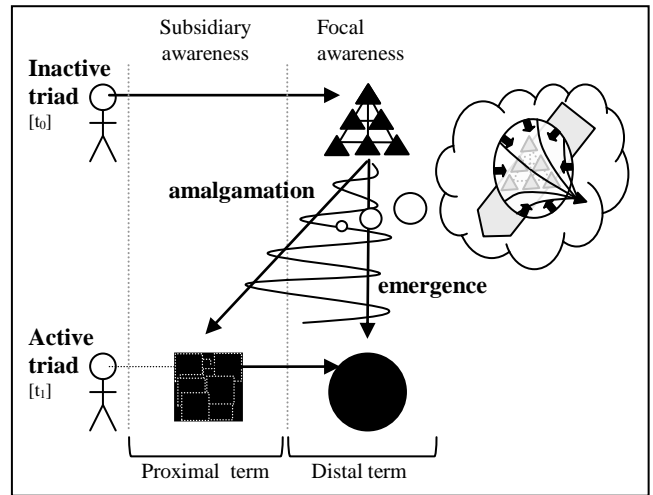


Figure 4: Emergence and amalgamation as symbiotic processes

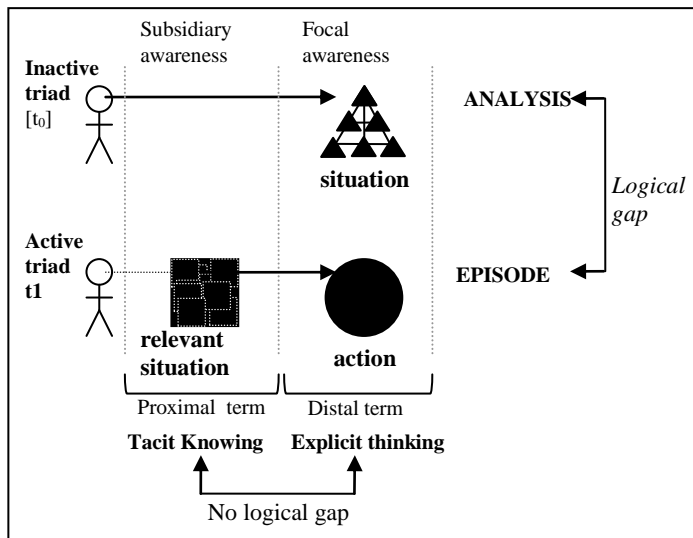


Figure 5: Analysis and episode

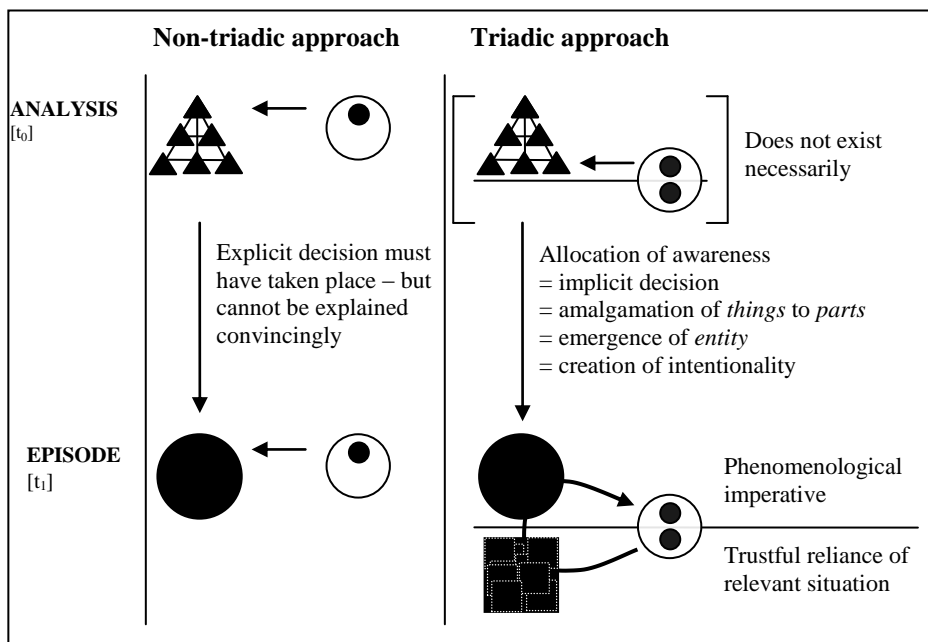


Figure 6: Non-triadic and triadic approaches to episodes

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Notes

¹ The claim that planning and knowledge application are without conscious equivalent because they are or had become "processed" (Anderson 1983) is rejected as implausible: "It is misleading [...] to describe it [the use of tools] as the mere result of repetition; it is a structural change [...]" (Polanyi 1998, p. 62).

² *Blindly* here means *not focally*. It must not imply that subjects would not see them. If one models two kinds of awareness it is insufficient to think in plain opposites. The "transparency" (Polanyi 1998, p. 57) of the proximal term must not be mistaken for ignorance. No one would say one is ignoring one's glasses although they appear transparent. We do not look *at* them but *through* them.

³ Consequently, Polanyi, at times (e.g. 1965, p. 212), speaks of two *levels* of awareness: "The lower one for the clues, the parts or the other subsidiary elements [therefore *first term*] and the higher one for the focally appended comprehensive entity to which these elements point [*second term*]."

⁴ They are triads nonetheless. However, they do not (yet) have the semantic value compared to what is labelled "active" triad. While any triad is situated, *inactive* describes the complementary event: anytime or any perspective that does not provide this particular triad. Accordingly, the subsidiary awareness in t_0 is not empty (as indicated in Figure 2). Rather, its contents are not discussed because they are not central for my argument.

⁵ Distal term and proximal term are as much or as little the same as "2+2" and "4". They refer to the same thing, but they are different: While the first consists of two numbers and a plus, the latter is one number. This syntactic difference explains why subsidiary awareness and focal awareness are not as similar to each other as the right eye and the left eye (Figure 1).

⁶ Thereby, the gap can be located either between *things* and *parts* (semantic aspect) or between *things* and *entity* (phenomenal aspect) as *parts* and *entity* mean the same.

⁷ *Former* is not quite correct as inactive triads may exist chronologically after active triads, i.e. in the process of *alienation* (Polanyi 1964, p. 146).

⁸ Within any framework with only one kind of awareness, there is the danger to construct from-to structures in a timely, and therefore causal, dimension. Indeed, with only one kind in stock, this is the only option. Doing so, however, is a category mistake (Ryle 2000).

⁹ Thus we can specify what is meant by a formal logical gap which is claimed to exist between *things* and *parts/entity*. Formal logic is limited to focal awareness. It claims not to have or does not allow subsidiary awareness. In this respect formal logic uses only "one eye" and is hence only capable of "mono-viewing", which is insufficient for the phenomenon of interest. Since, however, tacit knowing's virtues do not have equivalents within the distal term, the attempt to reduce *knowing* to *explicit thinking* must remain logically patchy. It is like describing "diagonal" in the categories "vertical" and "horizontal". The attribute

non-formal refers to the incapability of an explanation to picture the phenomenon. Since reality does not fit the explanation, a negative characterisation applies: the phenomenon is *non-formal* (just as dialogical is a *non-right-angled* movement).

¹⁰ Reversely, its virtues are indispensable since they have no equivalent within explicit thinking. The situation is even worse as compared to visual perception: While we are able to handle our three-dimensional world somehow with one eye, we would have no chance to act without tacit knowing because no kind of awareness can exist on its own. Purely explicit thinking and hence pure formal logic are *chimeras*. Therefore, *all* knowledge is either tacit or rooted in tacit knowledge (Polanyi 1964, p. 144).

¹¹ The first term's fathomless nature may even go so far that we cannot become focally aware of *parts* as *things* in their raw nature at all, e.g. in *physiognomies* (Polanyi 1961, p. 124).

¹² In this definition, episodes can be reduced theoretically to seconds. Indeed, for experts an entirely new situation may arise with just one more word spoken, just as a mathematician may solve a problem in a blink. Nevertheless, it is possible to define larger episodes in the stream of life. One only has to accept that these episodes could always be atomised in smaller triads. However, one is not forced to do so.

¹³ Thereby, it was assumed for intuitive acting that phenomenological imperatives are implemented without reflective inferences.

¹⁴ Not all potential *things* must be included in the amalgam of *parts*. And even if *things* are integrated, no claim can be made if they become truly relevant in the *entity's* emergence. They could be dominated within the amalgam. *Relevance* hence remains unspecified.

¹⁵ Thereby, the reservoir of potential *parts* is unlimited since mental efforts tend to incorporate any available elements of the situation which are helpful for their purpose (Polanyi 1998, p. 62). Hence, the whole present situation as well as the subject's whole past (knowledge, beliefs, learning history, etc.) may be relevant for an insight. *Situation*, thereby, does not only refer to everything with which the subject is confronted but includes the subject herself as well (mood, personality, working mode, etc.).

¹⁶ Often, in everyday life, we are not aware of the fact that *parts* cannot be focussed. Therefore we take *things* for *parts* since both refer to the situation. (This is signified in Figure 6 where "situation" is used twice.) In doing so, however, we fail to appreciate our different kinds of awareness towards them. Hence one searches for causal (sic!) relationships between *things* and the *entity*, which is understandable since *there is* a timely relationship between the two. However, we give semantically reduced *things* as reasons and wonder why we are misunderstood.

¹⁷ *Explicit* here does not refer to the subject being aware of this activity. Rather, it is to say an analysis truly takes place. *Implicit*, in contrast, implies that the process appears to exist only from third-person perspective.

¹⁸ "The act of personal knowing can sustain these relations [of the *things* and the *entity*] only because the

acting person believes that they are apposite: that he has not made them [with his focal awareness] but discovered them" (Polanyi 1998, p. 63).

THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF CONVERSION: THE CONVERSIONS OF KARL AND MICHAEL POLANYI

Endre Nagy

Abstract

The essay considers all kind of conversion (both of religious and secular) as an intellectual illumination and a destiny event, and seeks to analyze it from various aspects focusing mainly on the conversion of Karl and Michael Polanyi. It employs the existential psychoanalysis of Sartre and the concept *original choice* to come closer the riddle of conversion. but interprets conversion in terms of Michael Polanyi's 'breaking out' as the conversion. It leads the concept to the transnatural formations of later Polanyi's work of *Meaning* (art, literature, myth and religion), asserting that these formations are as real as 'tangible' scientific discoveries. The author introduces 'phylogenetic subjectivity' as the carrier or vehicle of the reality attributed by Polanyi to transnatural formations. Polanyi's 'breaking out' is compared with Heidegger's 'clearing'. Both refer to life in the clearing as self-subordination to standards (as Being gives itself) maintained by a phylogenetic subjectivity and they reject living the ordinary way of life as fallenness.

Key words

Conversion, destiny event, sociology of contemporary Hungary, conversion of Jews, socially unattached intelligentsia, original choice, breaking out, transnatural formations, phylogenetic subjectivity, fallenness, clearing, *alétheia*.

1. Introduction

In what follows, we are dealing with the phenomenon of conversion. We are making every effort to analyse thoroughly the troublesome phenomenon: conversion, that is, we are to scrutinize the factors leading somebody to convert. Conversion – an act characteristic of human being that must be attack. The method we choose is phenomenological one in terms of Husserl and Heidegger, that is: 'a substantial outlook to the things themselves'. We resolutely striving to pierce into the core of the phenomenon of conversion. The core is the Being as such to which we have to arrive at. By dint of the phenomenological analyses that starts from the appearance through the semblance and essence, we want to achieve the reality, that is the phenomenon (conversion). Since phenomenon does not give itself by itself we apply to hermeneutics. 'Essentially, nothing else stands 'behind' the phenomena of phenomenology. Nevertheless, what is to become a phenomenon can be concealed. And precisely because phenomena are at first and for the most part

not given phenomenology is needed'¹. Of these requirements induced we are going to draw on the sociology of knowledge, the existential psychoanalysis, and the Heideggerian 'clearing' in terms of Michael Polanyi's 'breaking-out'.

Let's begin with the term 'conversion' that has, first of all, a religious meaning that bears on somebody's finding his or her way from which he or she had made an early shift in this or that direction, but later he has returned on the right way where he or she had been at the outset of his/her life. The paradigmatic example of it has always been St. Paul who miraculously converted to Jesus Christ whom he had so far persecuted. Yet, the conversion had not been completed with this, by an *intellectual illumination*. It is necessary to finish it so that one can put into practice of the consequences of the inner *transubstantiation* that we call –after a Hungarian philosopher – a *destiny event*². This is the stage when one identifies oneself with one's destiny, and by doing this, we could say, one becomes (by reversing the term contrived in speech-act theory) an *act-speech*, i.e. an act that speaks. When Saul stopped persecuting the Christians in fact and went on to fight for Jesus Christ; when St. Augustine abandoned his concubine; when Georg Lukacs abandoned his former 'progressive Idealism' and entered the Communist Party; when István Bibó remained in the Parliament building at the moment when the Red Army seized it, and was conceiving a Memorandum about the world situation; when Edith Stein ceased to be an assistant of Edmund Husserl and later entered the Carmelite order; when Simone Weil abandoned her Atheist way of life, and gave herself to a particular Christian one: all these happened with speech and act. And so forth from Plotine to converts of our days. Therefore we call the second stage of conversion 'act-speech' that means in a narrow sense 'body-speech', the body where he is going and does not go, the hand when it moves the pen, that is, the movement in physical terms, what the body does and does not.

In this essay, I am going from the very beginning to set out of a question in the sociology of knowledge. In what follows I examine the question whether or to what extent any author's oeuvre, be it scientific, artistic, philosophical or religious one, has been determined by the local and social circumstances into which he or she was born.³ It was Karl Marx who first jolted the fixed position of the knowing subject

described in the Cartesian philosophy, the one whose brain was a ‘tabula rasa’, an impassive mind, imprinted by the sense data also allegedly supposed to be neutral ones. Instead, Marx made every efforts to prove the epistemological subject as dependent from, or rather determined by his or her class interests⁴. In the XXth century Lucien Goldmann gave a more sophisticated shape to the Marxist tenet by applying a new method. According to this new Marxist doctrine one has to analyse an artistic, literary and philosophical text in three successive stages:

1. the world view and the text;
2. the spiritual, emotional totality of a group and the world-view of it;
3. consciousness and psychic life in relation to economic and social life.

Implementing this doctrine on Pascal and Racine, Lucien Goldmann could relate the tragic *world-outlook* (taking over the term from the young Georg Lukács) to Sceptical Jansenism, and seemed to prove that the latter was but the ideology of the French court nobility.⁵

At the outset of the XXth century Karl Mannheim changed this thesis of class dependency into a non-Marxist formula. In his sociology of knowledge he came to the conclusion (*Ideology and Utopia*, 1926) that the knowing subject is determined not so much by his class interest but by the (social) *Being as such* (Seinsgebundenheit, or in English translation: situational determination). This was a sounder position as compared with the original Marxist doctrine about ideology. Unlike Marx, Karl Mannheim, the founding father of the sociology of knowledge, distinguished a particular group which was able to transcend his *particular* class interest, because they detach themselves from their *particular* class situation and break through to a view that is all above the class interests of any kind. This was the ‘socially unattached intelligentsia’ (freischwebende Intelligenz) which diving into a common, European and literary cultural heritage, and by making a ‘distance’, ‘relationating’ themselves from their original and local class dependency, and by doing so they would be prompted to represent some ‘general’ interest which is beyond all kinds of class interests. We shall return to his theory later.

2. The approach of sociology of knowledge

First we have to investigate the actual situation in Hungary where the two Polanyi brothers were born.⁶ Since we have already published in English an essay of the Hungarian political and cultural situation at the beginning of the XXth century let it suffice to give a brief account of it.

First, the Polanyis were of Jewish extract coming from a family that had become detached from the Jewish religious tradition. To understand the great scientific, artistic achievements that Jews worked out can be explained by the overall situation of them living in Exile since the collapse of Jerusalem (AD 71). In the Middle Ages they were living –as Max Weber pointed out –‘under the leadership of a stratum of intellectuals who were trained in literature and ritual, a peculiarity of Judaism. This stratum has represented and increasingly quasi proletarian and rationalist pretty-bourgeois intelligentsia’.⁷ This situation gave them a trait of ‘pariah people’. Then, in the modern time, as the emancipation went on in Europe hand in hand with disappearing their pariah situation, Jews could enter any social occupations. This happened in spite of the resistance of traditional strata (in the Eastern Continent: the gentry and nobility) which became envious of the Jewish ‘occupation of the ground’. Realizing the growing anti-Semitism, Jews stood up against it by two strategic behaviours. The first was economic activity, the second was to get new jobs the traditional strata kept aloof. These were the so-called free intellectual jobs like private bureaucracy, actors, barristers, doctors, etc., and the new sciences like psychoanalysis, sociology and philosophy. A large number of these intellectuals emerged to participating in the communist movements.⁸ In Hungary one the most famous story was that of Georg Lukacs who joined the Communist Dictatorship of Bela Kun as a commissary.⁹ He was the son of a rich banker of Jewish extract. Although, Lukacs abhorred (as he later reported it) Capitalism just because of the example of his father, and became a converted Communist as latest as at the end of 1918, entered the Communist party just founded, after having been earlier a so-called ‘progressive idealist’. Later on he was oscillating between the peaceful transition for the classless society and a Bolshevik revolution that was a moral dilemma for a Bolshevik as he described it. Finally, he opted for Communism substantiated his turnover by the German playwright, Hebbel’s formula that was given in the Biblical story¹⁰ of Judith and Holofernes. For, in Hebbel’s play ‘Judith’, said the following sentence after having killed Holofernes: ‘If God put the sin between me and his target, may I avoid myself from his will?’ Or else, with an other formula referring to Dostoyevsky’s novel, *Sin and Punishment*: ‘May we lie ourselves to the truth?’ And he went on to be appointed for secretary of State in the government of Béla Kun, the leader of the Hungarian Communist ‘experiment’ in 1919. After the collapse of the

regime, Thomas Mann and Max Weber sided with him to avoid the execution.¹¹ This was really a radical change. Later on, Lukacs abandoned to play any political part in the practical politics after the discussion of the so-called Blum-thesis when he was denounced and forced to do self-criticism at the end of the twenties. Yet, exceptionally, he undertook the membership in the second government of Imre Nagy composed on the multi-party system at the end of the Hungarian revolution in 1956. However, he remained a faithful Communist for ever, until his death, 1973. But, as Paul Ignotus wanted 'to do them justice', he 'tried to reconcile Lenin's interpretation of the Marxist creed with the humanist European heritage'.¹²

This last development was due to the early pariah situation from which to break out is one of the endeavours of those seeking to get rid of the subjected situation. However, this ambition is not uniquely characteristic of Jews but it can be found in strata in similar situations throughout history. As Max Weber pointed out in his *Sociology of Religion*,¹³ the relation of intellectuals to religion can be divided in two kinds. The first one is that of aristocratic origin whose religion could be characterized as a particular 'fleeing from the world'. This happens when the aristocratic strata are excluded (either by a militaristic-bureaucratic state power or by themselves) from the political life, and therefore the development of their intellectual culture becomes more important for them than any practical activity in the world. The second kind is more interesting with regard to our concern. These strata belonged to 'proletaroid intellectuals' such as junior bureaucrats and smallholders on the edge of subsistence level, the clergy without privilege in times when the knowledge of the alphabet provides an independent job, elementary teachers, minstrels, performers, tale-tellers, reciters of poetry, and free professions similar to the former. However, to them belong those of the self-educated intellectuals of negative privilege the example of which in Eastern Europe the Russian peasantry intelligentsia, and in Occident the socialist and anarchist intellectuals. Further to this, Weber emphasized as a 'classic case', in the Middle Ages, the devout Jews (Pharisees, Chassidees and Jews following the Law in daily life). These strata are eminently susceptible to develop a certain kind of religion apprehending the world as a meaningful cosmos. And Max Weber sums up the lessons of this state of affair as follows:

As far as it matters a 'pariah intellectualism'... its intensity is in as much as resting upon that people being both at the bottom of social hierarchy or of outside of any hierarchy took foothold on an Archimedean point with regard both to the outer order

and the customary views about the social conventions. Since they are not tied to the social conventions they can carry on a genuine position about the 'meaning' of cosmos, and since they have not to concern with material standpoints they are facilitated to amount an ethical and religious pathos ascending beyond any material interests.¹⁴

This statement can apply to the situation of Jews living in Europe. They were living in 'pariah' situation just before the emancipation and later on, experiencing a particular aversion, even because of anti-Semitism. Therefore, they were striving to flee from this situation through three ways. The first was, following the ancient Jewish endeavour to salvation but as a collective entity what led them joining the Communist movements, since it sought the collective salvation of the world as a whole. The second was the over-identification with the nation in which they were living. It happened through accepting to be baptized of the large Jewish population, and by taking up the names characteristic of the nations they lived. And there was a third possibility almost uniquely for the intellectuals who were in an 'Archimedean position' in the society, and since they were not tied both to national feeling and economic interests, it remains for them no other way out from their wretched situation that to carry out genuine theories irrespective to national sentiments. And that was the case of Marx, Moses Mendelssohn, Freud, Jaques Derrida, etc., and also the Hungarian sociologists of the turn of the last century the majority of whom was of Jewish extraction. Their originality and genuineness can be observed in their sociological theories.¹⁵

Besides the Jewish extraction of the Polanyis there can be mentioned three other influences that adds to the conversation.

First, as an antecedent for their conversion was, though in an oblique way, the Galileo Circle¹⁶ the first president of which was elected Karl Polanyi. The Circle had a very anti-religious stance. They believed in sciences, in stead of 'superstition' (as they considered the religion to be). Though they did not want to interfere in politics, they believed in a more beautiful future when (as some of them described) 'humanity having got rid of its fetters... and goes on with firm steps on the road of justice, of virtue and of happiness'.¹⁷ But while being stern Atheists they were eager enthusiasts of an intangible spiritualism, namely, their ardent faith in science. In Georg Lukacs' terms, they were 'religious Atheists'.

Second, they all followed Endre Ady, the greatest poet of that time. Ady revolted against the 'Hungarian Fallow' (as he characterised the backwardness of the country), and (as Lee Congdon put it) 'he was not a politician or sociologist but poet

and prophet of Hungary transformed politically, socially, culturally and morally'.¹⁸

Third, a distinctive impact was made by a singular Hungarian Socialist theoretician, Ervin Szabó who while being a zealous Socialist was seeking a moral (Syndicalist) revolution that would change men from within.

Thus, from the effects of these factors, both Polanyis had been changing throughout the first decade of the last century. It is quite a curious phenomenon that the proceeding leading them to the conversion occurred almost at the same time by the brothers.¹⁹

Already in 1909, Karl Polanyi had published an article with the title 'The Crisis in our Ideologies'. In this article he said that the next period of the capitalist age would produce more or less stable conditions of material existence, and it would bring about a regulated and stabilized capitalism. The restrictions and limitation on competition, price fixing by public authorities, social insurance etc. 'Thus personality loses its importance, the individual is not valued any more according to his 'individuality' but according to his 'sociality'...Consequently in the coming period of a stable capitalism the ruling ideology will be a socialist one...Socialism returns to its origins, to the middle class...Christianity repeats itself: capitalism exalts socialism to state-religion precisely as the Roman empire did with the militant religion of the rebellious slaves in Christianity.'²⁰ For us, this small work is interesting, because it shows that the firm faith seemingly unshakable is getting broken down.

Some nine years later, Karl Polanyi gave an oration at the obsequies for Endre Ady. On this occasion, he underwent a radical change of mind. First, he outlined what they believed so far:

And we believed, it seems, that mankind must adjust to the reality of society, that external things are the real things and that science is the leading light in them. We believed that not men, but circumstances made the war, that responsibility for and guilt in it lies not with us, human beings, but with the circumstances, and that, therefore we ourselves must not change, but the circumstances...For, we believe, with a grimly determined faith that we are unbelievers, that we are the chosen generation of unbelief, that we shall find the promised land of unbelief, the world of perfect institutions and contrivance.

By now, he realized 'we only believed that we are unbeliever, for, while professing unbelief, behold, we leave the colours of mourning to the poet, the believing hero, and we ourselves are trying to follow his example in self-sacrifice.' And, he goes on to explain:

There is no science that could alter, only science that will affirm the truth that the bird flies not in accordance with the laws of gravity, but in spite of them, that the tree does not spread in foliage according to the law of creative profusion, that society rises to higher spiritual levels not in accordance with material interests but in disregard of them, and that of human faith, force and self-sacrifice lead us on high, not the downwards pulling gravitational force of material interests, but by force of the hallowed laws of spirit which defy them.²¹

And let's take a look at Michael Polanyi. It seems that, earlier than his brother, he also underwent a radical change in 1913, when he read Dostoyevsky's 'Brothers Karamazov'. In a letter written to Karl Mannheim in 1944 he describes his conversion:

As a young boy and young man I was materialist and eager disciple of H. G. Wells. My religious interests were awakened by reading *The Brothers Karamazov* in 1913. I was then 22. For the following ten years I was continuously striving for religious understanding and for a time I was a converted Christian on the Tolstoy's confession of faith...My faith in God never failed entirely since 1913, but my faith in the divinity of Christ (for example) has been with me only for rare moments.²²

It is not surprising that Paul Ignatus having no tknoen his conversion characterised him as a meneber of the Galileo Circle: 'His reputation was that of the man who had the courage to dissent from dissenters; in a flock of black sheep he shocked many by seeming almost white'.²³

Thus, by the end of tens the brothers became idealists. It was corroborated by Iona Duczynska, the wife of Karl, who wrote in her memories that 'in thought, in world view he stood close to Tolstoy'.²⁴ For, as we have seen in their Atheist period, they were really believers unbelievably, since they choose a faith other than the religious one. As Paul Tillich pointed out that even the humanist faith also a faith.²⁵ However, any profession of faith, be it in science, or in the changeability of the order of things, or whatever else, is still a faith, and diametrically opposite views easily turns into each other. *Les extrémité ses touchent!*, say the French. Rightly! Karl Polanyi, looking back in 1929 on the Circle, emphasizes their 'activist idealism' that was running counter to the Materialism of Europe.

To go on new roads – we, the youth saw such ways, as the 'searching for the truth', in contrast to the deterministic Materialism prevailing in Socialism, by representing the new activist Idealism that was quite a new one in Europe at that time. In the question of religion, we did not deny the value of faith - and the Galilean generation was likely the first one being

affirmative with faith as a phenomenon - but that of credulity.²⁶

Thus, so armed with the sociology of knowledge as outlined by Lucien Goldmann, we have come at a Jewish community as gathered in the Galileo circle, that formed a 'superior knowledge' in Michael Polanyi's term. 'Superior knowledge' exists in every modern society as a coherent system or a mediated consensus that is upheld by people mutually recognizing each other as scientist, artist, ministers, etc., and a small fragment is directly visible to any of its adherents.

Large part of it are altogether buried in books, paintings, musical scores, etc. which remain mostly unread, unseen, unperformed... There are the utterances of prophets, *poets*, legislators, *scientists* and other masters, or messages of men who, by their action, recorded in history, have set a pattern for posterity; to which are added the living voices of contemporary cultural leaders, competing for allegiance of public.²⁷

As we have seen above the Galileo Circle choose the poet (Endre Ady) and scientists (included Ervin Szabó or Mach), and this way they elaborate their own superior knowledge. They were their – as Michael Polanyi puts it – 'great men: men to whose superiority [they] entrust [themselves], by trying to understand their works and to follow their teachings and examples'.²⁸ It was uniquely characteristic of them directed against the official and backward country. And this is the reason for the fact that they became later on, during Communist revolution of Bela Kun in 1919, scapegoats both for the terror Communist performed during their rule and after the collapse of the Communist revolution as a revenge, since they were stigmatized for allegedly preparing the road to Communism although they were keeping aloof from direct polity. But the whole of the Communism seemed to have been a nightmare and owed to the Jews for the large Hungarian public. So Karl and Michael Polanyi anticipating the 'white terror' and the anti-Semitic wave that has really come after the collapse of the Communism felt compelled to emigrate from the country.

After having given a briefly account of the conversion of Polanyi brothers we try to interpret the conversion. We will solicit to Sartre's existential psychoanalysis, and then we draw on Heidegger's arguments on the 'clearing' in the light of Michael Polanyi's teaching of 'breaking out'. By doing this we hope to throw new light on both of them, and both terms will appear in particular refraction. And we hope so to add to a theory of the 'phenomenology' of conversion.

3. *The original choice*

We have seen so far the explanatory strength of sociology of knowledge. We outlined how Karl and Michael Polanyi belonging to the Jewish community in Hungary became converted. We were trying to investigate the effects of Galileo Circle, of the imagined native land or 'virtual home', of as supplied by Endre Ady. However these factors can present us with only a partial explanation. Sociological explanation can be only one thread of the understanding. For we have found the group that can be, to a large extent, relied on an intellectual development, that is life career. This is the last point to which one can attained by the help of sociology of knowledge. To transcend this point we ought to apply for psychology, better said the psychoanalysis. It was Freud who carried out the techniques of psychoanalysis that was later transcended by the post-Freudian 'superstructuralists' (Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari) who refused the Freudian psychoanalysis and opted for the Id, by trying to point out that the Ego 'colonized' the Id that must be liberated.²⁹ So, they went on to an extreme materialism, and finally eliminated the centered person from their investigations. As Foucault questioned in one of his writings 'What is the author?', in stead of 'Who is the author'.³⁰

Thus, we turn to another philosophical paradigm which locates the subject in the centre of its theory. This is existentialism as expounded by J.P. Sartre in his *The Being and Nothingness*. Not because we would accept all assumptions in his book, especially we do not follow him in his tenet of *absolute liberty* having by the Self that he, by the way, also would have withdrawn in the *Critique de la raison dialectic*. Nor do we accept his materialism. But we hold his theorem of existential psychoanalysis on the agenda, first for it rejects the reducibility of the subject to such factors e.g. will to power or to libido brought to the extreme by Freud; second, by outlining the theoretical status of the term 'original choice' as being prior to any logic; and, third, because he denies the complex as being in the unconsciousness, and by doing this, he comes closer to tacit knowledge³¹ (which has nothing to do with Freudian subconsciousness³²).

Sartre sets out a laborious analysis of the differences between the Freudian, i.e. empirical psychoanalysis and his existential, i.e. philosophical psychoanalysis. We do not concern with it in detail, suffice it to us to focus on the main points of it. According to Sartre the man is a totality, a complex of many-sidedness, and his irreducible being consists in that he is the one who gets along at the unification of his many-sidedness uniquely characteristic to him.

Well, this unifying act that is acting out by the subject *not* after the act itself but it *precedes* it, and which is called by Sartre the *original project*. By doing so, the subject chooses the Being, and it is the *original choice* that is expressed in all his manifestations, just as, at Spinoza, substance is manifested in all its attributes. In all trends of subject one has to discover one signification that transcends him. An example of it is if somebody is jealous of a woman at the given time

means his general relation to the world in that the subject constitutes himself as a Self. Otherwise, this *empirical* attitude is a manifestation of the choice of ‘an intelligible character’...: if the empirical attitude signifies the choice of the intelligible character, then, just for *he is himself* this choice.³³

Since this choice of himself can only be that of Being, the original choice is a project of Being, for it is ontologically *a priori* as ‘*a before of all choice*’, and it is that manifested in all empirical tendencies. Sartre goes on to explain:

Empirical psychoanalysis and existential psychoanalysis both search within an existing situation for a fundamental attitude which cannot be expressed by simple, logical definitions because it is prior to all logic, and which requires reconstruction according to the laws of specific synthesis. Empirical psychoanalysis seeks to determine the *complex*, the very name of which indicates the polyvalence of all the meanings, which are referred back to it. Existential psychoanalysis seeks to determine the *original choice*. This original choice operating in the face of the world and being a choice of position in the world is total like the complex, it is prior to logic like a complex. It is this, which decides the attitude of the person when confronted with logic and principles, therefore there can be no possibility of questioning it in conformance to logic. It brings together in pre-logical synthesis the totality of the existent, and as such it is the centre of reference for infinity of polyvalent meanings.³⁴

We are dealing with the original choice as described by Sartre, for we want to identify it with what we consider the first stage of conversion, i.e. the intellectual illumination. It is really a pre-logical, unaware synthesis, it can overwhelm upon us even against us. And it is a general experience as well, that all of us have undergone a great revelation, once upon a time, when our eyes open up on the truth, prior of all logic which henceforth determined our course of life. This is the meaning of original choice.

The other relevant moment of Sartre’s doctrine about the original choice bears on the approach of sociology of knowledge but in an encountering sense. As he conceives it, the existential psychoanalysis rejects the presuppositions according to which the milieu make a mechanic effects on the subject in

question. The milieu can act upon the subject to the extent that he is able to comprehend it, that is, he transforms the milieu in a situation. ‘No denotation of a milieu does serve anything for us. The milieu considered, as the situation is in the need of the choosing the for-itself, just as that the in-itself is in the need of milieu by his being in the world.’³⁵ This statement while rejecting the mechanical effect of the milieu would be running encounter to the sociology of knowledge if Sartre himself were aware of what is the signification of it. For a sociology of knowledge the surroundings, that is, the milieu serves as the unique explanatory factor. His main concern can be conceived as follows. He is focusing his interest so much on the leap by man transcends his being in for-self. That is, in the whole book Sartre emphasizes the contingency of the choosing for-itself to the extreme so much that he practically cuts off all the connection of original choice with the milieu, that is, what were the antecedents, namely the question: what had been earlier. He does not explain us conceptually how to come out from the milieu. And at the same time, he does not analyses the other end of the whole of the process as well: what is happening after having chosen the Being, that is, what induce man to act on the line of his earlier insight. Later, in his *Existentialism and humanism* he gave example on the ‘after’ (for instance whether somebody being in doubt applies to a priest or a revolutionary drawing the consequence that he already had chosen before his decision) but no connections with both the antecedents and the future.

However, it is true that in the original choice man has transformed himself but so that he remains identified with himself in the difference. As we have seen the Polanyis, while changing from Atheists to Idealists, remain faithful to their ‘bodiless’ ideals believing in what was not tangible. They transform their selves, on the level of faith, (in the world-outlook in our term), but they remain the same on the first level, on the *Weltanschauung*. (The medium level of the vision of world is that of world-outlook when the encountering parts accepts mutually each other as competent³⁶). They still remained Anti-nationalist, they were still sticking to their virtual home (a better Hungary) on the pattern of Endre Ady, and, finally they still remain faithful to socially handicapped people. This is the dialectic of conversion.

At any rate, the Sartre’s assumption relative to that the Self is able to transform the milieu towards situation transcends the scope of sociology of knowledge for it presupposes a crucial element in the human being. Namely, that the socially acting person

can contrive a plan by himself according to which he transforms the reality, and by doing so he transforms at the same time himself. This act relates the intellectual illumination to practice, or as we named it above, to the act-speech.

4. Heidegger's clearing: in truth of Being

We have so far presented the conversion in the line of both sociology and an (existential) phenomenology. We have come to the notion of man as judged to freedom for he is a being for himself. However, we are falling due to analyse what does consist of the substance of personality for us in its core, and that what is developing from this core. We push aside the many psychological theories on personality for we are striving to touch upon it by a philosophic approach, and at the same time by the help of phenomenology considered as it was originally defined by Husserl as 'looking things with an essential outlook' (*Wesensbetrachtung*).

We know well the assumption of Sartre in his *Existentialism and humanism* (in the forties) that existence precedes essence uniquely in the case of Man. Since he is the unique being who 'nothing else but that which he makes himself', and 'man first of all exists, encounter himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards. If man as the existentialist sees him is not definable, it is because to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself. Thus, there is no human nature because there is no God to have a conception of it. Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself'.³⁷

Going from Sartre to Heidegger,³⁸ we recall that Heidegger denies the tenet of Sartre's on the priority of existence over essence by pointing out that the reversing of *esse essentiae* and *esse existentiae* still remains being in the oblivion of Being and in the framework of the traditional metaphysics.³⁹ For, as Heidegger substantiates in the *Letter on the Humanism*, existence means in reality ek-sistence that is 'standing out'. But the question is: Into what is standing the Man out? The answer is: 'Man [is] standing out into the truth of Being' (230). With his words:

Ek-sistence, though in term of *ecstasis*, does not coincide with *existentia* in either form or content. In term of content ek-sistence means standing out into the truth of Being. *Existentia* (existence) means in contrast *actualitas*, actuality as opposed to mere possibility as *Idea*. Ek-sistence identifies the determination of what man is in the destiny of truth. *Existentia* is the name for realization of something that is as it appears in its *Ideas* (230).

Further to this Heidegger hints at a passage of the *Being and Time* that puts it: 'The 'essence' of

Dasein lies in its existence' (229). But he adds that it does not matter on the standing vis-à-vis existence and essence in the traditional, i.e. metaphysical sense. For this statement of him precedes this contradiction. The statement does not contain a general assumption about the Dasein as it was applied in the XVIII. century on the 'object' as the real metaphysical concept of the real reality. It says rather: Man is (west) on the way that he is that of the 'there' (Da), i.e. that of the clearing (*Lichtung*). This 'wesen' [= the verb from the existence, in German: *sein, war, ge-wesen*, the latter was 'verbalizing' by Heidegger] of 'there is' (Dasein), and this ek-sistence is that what has the ecstatic standing-into-the-truth-of-Being. This ecstatic *Wesen* (= essence) of Man lies in ek-sistence that differs from the existential as thought in the metaphysics.

Thus, the Dasein's existence means here a standing-in-the truth-of-Being as an underlying definition. But this is hidden for the traditional metaphysics that has been searching always for something that is – according to Heidegger – beyond the original question oriented to Being. As Heidegger puts it: 'The truth of Being as the clearing (*Lichtung*) remains hidden for the metaphysics'.

As one can see it is all about of 'truth'. What is the truth as such a question to which Heidegger clings several time. He first attacks the meaning of truth in '*Plato's teaching on the truth*' then in '*On the essence of truth*'. Since both of them run out to make a direct contact from truth to *alétheia*, it is absolutely needed to make at least a brief interpretation of the latter. First of all Heidegger reject the conception of truth as seemingly obvious for each accepting the traditional metaphysics that is according to which 'truth is the accordance (*homiosis*) of a statement (*logos*) with a matter (*pragma*)', or else: 'beings present themselves along with the presentative statement so that the latter subordinates itself to the directive that is to speak of beings *such as they are*' (122). In this case the statement conforms to beings, and speech so uttered is correct and true. However - Heidegger affirms -, Western thinking in its beginning conceived an open region that it calls *alétheia*, the unconcealed. And he added: 'If we translate *alétheia* as 'unconcealment' rather than 'truth', this translation is not merely more literal'; for it means to 'rethink the ordinary concept of truth in the sense of correctness of statements and to think it back to that still uncomprehended disclosedness and disclosures of beings' (125), for it want to get at the beings in order 'that they might reveal themselves with respect to what and how they are'. And further to it, it means things to let be

as they and how are. Therefore liberty is the behaviour of anybody who intrinsically ek-sistent, that is who is standing outside himself. But '[m]an does not possess freedom as a property' – comes back Heidegger to the formula of the Fallennes of the *Being and Time*. For, 'historical man can... not let beings which they are as they are. Then beings are covered up and distorted.. Semblance comes to power' (127). For untruth derives from the essence of truth. Therefore 'Dasein not only ek-sists but also at the same time *in-sists*, i.e. holds fast to what is offered by beings as if they were open of and themselves. *As ek-sistent, Dasein is insistent*'. That's why man is always in errancy, and 'errancy belongs to the inner constitution of the Da-sein into which historical man is admitted' (133). If in spite of this miserable human condition, man tried to get out from the untruth and errancy, and 'from time to time it gets taken up in its primordial essence of truth', but it was happening in the sense of the correctness and presenting in terms of traditional metaphysics. Namely, 'this questioning thinks the question of *Being* of being' (135) that was essentially misleading. This train of thought is already very much familiar of Heidegger.

We can see Heidegger going on always in the line of *Being and Time*, adding that his mains concern *On the essence of truth* was to explain why the thought of mankind went astray in the course of history. As he put it at the end of his essay: 'the truth of Being and not merely of beings remains intentionally undeveloped'. At any rate we can see here corroborated the teaching of the Being and Time on the togetherness of the 'inauthentic' way of life of man and who is able to break out from it in an authentic way. We will see it soon.

At the end of *On the Essence of Truth* Heidegger hints at *The Letter on Humanism*, and we further our interpretation with analyzing this essay. At the beginning one is faced first by some basic conceptions of 'humanism' that are 'too hasty', that is, passing by the original question: What is the man (Da-sein) in his reality in Being? Heidegger argues: all the determinations like 'man is the ensemble of social relations' (Marx), or 'man is nature' (Feuerbach), or man is the renaissance of the Greek word (as Winckelmann, Goethe and Schiller): all these definitions determine Man with regard to a preconceived objectivity. Instead, following Heidegger, man (Dasein) is, we repeat, the essence of Dasein that consists in the standing in the truth of Being. However, Dasein has to arrive at the clearing. The clearing is Being at which not everybody is able to get. For – as it is written in *Being and Time* – 'Being is completely

transcendent'. Thus, Being is completely transcendent 'yet it is nearer to man than every being' (234). However, man is not able to experience this nearest condition. Since in the course of European history Being was forgotten because of the dominance of technique. Therefore Marx revealed the alienation of man, and this statement, in a deeper sense, dates back into the 'homelessness' (243) (that means: who lost his home, his native country) of European people.

But there are two possibilities with regard to the bearing of man to the clearing. The first is the 'natural behaviour' of Man (Dasein), i.e. living in an inauthentic way. This is the sphere of 'thereness'. Dasein is thrown into the public arena of 'the they'. One is enjoying and amusing oneself as Man is doing it; one is reading, making a judgment on literature and arts as Man is doing it; one is withdrawing from the 'crowd' as Man is doing it; one holds outrages what Man also does so.⁴⁰ This is the fundamental propensity of Dasein, when one belongs to everydayness and manifests itself as *das Man*. Symptoms of everydayness are idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity. This is the state of Fallennes. Which is quite normal way of life that 'does not imply a moral-existential or an 'anthropological' distinction but rather a relation ...an 'ecstatic' relation to the essence of man to the truth of Being. Man lives in Fallennes. Yet Heidegger emphasis the opposite, the way out of inauthenticity, in the next sentence: 'But this relation of the essence is as it is not by reason of ek-sistence; on the contrary, the essence of ek-sistence derives existentially-ecstatically from the essence of the truth of Being' (236).

In spite of this inauthenticity the breaking out from that the everydayness is to step into the truth of Being. For us it is more interesting with regard to the view-point of conversion. Although in the framework of Heidegger's theory as outlined in *Sein und Zeit* there is no way out of Fallennes in the future as long as the mankind has come in a particular developed stage of the culture: 'in the future man will be able to think the truth of Being' (239). But in the *Letter on Humanism* it looks like as it were ways for coming out earlier. A possibility for individuals is open.

How? Let's try to interpret after the quotation of a rather lengthy passage. As we have seen earlier: Man is 'thrown' from Being itself into the truth of Being, in order that beings might appear in the light of Being as the beings they are. Man does not decide whether and how beings appear, whether and how God and gods or history and nature come forward into the clearing of Being, come to presence and depart. The advent of beings lies in the destiny of Being. But for man it is ever a question of finding

what is fitting in his essence that corresponds to such destiny; for in accord with this destiny man as ek-sisting has to guard the truth of Being. Man is the shepherd of Being. It is in this direction alone that *Being and Time* is thinking when ecstatic existence is experienced as ‘care’ (234).⁴¹

Thus, Heidegger’s thinking is directed against the metaphysical ‘subjectivism’ (as revealed by Kant) that led to subjugation of philosophy to be considered as a mere ‘expression of culture (Spengler) or else as ‘an ornament of productive mankind’.⁴² Heidegger seeks to replace the truth in his original place as it was in Pre-Socratic time: *alétheia*. As it reveals itself as unconcealment after having been removed any kind of subjective addition of any mental or intellectual act. The truth must be self-concealed as it gives itself freely to the human mind.

Before going into the interpretation of this text let’s make a halt and see Polanyi’s conception of ‘breaking out’, and we will return later to the quoted passage above.

5. Polanyi on the ‘breaking out’

It is rather surprising that while *Personal Knowledge*’s index has 14 entries for ‘indwelling’, the breaking out is referred only two times. Further to this, in *Meaning* ‘indwelling’ is referred 24 times but there is no reference to the breaking out.⁴³ As far as I am able to glance at the whole of Michael Polanyi’s oeuvre ‘breaking out’ has not been mentioned in any other work. It is no surprise that those dealing with Michael Polanyi have not thematised this concept as well. The first book written about Michael Polanyi was that of Richard Gelwick who has not dealt with the breaking out.⁴⁴ The next was Harry Prosch’s book which gave a ‘critical explanation’ of the Polanyian oeuvre, and while he analyses ‘indwelling’ throughout 24 pages, he did not mention breaking out.⁴⁵ In her book Drusilla Scott expounds the problem under the aegis of acceptance of calling but she does not bring into relation to the fact that Polanyi was breaking out from a ‘local parochialism’ of Hungary.⁴⁶ Andy Sanders deals with the concept of indwelling (under the meaning *understanding*), but the breaking out is not a problem for him, too.⁴⁷ Richard Allen digresses on the significance of the breaking out but does not analyse it in his small book on Polanyi but does discuss it in later publications.⁴⁸ In the last larger book of J.H. Gill’s index ‘indwelling’ appears but breaking out is not mentioned.⁴⁹ But recently Walter Gulick touched upon indirectly the question concerning Polanyi’s teaching on reality and truth,⁵⁰ and so did Andy Sanders.⁵¹ We will dealing later with them.

We shall try to interpret Michael Polanyi’s conception of breaking out. He himself introduces the concept of breaking out in the sixth chapter of *Personal Knowledge*, as a counter-concept of indwelling. First he emphasizes: A valid articulate framework may be a theory, or a mathematical discovery, or a symphony. Whichever it is, it will be used by dwelling in it, and this *indwelling* can be consciously experienced.⁵²

Thus, everything we assimilated in our lives can serve as an interpretative framework in which we dwell in as in our body. We assimilated them by learning, personally, in an apprenticeship (cf. Chapter 4 in *Personal Knowledge*). By doing this we are situated in a location, namely in our birth of place.

Tacit assent and intellectual passions, the sharing of an idiom and of cultural heritage, affiliation to a like-minded community: such are the impulses which shape our vision of the nature of things on which we rely for our mastery of things. No intelligence, however critical or original, can operate outside such a fiduciary framework.⁵³

This statement is very much straightforward but while it is true in general, yet there are exceptions that prove the ‘essential restlessness of the human mind, which calls ever again in question any satisfaction that it may have previously achieved’.⁵⁴ Thus, while it seems as though we were tied up to our native community unshakeably, Polanyi shows how we can come out of it: ‘*Great pioneers may modify this idiom* by their own efforts, but even their outlook will remain predominantly determined by the time and place of their origin’.⁵⁵ Thus they are partly tied up to but to their idiom but at the same time free to come out of their native community. As Polanyi discriminates in this chapter the breaking out as the capacity of ‘great pioneers’, who are simultaneously ‘contact with universal aspirations’.⁵⁶ Reading further on the *Personal Knowledge* we are find an explanation of it. In Chapter 6, *Intellectual Passions* Polanyi presents us with an example of breaking out: the great scientific discovery. He is laying emphasis on the fact that the great scientific discovery can not be achieved by strictly logical performance but rather by overcoming a ‘logical gap’ in problem solving. ‘Illumination’ is needed to cross this gap.

The pioneer mind which reaches its own distinctive conclusions by crossing a logical gap deviates from the commonly accepted process of reasoning, to achieve surprising results. Such an act is original in the sense of making a new start, and the capacity for initiating it is a gift of originality, a gift possessed by a small minority.⁵⁷

And those accepting the really new result are required to follow the new proponent by crossing the gap as well but not by becoming convinced but by an 'irrational' act, conversion.

Proponents of a new system can convince their audience only by winning their intellectual sympathy for a doctrine they have not yet grasped. Those who listen sympathetically will discover for themselves what they would otherwise never have understood. Such acceptance is a heuristic process, a self-modifying act and to this extent a *conversion*. It produces disciples forming a school, the members of which are separated for the time being by a logical gap from outside it. They think differently, speak a different language, live in a different world, and at least one of the two schools is excluded to this extent for the time being (whether rightly or wrongly) from the community of science.⁵⁸

This is a very telling assumption of Polanyi's epistemology since he holds the great scientific discovery to be a breaking out from the traditional framework of thought, and at the same time, he lays the accent on the fact that the great scientific discovery can overwhelm not by a convincing rationality but by an 'irrational' though understandable act: conversion. This is a remarkable statement for it makes an apparent connection between a great scientific discovery and conversion. But we would like to make sure: in our understanding not all scientific discovery cannot claim this status, for a real conversion needs to be perfected by an act (destiny event) in our terms.

The next step towards the 'breaking out' figures in *Personal Knowledge* as mentioned above. Analysing the characteristic of arts Polanyi is detecting a general trait of all arts. Discriminating the 'framework' that can be a theory, a mathematical discovery or a symphony and he claims it to be the *differentia specifica* for all arts. This shows Polanyi's effort to enlarge the span of concept 'framework' into a larger sphere. The framework is, in sciences, a conceptual one that cannot be observed or else scientifically proved, but in which one is dwelling. We have seen above that a great discovery in science means to break out from the routine framework. By now, coming closer to the arts, it becomes obvious that to enjoy any works of art amounts 'neither to observe nor to handle them but to live in them'.⁵⁹ And he adds: 'Thus the satisfaction of gaining intellectual control over the external world is linked to satisfaction of gaining control over ourselves'. This dual satisfaction is persistent, he explains, and must demolish the framework valid so far. In sciences a new framework leads from the earlier to the new one, and 'while it is thus breaking out, the mind is for the

moment directly experiencing its content rather than controlling it by the use of any pre-established modes of interpretation'.⁶⁰ At this point we can see that how Polanyi brings scientific discovery closer to what Max Weber called an 'irrational understanding' (*Einfühlung*) characteristic uniquely of an emotional context 're-lived through'. For Michael Polanyi did not accept the abyss between the natural sciences and humanistic sciences in this respect. After cleaning up the way towards the intangible sphere he further his thought to the 'ecstatic vision'. He emphasises that it matters not the astronomical observation but our act when we contemplate the stars 'with great interest but without thinking them'. He continues:

The conceptual framework by which we observe and manipulate things being present as a screen between ourselves and these things, their sight and sounds, and the smell and touch of them transpire but tenuously through this screen which keeps us aloof from them. Contemplation dissolves the screen, stops our movement through experience and pours us straight into experience; we cease to handle things and become immersed in them. Contemplation has no ulterior intention or ulterior meaning; in it we cease to deal with things and become absorbed in the inherent quality of our experience, for its own sake.⁶¹

Beside of arts the chief example of this is the 'mystic' who 'by concentrating of the presence of God who is beyond all physical appearances, the mystics seeks to relax the intellectual control which his powers of perception instinctively exercise over the scene confronting them'.⁶² Christian mysticism is known as *via negativa* as described by Pseudo-Dionysius.

And he shows us as an example for it that is closer to the mystic vision, the Christian faith:

The Christian faith in everyday action is just a sustained effort at breaking out, sustained by the love and desire for God, a God who can be loved but not observed. Proximity to God is not an observation, for it overwhelms and pervades the worshipper. An observer must be relatively detached from that which he observes, and religious experience transforms the worshipper. It stands in his respect closer to sensual abandon than to exact observation. Mystics speak of religious ecstasy in erotic terms... But religious ecstasy is an articulate passion and resembles sensual abandon only in the surrender achieved by it.⁶³

Polanyi compares here the scientific attitude with that of the mystic and insists to the difference in their behaviour. The scientist must be relatively detached from the observed, while the mystic is dissolving in his object. Later on, in *Meaning* Polanyi will find an other formula grasping the difference. We will return back later to this point.

Polanyi goes on to interpret the arts in the light of *via negativa* that expresses a radical anti-intellectualism seeking 'to break out of our normal conceptual framework and 'become like 'little children'' – in the case of religion. Music, poetry and painting are in an intermediary situation between science and religion. Then he analyses the modern artist's works (like Sartre's *Nauseé*, Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, Stravinsky's *Sacre du Printemps*, etc.) and concludes that 'the work of art is more akin to an act of religious devotion in remaining, even in its finished form, an instrument of more active and comprehensive contemplation'.⁶⁴ However, the differences between the scientific discovery and religious mystical vision are that that the things apprehended by science are real but in religion they are not.

It is not an objective reality; for it is not the focus of an intelligent perception anticipating future confirmation by tangible things, but resides merely [in the example of contemplation of stars] in the coloured patches of various shapes which the things present to the eye.⁶⁵

Since the person in contemplation completely immersed in his vision, and not detached from it unlike in the case of an ideally objective observation. Therefore, it can be described either as egocentric or as selfless, depending on whether we see it from outside or inside. But the main point of Polanyi in *Personal knowledge* concerning the breaking out looms in that it also can occur in cases when it produces tangible things but not belonging to 'objective reality'.

Michael Polanyi takes up this point and continues in *Meaning* with a sophisticated analysis. Though we made a hint earlier at the fact that in the index of the *Meaning* did not figure the 'breaking out', yet, it is in reality figuring in the text. Going through the analyses of work of art and validity of art he arrives at the religion in the shape of the structure of the myth. Polanyi developed further his theory on arts and religion and emphasizes that in these spheres it matters of uniting of incompatible clues, that is, the frame with the content. Like in Shakespeare's Hamlet where we are seeing a murder re-lived as it were true although we know that is not in reality. We are honouring as 'true' an event though the story told us we clearly understand that it is not true.⁶⁶ This structure holds to all arts.

Our lives are formless, submerged in a hundred crosscurrents. The arts are imaginative representations, hewn into artificial patterns; and these patterns, when jointly integrated with an important content, produce a meaning of distinctive

quality. These artificial patterns are, as we have seen, what isolate works of art from the shapeless flow of both personal existence and public life.⁶⁷

Thus the work of art detaches us from our everyday life and carries us away. *This detachment* is not identical with what we have seen in *Personal Knowledge* when Polanyi distinguished scientific observation (which must be relatively detached) from the mystic's vision (who is immersed in his object and does not observe it). This *new detachment* bears upon our everyday life and the aesthetic sphere. Here, we are already in the sphere of aesthetics where we are already 'carried away'. And Polanyi next compares poetry, visionary art, painting with each other, and finally he seeks to come at the truth of the myth. At the end of his long interpretation he accentuates a point that recalls the contemplation as described in *Personal Knowledge*. When the person 'abandons', 'loses' himself, when immersed e.g. in the stars, that clearly shows that he brings closer the arts to religion.

The recital of myth is an experience that is detached from the day-to-day concerns of the reciting person in the same way as the frame aspect of a work of art detaches us from the concerns of the day. It raises us to a timeless moment. What happens when we accept a myth is what happens when listen to great poetry or a great play or view a great painting: we are overcome by it and carried away into its own sphere, away from the sphere in which we lives a moment ago and to which we shall presently return. It is the kind of detachment that we experience by observing a festive occasion or day of mourning. The detachment associated with rituals prescribed by archaic myth is clearly akin to religious devotion...The integration of incompatibles accomplished for us by the creative powers of the imagination are as evident in religious thought as they were in the arts.⁶⁸

It shows itself here how Polanyi is building out a series of integrations of incompatible parts (in the painting the combination of flatness and depth, murders and non-murders on the stage, etc.) from mathematics, physics and through the arts to religion. And he discriminates between science and arts by pointing out that art and myths go beyond incompatibles as it is in mathematics and physics. 'The latter are acceptable as *natural* integrations; the former, by contrast, must be called *transnatural*...The integrations of art, poetry, and myth, however, they do not enter in a practical way into our ordinary lives. They do not 'work' in such a sphere. They are, as we have said, detached from our daily lives. And their incompatibles *remain* incompatible. They must be joined together by a new act of our imagination every time we contemplate them. They thus appear to us to be meaningful and

coherent but nevertheless to have meanings that go beyond the 'natural'.⁶⁹

Let's sum up the interim lessons to bring home from the interpretation of breaking out by Michael Polanyi. The main lesson is that there are *transnatural formations* to which to come one must to break out from the customary conceptual framework (in the sciences), to detach ourselves from the customary daily life (religion), or we must unite incompatible parts (in the arts).

The question can be raised whether and how the *transnatural formations* are real or not. The answer is (though very much contested especially in religion⁷⁰) ambiguous, because there are some who deny their ontological status. For they say these ones to be only appearances, illusions created by chance interactions, and dependent on the man. Others speak peculiar congeries of historically needs and causes to which all religious meaning is reduced. Ethical meanings can be reduced to economic needs. Aesthetic meanings can be considered to be biological and psychological needs.

But Polanyi rejects these assumptions. 'The meanings – the coherent entities – which we know as Michelangelo's Moses, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, the virtue of justice, and the Christian God are not only intangibles, they are regarded by contemporary as free human creations... They seem, possibly, to have no existence or being at all in the absence of man'.⁷¹

However, they have a real meaning, not merely imagined. The aesthetic meaning of Moses 'is there', the Ninth Symphony is ruling all over in the world of the hearts, and so on. As Polanyi puts it by saying it to an imaginary contestant who questioned their reality:

Their coherence is no less real than the perceptual and scientific coherences he so readily accepts. He needs to see how his obvious personal involvement with these meanings is necessarily and legitimately part and parcel of the reality they actually have, that his personal involvement is not at all a reason to regard them as mere subjective fantasies. These meanings will then not seem to be mere appearances to him. They will seem to be in truth what they 'are'.⁷²

Recently Andy Sander's raises the problem of the transnatural formation in connection with reality.⁷³ In his interpretation he takes first the definition of the reality by Polanyi (IMF Effect = indeterminate future manifestations), and has come to the question whether this IMF criteria could be applied outside natural sciences. It seems to me if he had reread *Meaning* he could not doubt this at least in terms of Polanyi's self-interpretation. As we have seen

above, Polanyi explicitly requires the reality of transnatural formations. Better said, reality of meaning. But meaning can be attributed to human beings. And if it is true, the real meaning of myths and religion (that is, some God's independent being outside ourselves), it could be inferred, has evaporated. Polanyi was so concerned to eliminate the differences between science and humanities, between art and religion, that in the last analysis he blurred the distinction between art and religion. For if the meaning is real in humanities and religion as a real product of human mind ('imagination') no place independent of human being would remain for God. That was the bone of contention in *Zygon* discussion. But it was Polanyi's original intention that science, and even philosophy cannot prove the existence of God. He can 'only' can show that God's existence does not contradict the findings of science.

Walter Gulick has recently scrutinized Polanyi's stance about the real and meaning, and the connections between the two. He argues that Polanyi 'introduces a new insight into the notion of meaning as distinct from the real that has as yet not been fully appreciated (not even always by Polanyi himself)'.⁷⁴ He is warning us about 'the rigid identification of the meaningful and the real', for it threatens to result in scepticism, cynicism or total disbelief. Anybody can make the statement as follows: 'I won't accept [God, justice, beauty, etc.] as authoritative because it can not be demonstrated that [god, justice, beauty etc.] is real'. But if the two remain separated, in this case the question is: 'What are the visions and values you are willing to live and perhaps to die by?' Gulick's answer is: 'Dwelling in such meanings [that means: imbued by communal standards, included God, justices, etc.] orients one's existence and provides direction for living the good life. Can any ontological insight offer more?'⁷⁵ This suggests that the answer is 'no'. But 'Yes, it can' e would answer with Michael Polanyi. For he was not so much permissive towards ontological questions. If we consider his heavy attack on Max Weber's value-neutral sociology in *The Message of Hungarian Revolution* and teachings of *Beyond Nihilism*, and his perspective of the free society as described in the *Logic of Liberty*, we must state that he was strongly in favour of 'the natural attitude' in science and free society in his world-view. But he did not want to use science for substantiating God's existence.

The other problem with Gulick's stance is that he does not differentiate among art, justice and religion. Religion has in a quite another status vis-à-vis the arts as we developed above.

But the main trouble is the sharp distinction between the real and meaning that Gulick made and his reproach of Polanyi for not always appreciating this distinction. We can reply to this that Polanyi was clearly aware of the difference between the two kinds of meaning. When he insisted on the reality of humanities he was led by his stern aversion against both totalitarianism that denied reality to them. If we follow his train of thought in *Meaning* (pp. 67-68.) we see that it clearly shows this. He stresses the fact that Michelangelo's Moses etc. and the Christian God as well (!)

are not only intangible; they are regarded by contemporary men as free human creations – not subject to correction by nature. They seem possibly to have no existence at all in the absence of men. Therefore, they would appear to have an existence only in the sense of being present, as such, in somebody's mind and in the sense of being the effect of a heterogeneity of natural causes.

So these are men who are striving to demonstrate that they are but 'results of lower motivations or, eventually, of the reactions of atoms'.⁷⁶ And on the next page he points out the danger threatening us from such people.

The danger is that such a man may then also be induced at some point...to steel himself the sacrifice these meanings to 'realities' – to the ruthless demand of a Marxist or Fascism or to the no less ruthless demands of some other currently more fashionable theory of social engineering; for he knows no philosophic position that supports their reality other than in terms of those lower elements to which they are supposedly reducible.⁷⁷

Thus, Polanyi while vindicating the reality of these formations, saw the difference as well, and the whole of the book can be considered as a plea to people to accept the reality of this kind of meaning as of poetry, dramatic play, visual arts and myths and religion for 'their coherence in no less real than the perceptual and scientific coherence'.⁷⁸ Of course we cannot perceive it with our sensory organs. Then in what resides their reality? If they are not tangible how can we grasp them? To answer this question let's recall the example of scientific discovery which is tangible and perceivable since it opened up a true reality outside of us. That was Copernicus' heliocentric system mentioned by Polanyi already at the very beginning of *Personal Knowledge*. The lesson to be brought home by Polanyi was that

Copernicus gave preference to man's delight in abstract theory, at the price of rejecting the evidence of our senses, which present us with the irresistible fact of the sun, the moon, and the stars rising daily in the east to travel across the sky towards their setting in the west [because] such discovery, while using the

experience of our senses as clues, transcends this experience by embracing the vision of reality beyond the impressions of our senses, a vision which speaks for itself in guiding us to an ever deeper understanding of reality.⁷⁹

It can be objected that the solar system as discovered by Copernicus could be observed later, but we cannot observe such 'entities', like morality, art, God, etc. Where is the real locus of them? If Polanyi claims that their meaning resides in our imaginative power by the help of which we bring about the joint meaning of incompatibles, then does this meaning exist only in our imagination?

However, let's consider another entity which is very similar to art but nobody contests its reality, the law and especially the English common law. As already Burke demonstrated, the Common Law has grown through the centuries but it is not identical with the acts approved by Parliament. No, because the law in England is that which has been judged to be such. As far as there is no judgment adjudicated by a judge of a higher Court one cannot define it *in concreto*. The law is 'judge-made-law' as exists in precedents in connection of which Polanyi puts it in a manuscript:

Take the administration of law and consider the individual judge sitting in court and deciding a case. While pondering his decision, he refers consciously to dozen of precedents and unconsciously many more. Innumerable other judges have sat before him and decided according to law, precedent, equity and convenience, as he will decide now himself. He has to establish lines of communication between himself and those judges of the past, in order to discover how they would have considered the various aspect of the case before him. And beyond that he will sense the social medium as a whole, the entire contemporary trend of opinions and values...The tide of influence starts flowing backwards...Then as soon as he has taken his decision, it joins the galaxy of precedent, forming a new particle of law, custom, which affects to some slight extent the interpretation of all past law and custom on which it has based.⁸⁰

The question rises: where exist the English Common Law? Does it exist at all? The answer is: it does, namely in the minds of innumerable judges of past and present. There is an existence of something that has been formed and handed down from one generation to another. And this line of generation has been bearing the corpus of law as much as that in other transnatural formations. So there has been a concatenation lining out of people (artists, poets, magicians, ministers) who have been creating these transnatural formations in arts, literature, myths and God's service as it has been done in sciences discovering tangibles, natural things. The former cannot be got hold of as one takes a stone, but they

exist. There exists a *phylogenetic subjectivity*. As Conservative thinkers point out: there exists a covenant tacitly upheld by generations who form the society as a whole⁸¹ just as with phylogenetic subjectivity. The product of this cannot be accounted for as, let's say, the solar system as discovered by Copernicus but it is alive in the mutual adjustments described by Polanyi already in *Personal Knowledge*. He expressed it as follows:

The administration of the humanities, the arts, of practice of various religions are all entrusted, like that of science, to a chain of authoritative of specialists. The position and power of these may be institutionally established, as it is in the churches, or it may depend entirely on the respect in which they are held by their admirers and followers, as is the case with poets and painters.⁸²

And Polanyi also states that in a pluralistic society a measure of consensus continues in according some intellectual merit to most of the members of the élites who are maintaining it.

To accept a great scientific discovery involves a real conversion, and a self-modifying act. Yet, please take it into consideration that the great scientific discovery means conversion so much so far as forming a self-modifying act. Discovery being in the workaday level in itself does not need a perfect conversion but 'only' an intellectual illumination. Thus, in most cases, an average scientific discovery does not bring about the self-transformation, that is, of the inner transformation of the whole of general behaviour.

6. Again: Heidegger on the 'clearing'

Now, let's return to the interpretation of Heidegger. First of all, the statement that man's task to take care of the truth of Being is not a factual assumption but rather it is a normative one. It can happen or not. As Heidegger says: 'The happening of history occurs essentially as the destiny of It, Being, gives itself. But thought on terms of such destiny this says: it gives itself and refuses itself simultaneously'.⁸³ In my view the forgottenness of Being cannot be only a result of the history of philosophy but it can be 'ontogenetic' i.e. individual one as well. This is the way of life of Man who does not stand out into the truth of Being, passing by the clearing, forgetful of Being, the non-ek-sistence, that is in-sistence. It goes without saying that the truth of Being, i.e. the coming into the clearing, can be many. The Truth of Being reveals itself when a geographer discovers a reality as yet hidden. He does not make the reality but it was disclosed for him: Being gave itself for him. The truth of Being consists in that it 'is' independently of the explorer. When a judge adjudicates a just decision he has *found* the law but he did not make it.

When Copernicus discovered the heliocentric system, the solar system was in existence well before he discovered it. The Truth of Being once again sent itself for him. In these cases man humbly subjects oneself to something there out that was not made by him but by a phylogenetic subjectivity. For the truth of Being sent itself for him. As being Dasein, man is standing out into the 'undisclosedness' (Unverborgenheit) named by the Greeks 'alétheia'. Therefore as Heidegger put it: man is not the ruler of Being but its shepherd.

In a quite unusual way Heidegger's searching for the truth of work of art is just directed to the relationship to the truth. We say quite unusual for those concerning with the works of art search for the 'particularity' of art (as Georg Lukacs did in his theory of Aesthetics) and not for the truth as such. Their main concern is to elaborate the difference between scientific, mostly empirical provable or verifiable truth, and the idiosyncratic character of aesthetical 'truth'. At any rate in most cases they lay stress on the unique character of the work of art, and make very effort to prove that aesthetic formation has nothing to do with truth in terms of concepts. In spite of all this endeavour Heidegger seeks the origin of art and anchors it in the truth as such namely in the alétheia.

We have not space enough to expand upon his train of thought in detail but two points are interesting for us. Following Heidegger, the key concept of breaking out from everydayness consists of coming into the *truth* of Being. Here he recalls that 'if the essence of the unconcealment of beings [that is: Dasein, everydayness, that is: inauthentic way of life] belongs in anyway to Being [that is: Dasein is the nearest to Being though not perceived] (see Being and Time, section 44.), Being, by way of its own essence, lets the free space of openness (the clearing of the There [Da]) happen, and introduces it as a place *of the sort* in which each being emerges in its own way'.⁸⁴ This text reveals first: that the work of art is an entity possible amounting to the truth. As later he points out: '*Art is a becoming and happening of truth*'.⁸⁵ And he goes on by saying (in the vein of Polanyi's 'detachment' of work of art): 'The essence of art...is in the setting-itself-into work-of-truth. It is due to art's poetic essence that, in the midst of beings, art breaks open an open space, in whose openness everything is other as usual [Polanyi: 'they are detached from our daily lives'⁸⁶]''.⁸⁷

Second, that each being could emerge in the truth of Being ('clearing of the There') from the inauthentic way of living. Further on in the text he

says that there are several ways to emerge in the truth of Being:

One essential way in which truth establishes itself in the beings it has open up is truth itself into the work. Another way in which truth occurs is the act that founds a political state. Still another way in which truth comes to shine forth is the nearness to that which is not simply being, but the being that is most in being. Still another way in which truth grounds itself is the essential sacrifice. Still another way in which truth becomes is the thinker's questioning, which, as the thinking of Being, names Being in its question-worthiness. [Even the science is not included from this process:] When and insofar as a science passes beyond correctness [to which it was brought in the forgottenness of Being by metaphysics] and goes on to the truth, which means that arrives at the essential disclosure of beings as such, it is philosophy.⁸⁸

We can now turn to Polanyi's insights reflected by Heidegger in *The Origin of Work of Art*. Not just the same but very similar. There are, of course, differences. For instance Heidegger is focusing on the origin (German *Ursprung* what means in English: primal leap), that is considered by Heidegger 'a distinctive way in which truth comes into being, that is, becomes historical, for '[a]rt is history in the essential sense that grounds history'. Thus, Heidegger goes back in the making of art to where art arises from, or else art leads itself outside of itself, that is the truth of Being. In this Heideggerian context the art is rooted in the same soil as the thought of mankind: thinking (See: *What calls for Thinking?*⁸⁹. Thinking – in the early Greek sense when *mythos* and *logos* did not 'become separated and opposed' (376).

In contrast, Polanyi goes forward into the structural semblance or phenomenon of art, or else into the advent or appearance of the work of art. He brings together the creator and audience who are working together to combine the incompatibles. That means they are aware of distinct ones being of two incompatible worlds, the world of the work of art and the world of reality. Although Heidegger is seeking to make a synopsis of two incompatibles, the reality as unconcealed or truth and the world of artwork as a creation of an aesthetic unit, he also uncovers the incompatibles as Polanyi did it. For if he shows that '[t]ruth essentially occurs only as a strife between clearing and concealing in the opposition of world and earth' (187), (whatever must be understood by the latter two), he has arrived at the incompatibles as the essence in the Polanyian conception. As we have seen with Polanyi: while the emphasised pole is the framework that is one side of the work of art as such, Heidegger lays stress on the process in which

the artwork is brought about. Heidegger looks at 'behind the framework' and he is 'bedding himself' into the truth as *alétheia*. But Heidegger discovers as well what Polanyi calls 'detachment' when he throws light on the fact that '[t]he more solitary the work, fixed in the figure, stands on its own and the more cleanly it seems to cut all ties to human beings' (191) for it is seceded from our ordinary way of life: 'it transport us out of the realm of ordinary' (191). Thus both thinkers are endeavouring to get at the essence of the work of art but Polanyi gives us a *structural* analysis while Heidegger a *genetic* one ('origin' of the work of art). But both of them see in the great works of art a breaking out from our ordinary or inauthentic way of life. In so far the human beings are able to break out, that is getting converted.

The authentic way of life as described by Heidegger means living in the truth of Being or coming into the clearing (*Lichtung*) by the fact that one subjected oneself to the requirements of the great intellectual achievement of mankind (be it science, art, religion, philosophy, etc.). As Michael Polanyi emphasizes it: one has to put to the scientific (or aesthetic or religious) community one's discovery with universal intent. And the same holds in other branches of humanities. That is personal knowledge beyond subject and object humbly yielding to standards out of our direct effect. To break out on the individual level is open to everybody but not all of us can step into the clearing or be carried away. Man oscillates between his ordinary life of fallenness and at times he succeeds in getting at 'in the truth of Being' when he is creating or rejoicing science, arts or submerging in God. In my understanding this oscillation was well apprehended by Heidegger with the curious verb: *wesen*. For man or *Dasein* is at the same time *ek-sistent* and *in-sistent*. He was judged never to reconcile with himself.

7. To sum up

Summing up the lessons of the doctrine of Michael Polanyi on 'breaking out', one can state in connection with conversion as follows:

1. breaking out means to transcend the world dwelt in;
2. the most robust breaking out is that of the mystic vision that transcend of our conceptual thought;
3. there is a clear similarity between Heideggerian *ek-sistence* as coming into the truth of Being and Polanyian transnatural formations in so far as both means to live in the clearing as self-subordinations for standards (as the Being gives himself) maintained by a phylogenetic subjectivity and rejecting to live the ordinary way of life as fallenness;

4. since breaking out means not an every day event but needs a great scientific or artistic achievement it can be attributed to rare moments but in spite of its rareness as such, it can occur to everybody who is able to break out from the ordinary life;
5. conversion means an intellectual illumination but it must be implemented by an inner self-transformation to make conversion complete (destiny event).

And to come to the end of this essay let's quote a strophe of Goethe's poem as a lesson to bring home:

Wer Wissenschaft und Kunst besitzt
 Hat auch Religion,
 Wer jene beiden nicht besitzt,
 Der habe Religion.

But recall: the last line ('Der habe Religion') is conceived in oblique speech. That means freely translated: who should have a religion!

Semmelweis University
 Budapest
 dr.nagy.endre@gmail.com

Notes:

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Continued on p.55

MICHAEL POLANYI, SCIENTIST, SOCIOLOGIST AND PHILOSOPHER: THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS IN SCIENCE

Norman Sheppard

Abstract

Polanyi's philosophy of science concentrates on the informal application of imagination and judgement in the vitally important context of the ready checking of theoretical ideas by experiment or by further observations, and not upon any formal methodology. Instead he applied his concept of *tacit knowledge*, i.e. the unique lifetime-acquired experiences of a person that can be brought to bear on a particular problem, to scientific research and its practical skills. His sociological account of how individual scientists are trained, and how they relate to others within the relevant scientific community, is particularly significant.

Polanyi's account is contrasted with those of Popper and of Kuhn, in the latter case taking into account their different approaches to scientific revolutions (or upheavals as Polanyi termed them). Account is also given of Polanyi's assertion that biological phenomena cannot be fully defined in terms of physics and chemistry, and his use within science of the concept of emergent phenomena.

Key Words

Biology, chemistry, Kuhn, personal participation, physics, Michael Polanyi, science, scientific community, tacit knowledge

1. Introduction

Michael Polanyi, who died in 1976, came from a liberal and cultured Jewish Austro-Hungarian family. He was a natural polymath. During his early career he moved from an early interest in medicine to the field of physical chemistry in which he did work of notable originality in the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Physical Chemistry in Berlin. After the advent of Hitler, he moved to the University of Manchester in 1933 as Professor of Physical Chemistry, and while there was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1944. His concern for the aftermath of the 1929 economic crash led him to try and work out a model for the economic cycle and he was permitted to change his Manchester Chair of Physical Chemistry for one of Social Studies in 1948. From then he turned to a more general philosophy which was strongly underpinned by his experiences as a scientist. His magnum opus *Personal Knowledge*¹ (hereafter referred to as *PK*) published in 1958, the theme of which relates to that of this conference,

was published in 1958 as a great expansion of his earlier Gifford Lectures, published in 1946 as *Science, Faith and Society*.² *PK* is not an easy read, partly because of the width of the topics covered, but contains much original content. Perhaps because, to them, he refers to many unfamiliar examples from the field of science, Polanyi's work is little quoted by other philosophers of science, at least partially because he considers that their strongly rationalist approach does less than justice to science in action. He was disappointed by the lack of acceptance of his work in the UK, but during the two decades before his death he was invited frequently to speak in the USA where his ideas have been mostly applied in non-scientific fields.

This paper is concerned solely with the science-related aspects of Polanyi's philosophy. I am myself not a philosopher but, like Polanyi during the earlier part of his career, a physical chemist. I and a number of scientific friends to whom I have outlined his account of science (few scientists read philosophy) have agreed that it provides a fine and realistic description of how science is actually carried out.

2. Polanyi's overall aims

Let us start with some of Polanyi's own words which clearly define the major interest of his work.³

This is primarily an enquiry into the nature and justification of scientific knowledge. I start by rejecting the ideal of scientific detachment....

....Personal Knowledge. The two words may seem to contradict each other; for true knowledge is deemed impersonal, universally established, objective. But the seeming contradiction is resolved by modifying the conception of knowing [the concept of learning, or getting to know?]

.....the personal participation of the knower (occurs) in all acts of understanding. But this does not make our understanding subjective. Comprehension is neither an arbitrary act nor a passive experience, but a responsible act claiming universal validity. Such knowing is indeed objective in the sense of establishing contact with a hidden reality.....It seems reasonable to describe this fusion of the personal and the objective as Personal Knowledge.

....The act of knowing includes an appraisal, and this personal coefficient, which shapes all factual

knowledge, bridges in doing so the disjunction between subjectivity and objectivity’

In general Polanyi wanted to get away from the notion that progress in science is a logical, almost inevitable, process giving cut-and-dried results, as it is often perceived to be. Part of the problem lies within science itself. Scientific papers have, by convention, long been presented in an artificial third-person manner, as if reporting cut-and-dried results for an archive. The philosophers have been happy with this convention but sociologists have rightly criticised it. Polanyi by contrast presents science as a forward-thrusting activity involving passionate personal commitments in the convivial companionship of like-minded, but at the same time rival, colleagues (see Section 4).

3. Personal contributions in science

Within science it is a common finding that the solution to one problem very often leads to interest in a further one. Both in his science and in his philosophy Polanyi clearly exhibits a strongly intuitive mind, always looking for further progress. He repeatedly says that the perception of a rational reality within Nature ‘anticipate(s) an indeterminate range of yet unknown (and perhaps yet inconceivable) true implications’ for the future’.³ Polanyi is best known for his concept of *tacit knowledge* - the ideas and skills that one has uniquely acquired during a lifetime - which are automatically and intuitively employed (*‘I know more than I can say’*) when trying to solve a problem. Skills of both theoretical and practical types are important in science because of the important role of experimentation in promoting reliable progress.. A scientific problem often starts from an interesting observation followed by an idea in explanation. This idea normally has further implications beyond the original observations and these can be subjected to experimental scrutiny - this is the so-called hypothetico-deductive procedure. It can lead to support or discouragement of the original idea, in the first case possibly suggesting a refinement to the original idea, and in the second case often to intimations of a more-promising hypothesis. Within this procedure, theory and experiment have a chicken-and-egg relationship with one another. However, as Polanyi emphasises, sometimes a new theory appears fully grown.

Polanyi sees problem-solving as the application of articulated evidence of likely relevance, together with inarticulate tacit knowledge, all as subsidiary particulars hopefully capable of integration to solve the focal problem. This can suddenly in the manner of Gestalt psychology. Persistence has long been considered a virtue in science and for a difficult

problem Polanyi sees the necessity for *in-dwelling* with, and commitment to, the problem. This might involve repeated review of the various relevant factors and of the evidence available. Under these conditions the subconscious continues to work on the problem with the complete solution sometimes appearing spontaneously. Often this occurs during a period of relaxation rather than of focussed effort. I can personally attest to the effectiveness of this procedure – the longer one persists with a problem, the more ideas come to the fore. When we solve a problem our intellectual passions are assuaged, but our solution still needs to be put to the test. In science this is normally done by publication in the literature and carries the personal risk of a subsequent rebuttal.

4. The person within the scientific community

In his sociological role Polanyi also describes the structure and importance of the relevant scientific community, as also contributing to the success of the scientific enterprise.^{1,2} Apart from a genius, such as Newton, Darwin or Einstein, who seems to be far ahead of his rivals, most scientists operate within an informal ‘invisible college’ of international membership. This consists of those individuals and their associated research-groups who are interested in the same general type of problem. They will often approach similar problems with different ideas and alternative experimental techniques. The members of these informal problem-related communities often correspond or meet in conferences, with what Polanyi describes as *conviviality* because they share common or similar goals. At the same time however they preserve critical frames of mind because, as mentioned earlier, they are rivals in each hoping to be the first to publish the principal conclusions. The resulting situation is that many intelligent individuals with alternative points of view focus on the same type of problem and progress can be rapid. Although science has today many sub-branches, ranging from cosmology to the structure of the nuclei of atoms, or from ecological systems to a single biological cell, there is an overlapping coherence of outlook across the whole of science, primarily because of the shared theory-and-experiment relationship. Kuhn (see n.7, Section 8) has also pointed to the important role of the scientific community but seemed ignorant of Polanyi’s account,

No theory can be considered scientific if it persistently finds its predictions to be persistently at variance with experimental or observational results. Although controversy within a particular research field can last for a considerable period, in the end consensus is normally reached within most of the

community, based on experimental evidence and/or on a theoretical concept of wide applicability. Polanyi attributes this consensual capability to be a product of a uniform apprentice-like training, usually at Ph.D. or postdoctoral levels, during which guidance and criticism is given to an individual by a senior figure. Such a supervisor also introduces their young colleagues to the norms of scientific life, and to the conventions involved in publishing their work. By this means traditions are built up within science. This type of person-to-person relationship is particularly important for passing to the next generation preferred ways of reasoning within a particular field, or (even more) practical skills, that (unlike information) cannot be transmitted in explicit form. Science is known as often rejecting earlier non-scientific traditions but, as Polanyi was seemingly the first to emphasise, its own internal traditions are important. There are however situations where nevertheless it is necessary to break with a well-established scientific tradition. There is an occasional necessity for a scientific revolution in ideas, as will be separately discussed below. In general, scientific communities are always progressive even when the going is very tough - there is confidence that in the end there is always an answer to be found

4. Polanyi's philosophy of science

Science is famous for the great extent of the reliable descriptive understanding of the natural world that has been made possible through use of its methods. To the man in the street, science is even more appreciated for the many reliable applications that have ensued and that have changed in many ways the condition of human life for the better. This is true at least within the developed world, and when war has been avoided. It could reasonably be said that the detailed description of the Universe and its workings that have been achieved by scientists is mankind's greatest primarily intellectual achievement. Compared with most fields of human endeavour, the ever-expanding scientific field also develops with rapidity. This situation has led to the study of the philosophy of science as a separate discipline, with a view to discerning whether there is something exceptional about the intellectual methodology employed in that field. Vigorous discussions have ensued, by such as Carnap,⁴ about the relative merits of the induction of theories from observational data (as originally suggested by Francis Bacon in the early days of science in the 17th century), or the hypothetico-deductive procedure for evaluating ideas, as recommended by such as Karl Popper.⁵ Popper has also considered the relative merits of confirmation or falsification of the theory in

question for ensuring scientific progress. He has expressed a strong preference for falsification, on the grounds that confirmation can never be decisive, only at best providing corroboration.

Polanyi has commented that in practice scientists use both inductive and the hypothetico-deductive methods, the former principally in assessing the quality of the observational evidence relating to a prospective problem before committing themselves to its investigation. He also reports that in practice scientists do not favour the falsification approach, but rather prefer to pursue their developing theories in as many directions as possible, and for as long as they are fruitful. He also considers that in real terms it is as difficult to be sure of a claimed falsification, as of a verification.⁶

More recently the historian/philosopher Thomas Kuhn has considered the important question of what he termed revolutions, that occasionally occur in science involving major changes in theoretical direction, as discussed in his now famous book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*⁷ (hereafter denoted by *SSR*) published in 1962. In fact Polanyi⁸ had addressed the same ideas (although he had used the term upheaval rather than revolution) four years earlier than Kuhn, in Chapter 6 of *PK* under the sub-title *Scientific Controversies*. A scientific revolution often occurs because an existing fruitful and well-established theory (termed by Kuhn as a paradigm) cannot account for experimental findings which persist after repeated attempts to show that they are unsound. An explanation for this resistant anomaly usually requires a radically new theory based on different premises from those of the original one. Although their accounts seem to be independent, the two authors closely agree on the nature of the logical difficulties that ensue. To resolve the situation Polanyi adopted a typical scientific approach, i.e. the new theory should be put to rigorous experimental testing to further establish its validity and scope. Kuhn,⁷ on the other hand, recommended intellectual persuasion, citing elements such as perceived elegance, scope, promise, etc., of the new theory, aimed at provoking a Gestalt-type change of view from individuals wedded strongly to the original paradigm. Kuhn's proposal of 'persuasion' led to suggestions from some sociologists that he could be introducing irrationalities into the scientific process. This led to anticipated criticisms of science by several groups of the sociologists and led, in due course, to the verbal so-called 'Science Wars' between their groups and the few scientists who knew of and disagreed with their criticisms.⁹ These might have been avoided if Polanyi's obviously rational solution to the problem had been better known at the time. The controversy

did at least clarify the difference between what I have termed *science-in-process* and *science-in-outcome*.¹⁰ The latter is the stronger generator of the sciences' reputation for reaching reliable conclusions.

It is apparent from the above example that conventional philosophy of science is primarily concerned with theory rather than the 'theory-plus-experiment' situation that is the background to Polanyi's account. Polanyi also considers that in the outcome theory is more important than experiment because of its future promise. However, during the course of an investigation, the use of experiment (or further observation) is vital for deciding the merits of particular theoretical ideas. Where difficulties are found in a specific case, experiment can also help to formulate an improved hypothesis. Furthermore experimental techniques have greatly advanced in power during recent decades so that theoretical ideas come to be evaluated with greater and greater efficiency. This leads to more rapid and secure progress in science. Experimentation is most effective in the slowly changing (or repetitive) natural sciences, where multiple experiments are possible that can *generate* evidence in favour or otherwise of the hypothesis being evaluated. In such areas the possibilities are only limited by the capacity of researchers to devise checks. These opportunities greatly diminish as one traverses from the natural towards the human sciences. To use the best intellectual methodology remains important but perhaps in practice less so than it used to be.

Overall Polanyi's own philosophical account is closer to the practice of the working scientist and is derived from his own experience as such. It amounts to the generation of imaginative theoretical ideas, and the evaluation of these by experimentation allied to informal personal and communal judgements. The latter criteria are less favoured by other philosophers of science but any logical deficit is made up by the experimental capabilities of science in action.

5. The relationship of biology to physics and chemistry¹¹

Physics and chemistry are material sciences that otherwise are dependent on only a few external conditions such as temperature, pressure or concentrations of potential reagents, and in some cases also on the presence of radiation. Biology is more complex in that the living beings present have resulted from the historical process of evolution, which in turn has been determined by the requirements of reproduction within particular historical environments.

In the early days it was considered that the strongly marked differences between biology and physics or chemistry was such that an extra 'vital principle' might be needed to understand biological processes. Today the prevailing view is that the material elements of biological systems are indeed explicable in terms of physics and chemistry as all the individual processes are molecular in nature. However this leaves open the question of the operational principle of the system as a whole, which Polanyi contends is not explicable in these same terms. He has extended the discussion away from the biological field by pointing out that such restrictions apply equally well to non-living systems such as machines. Once again all the individual mechanical parts of a machine are fully describable in terms of physics and chemistry, but what is left over is their pattern of co-ordinated actions with respect to each other, i.e. the *operational principle* of the machine. What this is cannot be deduced by logic; it can only be inferred if the machine (or related ones) are seen in action or, failing that, by a creative act of imagination. As a biological system, such as the human body, can very fruitfully be investigated on the assumption that it operates like a complex machine, Polanyi argues that in principle biology cannot be fully described in terms of complex physics and chemistry. He argues that what is important is the operational principles that account for its functioning.

This view has been rejected by Francis Crick¹² who, with Watson, famously searched for, and found, the molecular basis of inheritance in the form of DNA. He and others have pointed out that the generation of an idea requires a material brain, so even the recognition of an operational principle may turn out to have a chemical basis. Polanyi rejects this and in return points out that, within DNA, chemistry is only used as a vehicle for passing on a code, being defined by a sequence of different chemical 'letters' that make up the hereditary message of the double-helix of DNA. The 'letters' themselves are not in chemical equilibrium with each other but are maintained in this non-equilibrium state by being passed from one double helix to another. As a simpler example, Polanyi maintains that the structure of a book can be given in physico-chemical terms, but not the messages that it conveys.

6. The scientific aspect of the emergence of new phenomena of increasing significance at higher levels of organisation¹³

Reductionism is the attempt, as far as is possible, to account for the overall working of a particular system in terms of the interactions of its smallest constituent units, usually atoms or molecules. Polanyi

acknowledged the value of this approach in science, but has emphasised its limitation as a system is necessarily more than the sum of its parts. The missing information lies in the organising principle which defines the system itself. He was also critical of the use of the reductionist principle as overemphasising the mechanistic, non-human, aspects of science. He became the most prominent scientist to express more interest in the inverse principle of emergence, whereby new types of phenomena are found to appear at higher levels of organisation of a system. The principle itself is a general one and is not limited to science. He suggested, as a non-scientific example, the sequence from letters, to words, to sentences and then to a particular composition. On this model, if we regard letters as the lowest, and the composition as the highest, level of organisation then significance (in this case meaning) increases as we ascend to higher levels. The latter, controlled by increasingly sophisticated rules, exhibit increasing complexity of content.

As applied to science, Polanyi assigns a different *boundary condition* to each level, as can best be understood with a two-level example. Physics is regarded as the basic science, and chemistry can be envisaged to emerge from physics at a higher level of organisation. [In fact, since the development of quantum theory, chemistry has been seen as a more specialised type of physics, with the characteristics of the 'specialisation' as defining the nature of chemistry.] The boundary level of physics is wide (seen as incorporating in outline all material systems) whereas that of chemistry (the 'higher' level) is notably less so (seen as selectively incorporating only processes which involve the interconversion of molecular species). Chemistry emerges from physics through the application of its own more specialised boundary condition, and we have a system under dual control. For chemistry boundary condition is in effect the collected rules of valency which determine which atoms or groups can (or cannot) react with each other to form new molecules. These rules, combined with information about the experimental conditions such as temperature, concentrations, etc., define the vast subject that is chemistry.

At a third higher level within science, we have biology (seen as selectively combining only those conditions of chemistry and physics which are compatible with species reproduction) with a boundary condition that is more specialised again. This model again implies, as in Section 5, that biology cannot solely be described in terms of physics and chemistry - it has additionally to be consistent with its own boundary condition. Quite new phenomena emerge associated with each system under

multiple-level control (in this case triple control with life as the new phenomenon) control. The chemistry associated with biology is in fact extremely sophisticated, and in general scientific systems under multiple-level control are of high complexity. Polanyi's championing of the principle of emergence in science has been developed very fruitfully in the study of systems which are of great complexity. Emergence is now a subject in its own right.

7. Conclusions

Polanyi's more dynamic view of science - the lack of which perspective, he considers, leads to serious misunderstandings of the nature of science - was derived from his own experience as an experimental scientist. It would surely be endorsed by many of his scientific colleagues. He has explained clearly the essential roles of persons within science and how they interact with their peers within the scientific community. This description rejects the cut-and-dried view of science as a logic-based discipline devoted solely to the generation of impersonal objective knowledge. Science does indeed produce very reliable knowledge, but within a flexible person-dominated environment in which the experimental method of evaluating hypotheses plays a vital role.

Polanyi opposes those within science itself who support more mechanistic views and specifically he denies in principle that biology can be understood entirely as sophisticated physics and chemistry. He considers that the operational principles of biological systems, and even of machines, cannot be described in physicochemical terms. Through the principle of emergence he explains why new phenomena arise at higher levels of organisation within the material world.

He takes the very original view that the most real objects in the Universe are human beings because, in contrast to sticks and stones, they have within them the most capacity for future developments. He concludes '*Any attempt rigorously to eliminate our human perspective from our picture of the world must lead to absurdity*'

School of Chemical Sciences and Pharmacy,
University of East Anglia,
Norwich NR4 7TJ, UK.
e-mail: kandnsheppard@dsl.pipex.com.

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DISCUSSION: RESPONSE TO ALAN FORD

Walter Gulick

It is always an honour to have one's thought subjected to a careful and gracious critique, such as Alan Ford provided to my March, 2009 article in *Appraisal*. I am happy to reply to his critique and invitation in the October, 2009 issue of *Appraisal* to continue the conversation about Macmurray's thought, especially as it relates to Polanyi's philosophy.

Stephen Cowley has a most interesting little account, 'Macmurray's Early Milieu,' published in the fall, 2009 issue of the *Macmurray Newsletter*. Cowley presents a good case for the degree to which Edward Caird's idealism influenced the young Macmurray. Macmurray's language of the positive and the negative, which I admitted I found abstract and annoying, is shown persuasively by Cowley to be taken over directly from Caird, as is Macmurray's distinction between the mechanical, the organic, and the form of the personal. As I will explain, Macmurray's 'form of the personal' seems functionally equivalent to Caird's 'form of self-consciousness.' In various of his writings Macmurray critiques and wants to distance himself from idealism (which, after all, had gone out of style when Macmurray was writing). Ironically, though, in using Caird's categories and in making experience the foundational reference point of his philosophy, Macmurray's metaphysics can be seen as an expression of late nineteenth century British Idealism. Reality for idealists is rooted in experience, whether taken as objective and absolute, as in the thought of F. H. Bradley, or in its more subjective form, classically represented by Berkeley.

Already I have made a claim that needs some qualification and explanation. Caird's idealism seems to begin with the fact of a person's consciousness and thus be closer to subjective than objective idealism (although hardly taken to Berkeley's extreme). Macmurray begins not with the solitary individual, but persons in relation as what he calls the form of the personal. He thus seems to be trying to avoid the charge of solipsism that is regularly asserted of subjective idealism, but not fall prey to the metaphysical abstractions characteristic of Bradley's Absolute. He views the form of the personal as the positive from which negative conceptions, like mind and matter, fantasy and reality, subjectivity and objectivity, etc. are derived. Presumably they are derived from a process of reflection upon aspects of the primal unity of the

personal as the person's experience unfolds. But let me ask, rather crudely, where is this primal unity found? Must it not be 'in' a person's mind, as indeed is suggested by Macmurray's explanation in terms of the baby learning about the world through a relation to its mother, transitional objects, and finally from interpreted perception? If so, then is the beginning point of 'persons in relation' *ontologically* different from Caird's 'form of self-consciousness?' It may be richer in terms of explicitly citing the diverse content involved in consciousness and its developmental influences, but we are still dealing with the experiences of a single individual.

I would classify Macmurray's philosophy, taken as a whole, as a personalist species of the genus idealism. His attempts to distance himself from subjectivism, idealism, and the like seem strained if not inconsistent. Ford explains Macmurray's form of the personal as what defines a person's *identity*, or alternately, as what defines *existential integrity*. The body and mind are seen as necessary for the personal, but not sufficient by themselves to sustain personal identity. But as with other formulations of idealism, I would again ask why 'identity' and 'existential integrity' are taken as ontological ultimates superior to notions of materiality or mind. These two terms again seem to be qualities of consciousness derived from reflection upon one's experience. Ford asks whether minds can exist independent of personhood (p. 41). My reply is that they certainly can. Non-human animals have minds but not personhood. Ford's question seems irrelevant to discussion of the personal. I don't see how the form of the personal is a category superior to mind or matter except by arbitrary stipulation.

Macmurray's account of the baby separating itself from its mother seems psychologically persuasive, but, it must be asked, does what comes early in experience necessarily indicate ontological priority? If what was earliest in embryonic development was truly primary, then at the earliest several cell stage of a fetus what would be ontologically fundamental would be *biologically programmed matter*. *Macmurray, like many idealists, seems to confuse epistemological priority (in cognitive development or in the momentary unfolding of thought) with ontological primacy. Undifferentiated awareness in the newborn is prior to any concept of reality, but does that make it more real? Reality, for Macmurray, is merely a concept, a negativity*

parasitic upon the primacy of the personal in the rise of knowledge. But is what the term 'reality' *refers to* the same as the concept of the real that develops at a certain stage in a child's development? Rather, isn't a person born into a real world that the person gradually comes to understand better and better through trial and error, and through various processes of socialization?

The points I have been making in the previous several paragraphs are my attempt to give clearer reasons for what I termed (as quoted by Ford on p. 41) the arbitrariness of Macmurray's ontological foundation, namely, persons in relation. Macmurray's monistic attempt to counter Cartesian dualism also seems problematic to me (but this does not mean I defend any Cartesian dichotomy between thinking and extended *substances*). If, when studied with care, Macmurray's form of the personal is in actuality a rich form of consciousness that recognizes the impact of other persons on one's consciousness and one's own personal integrity, then one is faced with an important ontological question regarding these other persons. If they are as real as the person being impacted, then the foundational certainty of 'the form of the personal' seems challenged. On what basis, given observable cultural diversity, does one think the experiential form of other persons or their form of identity is equivalent to one's own immediately experienced form? If to avoid dualism (or pluralism) one wants to ignore or deny the legitimacy of the question of the form of the personal in others, hasn't one returned to a variety of the Cartesian ego: I experience, therefore I am (but the rest of the world is known derivatively or, in Macmurray's language, negatively). The unwholesome implication of such an approach is that one has crowned oneself God over a world one has constructed oneself. All these questions, I hope, illustrate why I called Macmurray's starting point arbitrary. I suggested one could equally well start from the material world as the positive and see the personal as its negative, not because this is what I believe, as Ford seems to think (p. 42), but to illustrate the undecidability or arbitrariness of a philosophical style of arguing in terms of positives and negatives. One simply calls that which the person values the most the positive. Richard Dawkins, on this style of argumentation, would call physical matter the positive for a lot of reasons he can muster, while Macmurray calls persons in relation the positive for reasons he can adduce. Is there no way out of constructing philosophical systems according to one's all-too-arbitrary taste?

I think there is. The trick is to begin with a clear conception of the difference between connotation

(linguistic meaning realized in consciousness) and denotation (what language refers to). Philosophical idealism never really gets beyond sophisticated systems of connotation. It tends to deny that there is a significant ontological distinction between what is thought and what thought refers to. The holism of experience as such (the positive) is made more important than what is experienced (the negative). Epistemology thus seems to be conflated with ontology. Idealism flatters the individual decision maker. The rise of individualism and accompanying forms of thought in Western culture can be traced back to Renaissance thinkers breaking free of medieval restraint; to the achievements of scientists and developers of new technology, of whom Descartes is a good symbol; to the freedom of a person to interpret scripture introduced by Luther; and to the various forms of rejecting authority in favour of reason (the Enlightenment) and experience (romanticism). The solution I am suggesting involves turning away from prioritizing the individual and the individual's consciousness and returning to the things themselves, not in Husserl's sense, but in terms of a rich understanding of reality. That Michael Polanyi offers such a theory of reality is one of the reasons I find his thought so insightful.

To be sure, the idealist might call my (or Polanyi's) realistic starting point arbitrary and ask why not start from a person's experience rather than from the (for the idealist, assumed) real world? No proof can be offered when one is discussing a philosophical starting point, but there does seem to be an issue of coherence and a judgment about one's place in the world that is more than arbitrary. To put the issue in admittedly contestable terms, finally it seems more coherent and balanced (and less anthropocentric) to give ontological priority to the many-faceted-world to which we have access in various ways rather than to prioritize an individual's experience of that reality.

Can a theory of reality be developed that can acknowledge the limited truth in the many arbitrary starting points from which one can think? I believe Polanyi's theory accomplishes this by setting his understanding of ontology in a cosmological setting encompassing everything from the subatomic level to the most macroscopic cosmological level. This may sound like Polanyi is privileging science and by implication is setting forth a form of materialism. Not so. Polanyi is arguing for an evolutionary, emergentist view that sees in evolutionary development the emergence of genuinely new, decoupled levels of reality, each subject to their own set of laws or rules. These levels are inappropriately reduced to their antecedents or to their parts. There is no arbitrary positive or negative in such a view; all

levels have their own species of reality. The action of neurons in making possible consciousness is affirmed at one level, even while the action of a mind responding to ideas and perceptions is affirmed at another level. There is truth in what both Macmurray and Dawkins say, but where each seems to go astray is in saying their brand of truth is the only type there is. Polanyian philosophy is more comprehensive.

Ford several times uses the term 'emergence' in referring to Macmurray's thought. Yet if I understand him correctly, he is using 'emergence' as a synonym for 'development,' as in maturation. Thus he says Macmurray 'deals in detail with the emergence of perception from basic touch, through motive to intentional consciousness' (p. 43). The sort of emergence Polanyi discusses goes beyond ontogenesis, for the unfolding stages of genetically influenced development obey the same set of biological laws, and the sequence is roughly known from its inception. The emergence of life from insentient matter is a dramatic example of emergence in Polanyi's sense. Biology, although dependent on chemistry, obeys different rules than chemistry. Similarly, human consciousness is an emergent form distinct from the consciousness of other animals through the gift of language. The various worlds of culture humans have devised are also real, but in a very different way than stones are real. The values we cling to, including the value of the personal, are real in the strong sense of affecting future developments in how we live.

The point of this response to Alan Ford, however, is not to extol Polanyi's thought, although I think it is useful to indicate why I find his theory of reality – his ontology – superior in its breadth and explanatory power to that of Macmurray. Ford points out many ways in which the views of Macmurray and Polanyi are congruent – his mentioning of 'emotional sincerity' is especially helpful to me (p. 44). As an interesting aside, I'd note that Macmurray's thought was influential on a Polanyi: Michael's brother, Karl, who is well known for his powerful study in

economic history, *The Great Transformation*. When Karl Polanyi immigrated to England from Hitler-dominated Vienna in the 1930's, he found the Christian Socialism with which Macmurray was associated to be most attractive. Michael and Karl Polanyi had quite different social views. Those interested in finding out more about the brothers, and seeing especially the degree to which Karl Polanyi's social views are concordant with Macmurray's, are referred to my article in the 2008 issue of *The Political Science Reviewer*: 'Michael and Karl Polanyi: Conflict and Convergence.' The whole issue is devoted to Michael Polanyi's thought. Another helpful article in that issue is Phil Mullins' 'On Reading Polanyi and Reading about Polanyi's Philosophical Perspective: Notes on Secondary Sources.'

Now to sum up. Bluntly put, I think Macmurray's notion of persons in relation is quite inadequate as the basis for the kind of comprehensive philosophical vision he attempts. However, it might well serve as a useful and indeed attractive point of reference for systematic ethics, for ethics does involve relationships between persons. I would be most interested in seeing what might result from bringing Macmurray's form of the personal plus his ethical and social insights into conversation with leading ethical movements in our time: feminist ethics (including the ethics of care), the evolutionary/psychological basis of ethics, virtue ethics, particularistic ethics, theories of moral development, and the like. If this has already been accomplished in an exemplary way, I would appreciate being so informed. I especially appreciate his stress on the importance of community; it is an important corrective to the excessive individualism (cited above) in our time. I am glad there is an organization devoted to continuing his legacy, and I am pleased to have been able to interact with its members in what I thought was a stimulating exchange in Oxford. I especially want to thank Alan Ford for his critique and his invitation to continue the conversation.

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Continued from p.46

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10. N. Sheppard, *Tradition and Discovery* (submitted).
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References to books by Michael Polanyi:

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

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

Also:

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