Tradition & Discovery
The Polanyi Society Periodical

Preface

This special issue of *TAD* on ethics was long in the making. Special thanks go to guest editor Paul Lewis for the hard work he put into pulling this together. Read his introductory essay "Towards a Post-Critical Ethic" on page 4 for a survey of what this issue holds.

On the opposite page, you will find the program for the November 2002 Polanyi Society meetings in Toronto. The major papers to be presented at these sessions should be available for downloading on the Polanyi Society web site (http://www.mwsc.edu/orgs/polanyi) by the end of October. Note that one session is again this year co-sponsored by the AAR Science and Religion group. At the Polanyi Society June 2001 conference, John Haught was a featured speaker; at the November 2001 annual meeting, there was a special session with Phil Clayton. This year in Toronto, one session is to be devoted to discussion with Ursula Goodenough. Clearly, the Polanyi Society has encouraged dialogue between those interested in Polanyi and some prominent contemporary thinkers writing about science and religion. But also this year we are reverting to our traditional pattern of including papers by members. Esther Meek and Richard Moodey, two members who have not previously presented at the annual meeting, sent in promising proposals; I am sure the Saturday session treating their papers will be a lively interaction of the sort many have enjoyed in the past.

This issue contains a flyer notifying members that renewals are due. Dues go up from $20 to $25 US this year. Although the Society membership cycle follows the academic year (i.e., dues are due in the fall), I have not succeeded in getting all members on this cycle. It would make our record keeping simpler if all dues were paid in the fall. If you have any kind of question about your standing, please write or e-mail me.

The Society is making an effort to increase *TAD* library subscriptions. For a while, we can offer a free copy of Andy Sanders fine book *Michael Polanyi's Post-Critical Epistemology* (whose price is about twice that of a subscription) to any library that does subscribe. Please work with your local institution to see if we can expand our institutional subscription list.

<div align="right">Phil Mullins</div>

2002 Toronto Annual Meeting

The Polanyi Society annual meeting will be held in Toronto, Ontario on November 22 and 23, 2002. Please go to the Polanyi Society web site (**http://www.mwsc.edu/orgs/polanyi/**) for complete information about housing through the AAR/SBL. The November 22 session, co-sponsored by the Religion and Science Group of the AAR, will focus on a paper by Ursula Goodenough, a scientist and author of *The Sacred Depths of Nature.* The November 23 session will discuss papers by Esther L. Meek and Richard W. Moodey. The papers (which will not be read in sessions) will be posted on the Polanyi Society web site for downloading in late October or early November. Please note that the Friday evening session was not identified in the AAR/SBL Annual Meeting Program as a Polanyi Society meeting. The session is listed in the AAR/SBL Annual Meeting Program (Session AM 45 on page 180) using the title of Ursula Goodenough's paper, "From Biology to Morality with Polanyian Footnotes."

Program

November 22, 9:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m.Westin Harbour Hotel, Pier 8 (Convention Level)

Theme: From Biology to Morality with Polanyian Footnotes

Ursula Goodenough, Washington University

Respondents:
Nancy Howell, Saint Paul School of Theology
Phil Mullins, Missouri Western State College
Diane Yeager, Georgetown University

Discussion

November 23, 9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Westin Harbour Hotel, Dockside II (Lower Level)

"Learning to See: The Role of Authoritative Guides in Knowing"
Esther L. Meek, Covenant Theological Seminary
Respondent: Paul Lewis, Mercer University

"Moral Passion and Moral Judgment: Polanyi and Lonergan on Ethics"
Richard W. Moodey, Gannon University
Respondent: Vincent Colapietro, Penn. State

Open Discussion

Business Meeting 11:30 a.m.
Chair: Marty Moleski

For additional information:
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Please note the Polanyi Society's new web address: http://www.mwsc.edu/orgs/polanyi/

Electronic Discussion List

The Polanyi Society supports an electronic discussion group exploring implications of the thought of Michael Polanyi. Anyone interested can subscribe; contal Struan Jacobs (swjacobs@deakin.edu.au) who is the moderator. The address for the list is polanyi-list@deakin.edu.au

Toward a Post-Critical Ethic

Paul Lewis
Guest Editor

ABSTRACT Key Words: post-critical ethic, Michael Polanyi
This essay is a brief introduction to four essays exploring the implications of Michael Polanyi's thought for ethics.

Welcome to this special issue of *Tradition and Discovery*, one devoted to exploring the implications of Michael Polanyi's thought for a post-critical ethic. Devoting an issue to such a topic raises three important questions. The first concerns terminology. What is post-critical? While we can take as a truism the claim that we live in a post-modern age, we find little agreement about what the post-modern world looks like. Is the post-modern world a nihilistic, ultimately despairing world that gives up on ethics (that is how some read the continental deconstructionists)?[1] Is the post-modern world one in which we are destined to live in self-contained communities?[2] Is the post-modern world simply the modern world run amok, or is it one in which we find a synthesis of the best of both modern and premodern ways of thinking, feeling and doing?[3] Is the post-modern world all of the above? More? Where does "post-critical" fit in such a landscape? The second question concerns Polanyi's credentials as an ethicist. Can we appropriately call this physician-turned-chemist-turned philosopher an ethicist? The final question concerns the value of Polanyi's work for ethics. Can we learn anything useful from Polanyi, whatever we decide to call him? This issue of *TAD* proposes to explore these questions.

In the opening article, **Charles McCoy** takes on the first question most explicitly and situates Polanyi's life and work in the context of the Enlightenment's critical spirit. McCoy positions Polanyi as a post-critical thinker, rather than post-modern, in that he sees in Polanyi someone who appreciates the contributions of the Enlightenment (something many so-called postmodern thinkers are unable or unwilling to do) at the same time that he is able to acknowledge its shortcomings. Not content to simply situate Polanyi in the intellectual history of the West, McCoy goes on to survey three themes from Polanyi's work that might fruitfully inform a constructive, post-critical ethic. He suggests some of the implications for ethics found in Polanyi's ability to combine critical reason with a pre-critical vision, his understanding of the from/to structure of human knowing and his account of dwelling in and breaking out of the communities and traditions in which we find ourselves.

In the second article, **Diane Yeager** takes up our second question, i.e., "To what extent should we take Polanyi to be a moral philosopher?" Zdislaw Najder thinks that he makes a poor one, as Yeager recounts. Najder thinks Polanyi is, among other things, fuzzy on the meaning of morality and guilty of absolutizing his own culture. Taking these two criticisms as her beginning point, Yeager defends Polanyi's status as moral philosopher by offering an in-depth examination of moral inversion, the process whereby the passions that underlie morality turn in on themselves to produce vicious behavior. In the end, we see that Polanyi offers a rich account of the passionate nature of moral existence, as well as a complex account of both the promises and perils of one's own tradition.

The third and fourth articles address our third question by more directly taking Polanyian insights in constructive directions. **Mark Discher** draws on Polanyi's account of epistemology in order to help move along (if not resolve) debates between moral generalists and moral particularists. The former think that ethics proceeds by applying general principles to concrete situations. In contrast, the latter think that ethics must attend first and foremost to the details of individual cases. Discher finds instructive Polanyi's understanding of the process of scientific discovery, to which he likens the process of moral discernment.

In the fourth article, **Beth Newman** proposes a post-critical ethic that is built around the practice of hospitality. Like McCoy, she distinguishes Polanyi's post-critical views from those of the Enlightenment, but does so by focusing on one particular problem that the Enlightenment has, i.e., recognizing the giftedness of life. Building on Polanyi's understanding of the fiduciary character of knowledge, Newman puts Polany into conversation with other philosophers, theologians and novelists to explore how hospitality to others honors and builds on that neglected fact about ourselves.

In sum, we find in these essays different suggestions for how Polanyi's thought might be appropriated for ethics. Some draw from his epistemology and others his understanding of the passions. They do not, obviously, exhaust the contributions that Polanyi might make to ethics, but such was not the goal of this endeavor. Rather, we hope that these articles can be fruitful in stimulating conversation about and constructive appropriation of Polanyi's work for contemporary ethics.

Endnotes

[1]See, for example, Stanley Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdma's Publishing Co., 1996).

[2] Many infer this fate from Alasdair McIntyre's *After Virtue*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

[3.] Albert Borgmann charts these two possible trajectories in his *Crossing the Postmodern Divide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). The first he calls hypermodernism and the latter postmodern realism.

WWW Polanyi Resources

The Polanyi Society has a World Wide Web site at http://www.mwsc.edu/orgs/polanyi/. In addition to information about Polanyi Society membership and meetings, the site contains the following: (1) the history of Polanyi Society publications, including a listing of issues by date and volume with a table of contents for recent issues of *Tradition and Discovery*; (2) a comprehensive listing of *Tradition and Discovery* authors, reviews and reviewers; (3) information on locating early publications; (4) information on *Appraisal* and *Polanyiana*, two sister journals with special interest in Polanyi's thought; (5) the "Guide to the Papers of Michael Polanyi" which provides an orientation to archival material housed in the Department of Special Collections of the University of Chicago Library; (6) photographs of Michael Polanyi; (7) five essays by Michael Polanyi.

Ethics For The Post-Critical Era:
Perspectives from the Thought of Michael Polanyi

Charles S. McCoy

ABSTRACT Key Words: ethics, post-critical thought, Michael Polanyi
This essay treats Michael Polanyi's post-critical philosophy and the contributions of post-critical thought to ethics. It discusses the from/to structure of human knowing and heurism and ethics. It argues that virtue, viewed post-critically, is an achievement in community; post-critical thought calls for movement beyond specialization.

1. Introduction

The twentieth century was not always kind to practitioners of religious, philosophical, and ethical thought. This is especially so for Christian thinkers who let themselves become caught between the rational empiricism of the Enlightenment turned into dogmatic scientism and the onslaught of historical relativism as Western thought wrestled with the diversity of cultures and religions. Scholars in the physical and biological sciences fared better as long as they avoided quasi-metaphysical claims and shallow theological excursions. In the humanities, however, academics have often tried to become "scientific" and, as a result, have wandered either into wastelands of rationalism, thus becoming isolated from the wholeness of being human, or into post-modernism, with its confusing array of meanings and individual fideisms.[1]

In this era in which final certainties have been undermined, we can hope that there will be more cautious and modest claims from persons of all persuasions, more adequate measures of clarity as to meaning, and wider acceptance of the particularity of human location and perspective. As for theology and ethics, it is probable that a new era is emerging, with a turn comparable to the abrupt one brought on by the biblical fundamentalism based upon modern rationalism and the neo-orthodox challenge to Christian theology shaped by the Enlightenment. There is the possibility of recovery from dogmatic rationalism, from the erratic tendency to veer from one fad to another, and from the insular theologies of Rudolf Bultmann and Karl Barth.

This essay makes no attempt to deal with the entire spectrum of issues emerging from the impact of Enlightenment thought or the challenges to it. Instead, we shall explore contributions that the post-critical philosophy of Michael Polanyi[2] provides for a new era of faith and ethics in the 21st century, based on his creative redefining of the problems of the post-Enlightenment era.

Before launching into the major focus of the essay, a brief account of how the present problems came about may provide helpful background for the discussion. This sketch will be given from my own somewhat jaundiced angle of vision.

2. Enlightenment Thought and Its Developing Problems

The triumph among 19th and 20th century academics of Enlightenment rationalism and scientism has never been complete or without strong alternatives. Nagging doubts emerging over the entire period caused the

reigning confidence to recede sharply during the 20th century. It is instructive to note the intellectual movements and academic fads that have been put forward to replace the Enlightenment and to examine briefly their significance for Christian thought
.

The Enlightenment can best be understood as the culmination and triumph, at least among European intellectuals, of the critical movement in philosophy initiated by Descartes, the view of the natural world formulated by Newton, and the articulation of these views in the philosophy of Kant. The critical period of Western thought coincided with the rise of modern science. Both the critical movement and modern science were made possible by the hard-won increases in religious, political, and economic freedom initiated during the Renaissance and the Reformation. Major sectors of Western society, previously restricted in thought and action, could read the Bible, become educated, and engage in research with far fewer restraints. In turn, increasing knowledge and diverse perspectives strengthened the political economies and educational systems emerging from the growing liberation. The *philosophes* of the Enlightenment liked to regard themselves as solely responsible for the freedom they had inherited as well as for the critical philosophy and scientific method they nurtured. They also believed that critical rationalism could now discover "objective truth." Truth as it emerged would become, they thought, a sufficient basis for rejecting the pre-critical past of traditional cultures. As Carl Becker suggests, however, they resembled thinkers of the past more than they realized, even while believing that history was a success story because it had culminated in them. In their own eyes, Becker writes:

> They are citizens of the world, the emancipated ones, looking out upon a universe seemingly brand new because so freshly flooded with light, a universe in which everything worth attending to is visible, and everything visible is seen to be unblurred and wonderfully simple after all, and evidently intelligible to the human mind—the mind of Philosophers.[3]

The claims of Enlightenment rationalism did not, however, receive universal agreement, even among the intelligentsia. David Hume, for example, showed the problematic character of rational empiricism if taken as a final understanding of the world as experienced, and suggested that we still must come out of laboratories and scholarly studies to live in a world of tradition and belief. Immanuel Kant carefully left room for faith in his philosophy and, while rejecting the traditional proofs for the existence of God, confesses that, if he must choose between equally undemonstrable alternatives, would opt for belief in an *ens realissimum* as a necessary basis for rational thought, an endorsement in his way of the ontological argument for deity.

Nevertheless, the critical perspective carried the day generally in intellectual circles, and its embodiment in the academic programs of the Humboldt University (founded in Berlin in 1810) became the model for graduate education in the universities of Europe and America. The undoubted achievements of the critical method, in its brilliant discoveries about nature and its technological achievements, obscured for its devotees its deficiencies as a total view of the world. In spite of its contributions to modern society, the Enlightenment had also produced, it gradually became clear, a dogmatic "scientism" that, following the triumphalist pattern found in much Western religion, sought to discredit other perspectives, in particular pre-critical views of the world held by communities of religious belief, and to convert people to this Enlightenment way to Truth.[4]

On the basis of the critical premises of the Enlightenment, religion was expected to fade away, a prediction on which such different disciples of scientistic objectivism as Auguste Comte and Karl Marx could agree. Religion, however, both in its organized forms and in spontaneous movements, did not disappear during the time when critical thought and modern science were emerging, nor did it diminish in the 19th century except

perhaps in strongholds of established Christianity. Instead, from the time of the Renaissance and Reformation, religious groups have become a major force for freedom and have kept on growing during the zenith of Enlightenment influence, much to the dismay of many of the intelligentsia. Indeed, religious communities— leaders and members—have often played significant roles in science and critical scholarship, in political and economic democratization, and in social reforms such as the abolition of slavery and increasing rights for laborers, women, and children, changing the complexion of western society and laying the groundwork for continuing reform. Quite clearly, religious belief and communities of faith, far from disappearing, have remained alive and well, to the consternation of those for whom the scientific method had become a total view of reality, i.e. *their religion*.

At the same time, problems developed within the critical rationalism of the Enlightenment throughout the 19th century and multiplied sharply in the 20th. A series of events and movements undermined critical thought as the ultimate arbiter of Truth. Existentialism convinced many that rationality is inadequate for the anxiety of living without a leap of faith. Phenomenology retreated from the task of dealing with noumenal reality and contented itself with analysis of phenomena, except for Heidegger, who, in a brilliant reversal of Kant, declared the phenomenology of human existence as the way back into being. Nietzschean thought sneered at the weak mediocrity of Western Christian culture and proclaimed the possibility of transcendence into a superior level of existence. The emergence of cross-cultural awareness and historical relativity undermined confidence in Western rationality for the humanities. The idea of relativity, however, produced a quantum leap forward in the physical sciences with Einstein's theories. In philosophy, the attempt of logical positivism to bolster confidence in rational empiricism collapsed from internal contradictions, while the withdrawal into linguistic analysis provided for many attracted to this Oxford/ Cambridge movement an interesting evasion of the challenges to critical rationalism.[5] The frontal assaults of "deconstructionism" sent critical thought into retreat, except where dogmatic scientism and variations of pre-critical religious faith had become firmly entrenched.

Along with philosophy, Christian thought shaped by critical thought has faced all these challenges, as well as the powerful reactions of neo-orthodoxy and the rise of fundamentalism, the latter a modern byproduct of the critical method. As a result, theology, especially Protestant Christian varieties, has endured a series of errant fads such as "demythologizing," "honest to God," "secularization" and the death of God." Ethics has moved through what has been called a "wasteland of utilitarianism" into a "wasteland of rationalism," as well as an amazing ploy by Western ethicists to deny the existence of ethics in other religions and cultures, in an attempt, it would seem, to shape and control the emerging field of comparative ethics. A recent fad in theology and ethics, as well as in virtually every other discipline and cultural activity, has been the shift into the ambiguous language of "post-modernism." Its central thread of meaning, amid its confusing variety, is the rejection of "modernism." It has spread out into a "vague, oblong blur" across a wide swath of those who might be called the intellectual masses of Western society. Though this reaction to modernism has undoubtedly produced creative work, it has failed to achieve cohesiveness, clarity, or strength as a response to the critical period of Western thought.

There is an alternative to post-modern *pandemonium*. That alternative is *the post-critical philosophy of Michael Polanyi*. In the midst of his achievements in physical chemistry, Polanyi perceived early in his career problems of the critical method that the post-modernists discovered much later and attributed to "modernism." Further, in the view of many, he provided more cogent resolutions of these problems than did the post-modernists, and did so without post-modernism's rejection of the achievements of the Enlightenment. Polanyi combines appreciation of both critical method and pre-critical faith as he develops his post-critical philosophy.

While not directly dependent upon them, his thought exhibits kinship with the work of Plato, Charles Sanders Peirce, and Josiah Royce in philosophy, and of H. Richard Niebuhr in theology and ethics. In what follows, after a sketch of Polanyi's post-critical thought, the focus will be on its implications for ethics, adding insights from H. Richard Niebuhr and federal/covenantal theology.

3. A Sketch of the Post-Critical Philosophy of Michael Polanyi[6]

The philosopher Marjorie Grene declares that Michael Polanyi's theory of tacit knowing is "grounds for a revolution in philosophy" and involves "the thesis that all knowledge necessarily includes a tacit component on which it relies in order to focus on its goal, whether of theoretical discovery and formulation or practical activity."[7] I agree with her but propose a more inclusive hypothesis: Polanyi's post-critical thought, based especially on his notion of tacit knowing, *opens the way to a new era in human thought*, a revolution as significant as the earlier turn from the Ptolemaic to the Copernican perspective. Scholars in disciplines across the entire spectrum of learning have been slow to recognize that this revolution is taking place. The insights of Polanyi, nevertheless, are gradually seeping into and modifying the methods and tenor of human thought today. The critical period of Western thought, opened by Descartes and brought to its zenith in the Enlightenment, is ending, and the post-critical era is emerging. This new perspective, as we shall see, has important meaning for ethics. Here are the major points of post-critical thought:

A. <u>Combination of Critical and Pre-Critical Reason.</u> Polanyi's post-critical philosophy does not reject the achievements of critical thought, as is generally the case with post-modernists, but instead combines critical reasoning with the fiduciary dimension of pre-critical thought in a way that affirms both. He exposes the pretensions of those who suppose they have found the sure path to universal truth either through rationality or by means of scientific method. Polanyi holds that thinkers of the critical era have pursued a "mistaken ideal of objectivity."[8] He points out that the critical method has not escaped human location and personal commitment. "Thus, when we claim greater objectivity for the Copernican theory, we do imply that its excellence is, not a matter of personal taste on our part, but an inherent quality deserving universal acceptance by rational creatures. We abandon the cruder anthropocentrism of our senses--but only in favor of a more ambitious anthropocentrism of our reason."[9]

With this insight, Polanyi proposes an advance in human thought as significant as that initiated by Copernicus four centuries earlier. The Copernican Revolution shows that humanity is not the center of the universe. The Polanyian Revolution unfolding around us shows that we still occupy the particularity of human location in our knowing and action. Polanyi provides a method that combines critical rigor and impetus for discovery with the pre-critical respect for tradition, culture, community, and faith into post-critical thought. In post-critical perspective, uncritical adherence to critical method leads toward an objectivism in knowing that does not take account of the tacit coefficient upon which it depends, and is as inadequate as the post-modern rejection of the modern that leaves itself adrift without connection to a context of tradition, community, and commitment. Post-critical thought discloses the pre-critical passion and faith underlying critical rigor and the potential of pre-critical traditionalism as a springboard for discovery, thus providing fiduciary roots in tradition and community for post-modern creativity.

B. <u>The From/To Structure of Knowing.</u> In Western thought, Polanyi points out, attention has been given to the focal dimension of knowing, the "to" of knowing, and has neglected the "from" component of knowing that makes the "to" of knowing possible. With the "from," Polanyi offers an inclusive account of that

upon which the knower relies in order to focus on the "to." Knowing, he argues persuasively, has an inescapable "from/to" pattern, the "from" including the embodied, physical basis of observation, the existence of consciousness and the ability to think and interpret, and the context of presuppositions, faith, tradition, and culture shaping the interpreted "to." In this from/to structure, knowing consists 1) in that part that we focus upon, of which we have *focal awareness*, and 2) in that part that we rely upon in order to focus, of which we have *subsidiary awareness*. Knowing cannot be reduced to the *explicit dimension* of knowing but must include also the *tacit dimension*, without which the explicit dimension could not exist. Thus, the process of human knowing moves from a *proximal context,* of which we are subsidiarily aware to a *distal context*, of which we are focally aware. By dealing only with the focal aspect of knowing and ignoring the tacit dimension, Western epistemology has been individualistic and insufficiently aware of the bodily and communal context of knowing. By uncovering the tacit dimension, the Polanyian Revolution reminds us that knowing is personal, occurring within and relying upon human location, understood so as to include both the *from* and the *to* dimensions of human understanding and action. Polanyi succeeds in delineating with precision the central problem of the critical method and showing the need to re-appropriate the pre-critical perspective, thus opening the way toward a post-critical philosophy.

From Aristotle onward, the major lines of Western philosophy have given primary attention to the focal elements in knowing and little attention to the subsidiary elements upon which the focal relies. This is certainly the case with Descartes, who initiates the critical era of Western thought, and with Whitehead, the greatest metaphysician of the 20th century, who expresses directly his reliance on Descartes: "The positive doctrine of these lectures [*Process and Reality*] is concerned with the becoming, the being, and the relatedness of 'actual entities.' An 'actual entity' is a *res vera* in the Cartesian sense of that term."[10] In no way does this aspect of Whitehead's thought negate the greatness of his organic, processive system, but it does place it decisively within the bounds of critical philosophy. Though Whitehead acknowledges his debt to Plato, he does not give attention to Plato's suggestions of a tacit dimension in human thought in the *Meno* and in the dialogical method that makes clear the human location of philosophical exploration.

At one point, Polanyi offers a succinct summary of the discovery that takes him beyond the critical into the post-critical without rejecting the importance of critical thought:

> We have seen *tacit knowledge* to comprise two kinds of awareness, *subsidiary awareness* and *focal awareness*. Now we see *tacit knowledge* opposed to *explicit knowledge*; but these two are not sharply divided. While tacit knowledge can be possessed by itself, explicit knowledge must rely on being tacitly understood and applied. Hence all knowledge is *either tacit* or *rooted in tacit knowledge*. A wholly explicit knowledge is unthinkable.[11]

The recognition of the tacit dimension, the background in subsidiary awareness for human knowing, appears to be a resounding defeat to all those gripped by the critical desire to attain absolute, objective knowledge of Reality or Truth and for whom the particularity of human location is a scandal to be overcome. Polanyi regards the post-critical perspective as an important discovery, opening up the ignored tacit dimension of human knowing, an achievement rather than a defeat. He writes: "I suggest we transform this retreat into a triumph, by the simple device of changing camp. Let us recognize that tacit knowing is the fundamental power of the mind, which creates explicit knowing, lends meaning to it and controls its uses."[12]

What does this mean for the critical claim that it can arrive at objective Truth and uncover final Reality? The from/to structure of knowing makes it impossible to accept the detached objectivism of critical thought as

the path to Truth. A new understanding of Reality emerges:

> To hold a natural law to be true is to believe that its presence will manifest itself in an indeterminate range of yet unknown and perhaps unthinkable consequences . . . We meet here with a new definition of reality. Real is that which is expected to reveal itself indeterminately in the future. Hence an explicit statement can bear on reality only by virtue of the tacit coefficient associated with it. This conception of reality and of the tacit knowing of reality underlies all my writing.[13]

In this way, Polanyi dissolves the dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity in knowing. He writes:

> I think we may distinguish between the personal in us, which actively enters into our commitments, and our subjective states, in which we merely endure our feelings. This distinction establishes the conception of the *personal*, which is neither subjective nor objective. In so far as the personal submits to requirements acknowledged by itself as independent of itself, it is not subjective; but in so far as it is an action guided by individual passions, it is not objective either. It transcends the disjunction between subjective and objective.[14]

In no way does Polanyi reject the importance of the critical method, he only deprives it of what I call the "Imperial Mood" of discourse and the assumption that it describes Reality "objectively" from an "ontological peak" outside historical, social location.

C. <u>The Heuristic Shape of Post-Critical Thought.</u> Polanyi's recognition of the importance of tradition, culture, and community, i.e. the inclusion of the pre-critical, fiduciary rootage of knowing, does not lead to views of knowledge as static and chained to the past. We *dwell in* a past inherited from our community of interpretation, not in order to repeat it, but in order to *break out* into the newness of the future hidden within it. This *dwelling in* and *breaking out* arises from "the essential restlessness of the human mind, which calls ever again in question any satisfaction that it may have previously achieved."[15]

For Polanyi, fiduciary knowing regards faith not as an unchanging platform but rather as a heuristic springboard that places us in a restless tension between the known and the unknown. Reality becomes a process under way, a problem not yet completely solved, that engages our entire being and draws us further into the mystery of being. What we believe we know leads us to focus on what we do not yet know. Referring to the mathematician Polya's advice for solving problems, Polanyi writes: "How can we concentrate our attention on something we don't know? . . . 'Look at the unknown—says Polya—'Look at the end' . . . *Look at the unknown. Look at the conclusion."* Polanyi continues:

> The seeming paradox is resolved by the fact that even though we have never met the solution, we have a conception of it in the same sense as we have a conception of a forgotten name. By directing our attention on a focus in which we are subsidiarily aware of all the particulars that remind us of the forgotten name, we form a conception of it; and likewise, by fixing our attention on a focus in which we are subsidiarily aware of the data by which the solution of a problem is determined, we form a conception of this solution. The admonition to look at the unknown really means that we should *look at the known data, but not in themselves, rather as clues to the unknown; as pointers to it and parts of it.*[16]

Far beyond mathematics, the post-critical philosophy of Polanyi has meaning for the entire spectrum of knowing and action. This is the case no less for ethics than other academic disciplines. Polanyi enables us to accept and use critical thought without either absolutizing it into scientism or rejecting it as do the post-modernists. His post-critical thought reaffirms the meaning of the pre-critical, with its emphasis on tradition, community, commitment, and the reaches of human spirituality and faith. In Polanyi's brilliant reformulation of the meaning of reality, there is a partial affirmation of the critical method with its precise probing of human experience and also of the indeterminate nature of the future. There is stability in human thought and action based upon commitment and faith as the human location in which we dwell in order to break out toward a not-yet-known, unthinkable consummation. The heuristic tension relates the dwelling in and breaking out. Thus, we believe, know, and act, not with the rigidity of *absolute, universal assertion*, but with the confidence of *universal intent* that believes in order to understand but also anticipates, indeed *longs for*, a future of unfolding insight, knowledge, and faith.[17]

4. Contributions of Polanyi's Post-Critical Thought to Ethics

With this overview of post-critical philosophy in mind, we can examine the perspectives on ethical reflection and action in the contemporary world that the Polanyian Revolution provides. These insights will be illuminating for ethics within the Christian community, for ethics within other communities of interpretation, and also for the emerging context of global ethics in which diverse communities are meeting, at times with violent results and at times with creative interchange that may prove beneficial to the world. Some of Polanyi's contributions come from the overall pattern of post-critical thought, and others are particular insights of his about ethics. In both ways, Polanyi helps move us beyond contemporary forms of ethics toward ethics for the post-critical age of human history.

A. <u>Implications for Ethics of Combining Critical Reason with Pre-critical Faith.</u> As noted above, the post-critical thought of Polanyi continues rather than rejecting critical reasoning but places it within the pre-critical context of presuppositions, commitments, and faith. In this way, Polanyi affirms the achievements of the critical period but overcomes its pretense of objectivism that threatens human values and vision.

1. A basic contribution of post-critical thought to ethics is to affirm its importance for the entire spectrum of human thought and action. Faith, commitment, and valuing are present in the physical and biological sciences no less than in the humanities and social sciences, no less in the building of bridges than in home and family. Pre-critical elements of human life can be subjected to critical thought and modified but not eliminated.

2. Post-critical thought must be distinguished carefully from post-modernism and the problems it raises for ethics. A theme present amid the bewildering diversity of post-modernism is its decisive rejection of what it calls the "modern," meaning by this the objectivist rationality of the critical period of Western thought. In rejecting the narrow, limiting certainties of modernism, post-modernism also eliminates any firm grounding for human thought and action, ethics included. Deconstruction takes the matter further and rejects the possibility of grounding for any view of reality and value.

The post-critical view is more discriminating and, I believe, more accurate. While it does not accept the overconfident claims of critical rationalism as doorway to reality, the post-critical perspective through its discovery of the tacit coefficient discloses pre-critical *roots* (rather that ground) of human thinking in particular

communities and traditions. After all, the critique of epistemology and ethics by deconstructionists relies for its force on their tacit dimension, with its commitments and presuppositions. Further, the affirmation of *absolute relativism* involves a major contradiction.

The tacit dimension provides firm roots for human commitment and action but not absolute grounding. Polanyi rejects the claim of critical thought to make *universal* statements about what is real, but affirms the possibility for humans informed by their communities and traditions to take responsibility for committing themselves to statements about reality and value with *universal intent*. In this way, Polanyi's post-critical philosophy combines the critical and the pre-critical, thus providing roots for ethical reflection and action, rather than setting humans adrift in a post-modern, deconstructed world.

3. Post-critical thought discloses the weakness of rationalism as the basis for ethics. Reason is useful in the process of ethical reflection but inadequate as its frame and focus, as, for example, when rationalism reduces ethics to ethical theory.

Most obviously, in post-critical perspective, the questions must be posed: "Whose reason? In what tradition and community of interpretation is the reasoning rooted?" One example that illustrates the inadequacy of reason as the ground of ethics is what can be called the postulation method of rational individualism in ethics found in the widely acclaimed work of John Rawls, whose major work is *A Theory of Justice*.[18] Rawl's ethical theory is based on individual definition and sequential postulation, with the unexamined presupposition that the author's reason is congruent with a rationality present in all rational individuals. Thus Rawls can make such assertions as: "I have distinguished the concept of justice," "The concept of justice I take to be defined by" (p. 10), "the social contract as found, say, in Locke, Rousseau, and Kant," "each person must decide by rational reflection" (p. 11), "The choice which rational persons would make" (p. 12), "It seems reasonable to suppose" (p. 19), "Let us assume that each person beyond a certain age and possessed of the requisite intellectual capacity develops a sense of justice" (p. 46), and so on. The structure Rawls builds has its interesting aspects as a theoretical, individual performance. From a post-critical perspective, however, his work has a basis no stronger than Rawls' individual assumptions and stipulations and will appeal only to those who share his view or merely enjoy the performance.

In speaking of the rational ethics of English academics in the 20th century, Mary Warnock offers a succinct comment: "One of the consequences of treating ethics as the analysis of ethical language is . . . that it leads to the increasing triviality of the subject . . . We do need to categorize and to describe, even in the sphere of morals, but we should still exist as moral agents even if we seldom did so, and therefore the subject matter of ethics would still exist."[19]

Rationalism as practiced by Rawls and as observed by Warnock reduces and trivializes ethics as the result of ignoring the tacit coefficient of persons engaging in ethical reflection. The embodied traditions, communities of interpretation, commitments, and passions must also be included. Polanyi observes, "To speak of moral passions is something new. Writers on ethics, both ancient and modern, have defined morality as a composed state of mind . . . There is, admittedly one ancient record of moral admonitions which were outbreaks of moral passion: the sermons of the Hebrew prophets."[20]

The post-critical perspective widens ethics beyond rationality by making us aware of the tacit coefficient of human thought shaping moral reflection. The importance of critical reason is affirmed within pre-

critical context. The rational premise is questioned that reason operates the same way in all humans and is independent of culture and tradition. Further, post-critical method goes beyond the notion of ethics as coolly detached and includes the elements of commitment and passion that characterize the moral life of humanity. As Polanyi puts it, "for the sake of precision declaratory sentences should be formulated in the fiduciary mode, with the words 'I believe' prefixed to them" thus eliminating "any formal distinction between statements of belief and statements of fact." This admission that statements, when understood carefully, are "intentionally circular" expressing one's "intellectual responsibilities" and "personal beliefs" makes it clear that faith and commitment are crucial elements in the tacit dimension of knowing and action; "the fiduciary mode will have to be merged in the wider framework of commitment."[21] Such an understanding is as important for ethics as for epistemology.

      B. <u>Implications for Ethics of the From/To Structure of Human Knowing.</u> Polanyi reminds us that "thinking is not only necessarily intentional, as Brentano taught; it is also necessarily fraught with the roots that it embodies."[22] This is just as true for ethics as for the physical sciences, epistemology, or learning to ride a bicycle, though specialists in religious, philosophical, and theological ethics are as prone as scholars in other specialties to overlook this basic insight and concentrate focally on the analysis of ethical language and/or ethical concepts.

      1. Ethical reflection has its focus on moral judgment and action, individual and communal. That focal awareness emerges within a tacit dimension, a "from," upon which the "to" relies. Ethics provides guidance for the moral agency of humans and is rooted in the traditions and commitments shaping the subsidiary awareness of individuals and communities. Ethical reflection is neither objective reasoning about moral issues nor is it subjective preferences. Instead ethical judgment and action arise from what humans believe to be real, meaningful, and of value, what are right principles and rules, and what is responsible and appropriate in human relations. Ethical reflection and action are seen in their wholeness only when the tacit coefficient is included.

      2. The tacit coefficient in ethics has sometimes been dealt with under the heading of *character*. Polanyi's perspective helps enlarge the understanding of character by including the embodiment of humans and their immersion in tradition and community, so that character directs attention to much more than "virtues" inhering in individuals. The communal rootage of character is given more adequate attention in post-critical perspective, and the character of communities as well as persons in community becomes clearer. Parallel to Plato's view of justice, we may say that personal character becomes more virtuous as communal character embodies virtue, and communal character becomes more virtuous as the character of the persons in the community embodies virtue.

      3. The from/to pattern helps show the inadequacy of "situation ethics," and may clear up some of its problems. As presented by John A. T. Robinson and Joseph Fletcher,[23] "situation ethics" focuses too exclusively on response to the immediate context and too little on the larger context opened up in the tacit coefficient shaping human interpretations of the situations and what is regarded as appropriate response in a particular context. In this situation ethics, the criterion of action becomes too simply the "principle of love," overlooking the tacit coefficient understood through the Christian community of interpretation, the tradition of Christian love, and faith in a God of love, which provide the basic context of Christian commitment.

      4. Another view elides ethics into "obedience" in the moment of existential decision and ignores the tacit dimension that includes the roots of obedience in tradition, community, and meaningful relationships, thus giving attention to faith and commitment.[24] Without subsidiary awareness, obedience remains a concept that

is, at worst, vague and, at best, remains highly ambiguous. The reliance on a context of tradition and community for interpreting the meaning of obedience is obscured if no attention is given to the tacit coefficient of human thought and action.

5. The from/to structure of post-critical thought provides the tacit dimension necessary for understanding the ethics of one's own faith community as well as the ethics of other communities. In this way, Polanyi contributes more inclusive awareness to Christian ethics, liberates it from a shallow bondage to the ethicist's own culture that is a present threat to the development of comparative ethics, and may prove midwife to the birth of global ethics as diverse cultures meet and interact.

Attempts at formulating a global ethic have shown tendencies to emerge from lowest-common-denominator reduction rather than from the height of commitment present in diverse faith communities around the world. The result is a list of principles that produce weak agreement but not the basis of strong common action. A genuine global ethic must begin by understanding divergent tacit coefficients in which communal commitments are rooted and work at discovering areas of strong agreement providing grounds for common commitments and effective action.

6. Most obvious and direct of all, Polanyi's from/to pattern discloses what could be called the dilemma of "Dilemma Ethics" and renders this kind of ethical thought a primary casualty of post-critical thought. The focus of dilemma ethics is the notion that the need for ethics arises when a moral problem confronts us with a dilemma requiring moral judgment and decisions about alternative courses of action. Overlooked is the tacit coefficient in human agents within which a dilemma arises and makes it possible to recognize the existence of a dilemma. The from/to structure of post-critical thought both undermines the basis of "dilemma ethics" itself and also illumines the subsidiary element of focal ethical awareness and action. Without the "from," there is no "to," without a background of moral commitments, there is no dilemma. In this perspective, dilemma ethics is truncated and incomplete, existing in a vacuum of non-explanation, unless the crucial dimension of believed-in meaning and value is included. Not only does the tacit coefficient explain the appearance of an ethical dilemma, but also makes it clear that the resources for dealing with ethical issues once recognized will be shaped by the fiduciary character of the tacit coefficient.

C. Post-Critical Heurism and Ethics. At no point is Polanyi's thought more important for ethics in a post-critical era than in its heuristic core. Humans *dwell in* the traditions of the community in which they are born and to which they are apprenticed from birth. But there is the strong heuristic impulse to *break out* into new insights that extend the past. The teleological, goal-oriented, character of ethics must wrestle constantly with the burgeoning of meaning of such ends as love and justice. As one level of meaning is attained, new levels emerge. In deontological ethics, focused upon principles, rules, and laws to be followed, the same heuristic phenomenon of development and change can be observed. As Chief Justice Earl Warren observed, "Law floats in a sea of morality," and changes as moral insight unfolds. And morality exists in a context of ethical convictions and faith that have heuristic impulses taking humanity forward into a future of newness. Weber sees charisma emerging and subsiding into routinization, institutionalization, and stasis, but Polanyi views the dynamic force of charisma still present, dwelt in and waiting to break out anew. The heuristic core of post-critical thought appears especially in the Polanyi's notions of *moral inversion, virtue as achievement*, and *liberation*.

1. Moral Inversion.. Among the most interesting and original contributions of Polanyi to ethics is the notion of "moral inversion." When we understand that ethics is not based on inner peace or the absence of passion

but rather on commitment and moral passion, the ambiguous character of morality emerges. Ethical aspiration may open the way to coercion or violence to achieve the goal to which it is committed. This commitment to violence as a means may be transformed into a goal. Polanyi calls this "transformation a process of *moral inversion*."[25] One aspect of moral inversion arises from excessive intensity of moral expectations, which can be destructive of ethical thought and action. A second aspect of moral inversion is what Polanyi calls "dynamo-objective coupling."

a. The Peril of Perfectionism. In the opinion of many observers of the moral scene today, the language of moral discourse is chaotic; that human ethical thought, concern, and action are disappearing; and that moral standards and behavior are in sharp decline. Evidence for all these opinions, in the view of those holding them, can be found in abundance. Polanyi has a different perspective.

First, the view that ethics and morality have fallen into chaos and decline can be seen as evidence that the standards for judging have been raised. As some observers have noted about the rising tide of complaint about the ethics of business corporation, the situation when viewed carefully does not reveal that the behavior of corporations and business leaders is worse than was the case fifty or one hundred years ago; indeed the actual behavior has improved—in many areas quite markedly; the real change is that society (through government, through the activity of the increasing number of protest groups; and the development of ethics codes in business and trade associations and in all varieties of corporation) has dramatically elevated the ethical standards by which business corporations are judged. The intensity of ethical concern has become deeper, and the areas of ethical interest in society has widened immensely throughout the 20th century.

Second, the more serious problem today is the intensification and increasing breadth of moral concern, as it moves toward standard of judgment approaching perfectionism. The public is beginning to demand ethical perfection in all areas of moral concern and to want complete fulfillment of moral expectations immediately. This raises the possibility of "moral inversion," a reaction to failure to attain these ultimate expectations resulting in widespread cynicism, despair, nihilism, and an openness to immoral actions resulting from excessive moral passion. Not declining moral concern, but rather the reverse —the intensity of moral expectations—may lead to an endemic collapse of ethics.

Those "chicken-little" ethicists, who are declaring that the ethical sky is falling, may be victims of historical amnesia and social myopia.[26] In their focal awareness on contemporary moral outcry, they have missed the heightened standards and the increasing number of areas of concern in ethics and contributed to the looming peril of moral inversion via ethical perfectionism.

b. Dynamo-Objective Coupling. Polanyi finds illustrations of this kind of "moral inversion" in Marxism and Freudianism. The dynamo-objective coupling occurs when "Moral passions are . . . cast in the form of a scientific affirmation." For example, "both branches of Marxism operate by denying to morality any intrinsic moral force of its own . . . yet both appeal in this very act to moral passions . . . Any criticism of the scientific part is rebutted by the moral passions behind it, while any moral objections to it are coldly brushed aside by invoking the inexorable verdict of its scientific findings."[27]

Polanyi suggests that Freud carries out a similar bit of moral inversion. Morality as viewed by Freud in others has Oedipal roots, yet Freud's own "scientific" views are justified by the moral passions underlying them for curing patients of neuroses. Polanyi writes, "A society affiliated to such a network [Marxist or

Freudian] may be said to maintain a certain standard of 'factuality'—provided that one accepts its methods of fact-finding."[28]

2. Virtue as Human Achievement in Community. When ethics is understood in the heuristic perspective of Polanyi's post-critical thought, it becomes apparent that virtue as it should be understood in ethics is not a static form of goodness or a power for doing the good that resides in individuals or an aspect of character that inheres in habitual behavior. Whatever virtue humanity is capable of exhibiting is rooted in tradition, human community, and emerges in the heuristic context of dwelling in and breaking out. Virtue is an ongoing social achievement.

Polanyi does not have a doctrine of original sin but rather a conviction that humanity has a dimension of incompleteness with reference to moral aspiration as well as knowing. Reality has morality interwoven within it. Virtue, we may say, is also rooted in reality. The passion for fulfillment results in a restlessness of humanity that participates in a process toward an unknown consummation.

Just as in the community of science, there is a check on what individuals may regard as real and valid, so also in political and economic community that are checks and balances on power that contribute to moral development. Both the restlessness, the aspiration, and the importance of virtue as dependent upon community for pervasive ways of checking and limiting power and self-aggrandizement show the kinship of Polanyi's post-critical philosophy with the federal or covenantal tradition in theology and political thought as found, for example, in *The Federalist Papers,* especially those written by James Madison, who studied federal theology and political philosophy with John Witherspoon at the College of New Jersey.[29] There is also similarity with the ethics of Plato as found in *The Republic*, in his notion of the Good as the goal of human and divine striving and also in his treatment of virtue as reflected in "The Ring of Gyges,"[30] as resting on the visibility in society of humans.

3. Liberation. Polanyi's view of reality in process of unfolding knowledge and moral development is related to notions of evolution, but not in sense of chance natural selection but rather as a *heuristic field* luring all forms of living toward commitment and achievement. More than process, there is, for Polanyi, an eschatological element present in reality, not in the sense of "doctrine of last things," but in the sense that Jürgen Moltmann means that there is a hopeful teleology built into human, historical existence, as well as natural reality:

> For the emergent noosphere is wholly determined as that which we believe to be true and right; it is the external pole of our commitments, the service of which is our freedom. It defines a free society as a fellowship fostering truth and respecting the right. It comprises everything in which we may be totally mistaken.[31]

As we review the entire past embodied in our universe, Polanyi suggests, we realize that there has been purposive power shaping it, a power we identify with what we ultimately believe, a power bearing the world toward liberation. The ethics of Polanyi's post-critical philosophy emerges not with a view of values and morality rooted merely in human preferences but rather in tradition, culture, community, commitment, and believed-in reality. The final paragraph of *Personal Knowledge* displays this incredible vision:

> So far as we know, the tiny fragments of the universe embodied in humanity are the only centres of thought and responsibility in the visible world. If that be so, the appearance of the human mind has been

so far the ultimate stage in the wakening of the world; and all that has gone before, the striving of a myriad of centres that have taken the risks of living and believing, seem to have all been pursuing, along rival lines, the aim now achieved by us up to this point. They are all akin to us. For all these centres— those which led up to our own existence and the far more numerous others which produced different lines of which many are extinct—may be seen engaged in the same endeavor toward ultimate liberation. We may envisage then a cosmic field which called forth all these centres by offering them a short-lived, limited, hazardous opportunity for making some progress of their own towards an unthinkable consummation. And that is also, I believe, how a Christian is placed when worshipping God.[32]

D. Beyond Specialization. Most philosophers have been wary of Polanyi, the majority reluctant even to grapple with his thought. Not a member of any particular faith community, he felt a deep kinship with the Christian community. His thought erases the sharp lines of specialization between fields of study. Humans become participants in a world already underway. Reality, as he believes in it with universal intent to be inexhaustible, has ethical meaning at its core. This cosmic process is characterized by an eschatological drive toward ultimate liberation. And the empowering factor is the heuristic lure of dissatisfaction:

> The indwelling of the Christian worshipper is therefore a continued attempt at breaking out, at casting off the condition of man, even while humbly acknowledging its inescapability. Such indwelling is fulfilled most . . . in the heuristic upsurge which strives to break through the accepted frameworks of thought, guided by intimations of discoveries still beyond our horizon. Christian worship sustains, as it were, an eternal, never to be consummated hunch: a heuristic vision . . . [and] command: 'Look at the unknown!' Christianity sedulously fosters, and in a sense permanently satisfies, man's craving for mental dissatisfaction by offering him the comfort of a crucified God.[33]

In this context of commitment and acceptance of responsibility lies the human sense of calling, with an understanding including the whole being of humanness. Polanyi affirms the roots of faith and ethics in tradition and community, not bound to past dogmas or an impossible ideal of objectivity, but directing humanity toward an unfolding future filled with creativity and anticipation of newness leading toward ultimate liberation and unthinkable consummation.

The most important contribution to ethics of post-critical thought may well be restoring attention to the wholeness of human action and responsibility, rather than having the primary focus on one part or another. Specialization shatters the comprehensiveness of human living, so that, for example, the separated disciplines of the university as based on the rationalism of the Enlightenment are ill-equipped to deal with any human problem. In a sentence that might have been used at the beginning of this essay, Polanyi affirms that "the study of man must start with an appreciation of man in the act of making responsible decisions."[34] He sees ethics, not as an isolated specialty of philosophy or theology, but rather as central to the wholeness of human action in achieving knowledge and seeking to act responsibly in every sphere of life. The morality of personal knowing and the commitments involved are not peripheral but pervade the historical, communal nature of human existence.

5. Conclusion

Polanyi's revolution in thought touches every discipline and aspect of human life, and opens up a new, comprehensive understanding of ethics. The tacit coefficient makes it clear that ethics pervades all human

activity and involves commitment and passion as well as reason. Ethics represents a comprehensive level of reality as humans experience it, not a narrow specialty giving rational ordering to categories of "goodness" or analyzing "moral language." Post-critical thought provides a method for understanding diverse patterns of ethics in Western society and around the globe, respecting them without agreeing completely with them, and making it possible for them to relate to and learn from one another. Polanyi points out the dangers of excessive moral passion, and, of central importance, the heuristic lure that leads us to dwell in tradition in order to break out into the unfolding, satisfyingly indeterminate, inexhaustible, faithful reality of God.

Endnotes

[1] For helpful views of the relation of Polanyi's post-critical philosophy to post-modernism, see Richard Gelwick, "Michael Polanyi and Postmodernism," a paper prepared for the Polanyi Society; Andy Sanders, "Tacit Knowing—Between Modernism and Postmodernism," *Tradition and Discovery: The Polanyi Society Periodical* 18:2 (1991-1992): 15-21; and Jerry H. Gill, *The Tacit Mode, Michael Polanyi's Postmodern Philosophy*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2000.

[2] Michael Polanyi was born in Hungary in 1891 and died in England in 1976. Brought up in a family that prized learning and culture, he earned doctorates in both medicine and physical chemistry. A brother, Karl Polanyi, became a distinguished economist and author of *The Great Transformation.* Michael taught at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin until in 1933 his Jewish antecedents forced him to emigrate to England, where he became professor of physical chemistry at the University of Manchester and later was a Fellow of Merton College, Oxford. After very distinguished work in physical chemistry, he shifted into a chair in social philosophy, gradually developing his post-critical thought.

[3] Carl Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932, p. 34.

[4] For one analysis of the tunnel vision imposed by scientism and its missionary fervor, see Huston Smith, *Why Religion Matters: The Fate of the Human Spirit in an Age of Disbelief.* San Francisco: HarperSanfrancisco, 2000. Given Smith's perspective, however, this is hardly an "age of disbelief," as he depicts the fervent belief in scientism sweeping across the world with the power exhibited by Islam in the seventh century.

[5] Because of the preoccupation among philosophers at Oxford and Cambridge with the analysis of language, three of England's most important philosophers of the 20th century—Alfred North Whitehead, R. G. Collingwood, and Michael Polanyi—have been given far more attention in other countries than in British universities. As we were having a discussion one day over tea in the senior common room of Magdalen College, Gilbert Ryle remarked to me, "The major problem of Oxford philosophers is that they are convinced that 'ordinary' language is the English spoken in the senior common room of Oxford colleges."

[6] In other articles in recent years encouraging a deeper appreciation of Polanyi's thought, I have presented material similar to that found in what follows. For example, see "The Polanyian Revolution: Post-Critical Perspectives for Ethics" in *Tradition and Discovery*, Volume XVIII, Number 2, 1991-1992, based on an address I gave at the Polanyi Centennial Conference in 1991.

[7] Marjorie Grene, "Tacit Knowing: Grounds for a Revolution in Philosophy," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, Vol. 8, No. 3, October 1977: 164.

[8] Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958, p. 7. Referred to hereinafter as *PK*.

[9] *PK*, pp. 4-5.

[10] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*. Corrected Edition, edited by David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne. New York: The Free Press, 1978, p. xiii.

[11] Marjorie Grene (ed.), *Knowing and Being: Essays by Michael Polanyi*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969, p. 144.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 156.

[13] Michael Polanyi, *Science, Faith and Society*. London: Oxford University Press, 1946. Second edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946, p. 10. See also *PK*, p. 311.

[14] *PK*, p. 300.

[15] *PK*, p. 196.

[16] *PK*, pp. 127-128.

[17] *PK*, p. 311. See also the discussion on commitment and the circularity of knowing leading up to this affirmation, *PK*, 299ff.

[18] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971.

[19] Mary Warnock, *Ethics Since 1900*. London: Oxford University Press, 1960, p. 144; Third edition, 1978, p. 132.

[20] *Knowing and Being*, p. 4.

[21] *PK*, pp. 299-300.

[22] Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension*. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1966, p. x.

[23] See, for example, John A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God*. London: SCM Press, 1963, in which he writes (p. 115), "love alone . . . has a built-in moral compass, enabling it to 'home' intuitively upon the deepest need of the other, can allow itself to be directed completely by the situation." See also Robinson, *Christian Morals Today*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964; Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966, and "Love is the Only Measure," *Commonweal*, Vol. 83 (1966).

[24] See Rudolf Bultmann. *Jesus and the Word*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934. For criticisms of Bultmann's ethics of obedience, see Amos N. Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics in the Teaching of Jesus*. New York: Harper & Brothers, Revised edition, 1950, pp. 138ff., and H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*. New York, Harper & Brothers, 1951, pp. 22ff.

[25] See the entire essay, "Beyond Nihilism," in *Knowing and Being*, pp. 3-23.

[26] For example, see Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: a Study in Moral Theory*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981, who puts forward the thesis that we face "moral calamity" today (vi.) because "the nature of moral community and moral judgment in distinctively modern societies" makes it impossible "to appeal to moral criteria in a way that had been possible in other times and places . . . There seems to be no rational way of securing moral agreement in our culture" (6). The choice left for the modern world is either the moral disorder of emotivism epitomized in Nietzsche of the firmly rational basis for virtue found in Aristotle (211).

[27] *PK*, p. 230 and ff.

[28] *PK*, p. 240. Polanyi attributes his meaning of "factuality" to Hannah Arendt.

[29] See Charles S. McCoy and J. Wayne Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1992, esp. Pp. 95-98.

[30] Plato, *Republic*, 359d-368d.

[31] *PK*, p. 404.

[32] *PK*, p. 405.

[33] *PK*, pp. 198-199.

[34] Michael Polanyi, *The Study of Man*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959, p. 71.

Submissions for Publication

Articles, meeting notices and notes likely to be of interest to persons interested in the thought of Michael Polanyi are welcomed. Review suggestions and book reviews should be sent to Walter Gulick (see addresses listed below). Manuscripts, notices and notes should be sent to Phil Mullins. Manuscripts should be double-spaced type with notes at the end; writers are encouraged to employ simple citations within the text when possible. MLA or APA style are preferred; because the journal serves English writers across the world, we do not require anybody's "standard English." Abbreviate frequently cited book titles, particularly books by Polanyi (e.g., *Personal Knowledge* becomes *PK*). Shorter articles (10-15 pages) are preferred, although longer manuscripts (20-24 pages) will be considered. Consistency and clear writing are expected.

Manuscripts normally will be sent out for blind review. Authors are expected to provide a hard copy and a disk or an electronic copy as an e-mail attachment. Be sure that electronic materials include all relevant information which may help converting files. Persons with questions or problems associated with producing an electronic copy of manuscripts should phone or write Phil Mullins. Insofar as possible, *TAD* is willing to work with authors who have special problems producing electronic materials.

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Confronting the Minotaur:
Moral Inversion and Polanyi's Moral Philosophy

D. M. Yeager

ABSTRACT Key Words: Michael Polanyi, moral inversion, ethics, ethnocentrism, skepticism, totalitarianism, tradition, Najder, nihilism, modernity

Moral inversion, the fusion of skepticism and utopianism, is a preoccupying theme in Polanyi's work from 1946 onward. In part 1, the author analyzes Polanyi's complex account of the intellectual developments that are implicated in a cascade of inversions in which the good is lost through complicated, misguided, and unrealistic dedication to the good. Parts 2 and 3 then address two of the most basic of the objections to Polanyi's theory voiced by Zdzislaw Najder. To Najder's complaint that Polanyi is not clear in his use of the term "moral," the author replies that the pivotal distinction in Polanyi's moral theory is not the moral against the intellectual, but the passions against the appetites. In considering Najder's complaint that Polanyi's argument represents a naive instance of ethnocentric absolutism, the author undertakes to show Polanyi's consistency and perspectival self-awareness by focusing on Polanyi's account of authority and dissent within a tradition, as well as on Polanyi's treatment of persuasion as a heuristic passion.

Paul Nagy has characterized Michael Polanyi as "pre-eminently a moral philosopher" (Nagy 1996, 23). This description seems consistent with certain things that Polanyi himself said about his intentions. In *Personal Knowledge,* for example, he wrote that his opposition to the "universal mechanical interpretation of things" had as its "ground" his conviction that such an interpretation "impairs man's moral consciousness" (PK 153). Moreover, the argument of *Personal Knowledge* culminates in a narrative celebration of the emergence out of an inanimate universe, not just of life, but of life forms capable of pursuing their existence in moral responsibility within the framework of meaning and value provided by the multiple traditions and convivial orders in which persons participate. The middle third of *The Study of Man,* Polanyi's "extension" of the inquiry undertaken in *Personal Knowledge,* is given over to "the study of man acting responsibly within the bounds of his human obligations" (SM 42). Polanyi's 1965 essay "On the Modern Mind" occupies itself with addressing "the challenge that a positivistic empiricism presents to the existence of moral principles" (mm 18). His purpose there is to trace the destruction of and point the way to the recovery of "the grounds for our basic [moral] ideals," ideals rooted in and constitutive of "the higher intangible levels of existence, which a positivistic empiricism refuses to recognize" (mm 13, 18). Near the end of *The Tacit Dimension,* he writes, "I have specifically promised to find a place for moral principles safe from self-destruction by a claim to boundless self-determination" (TD 85). And the opening of chapter 2 of *Meaning* complains that the "morally neutral account of all human affairs" that continues to prevail in the academy constitutes a "false philosophy" which, though it may not be able "to destroy the power of our moral convictions," nonetheless inevitably entangles us and our students in a web of reductive thinking by means of which "we must come to suspect our own moral motives" and "silence" our moral impulses (M 23).

Yet to call Polanyi "pre-eminently a moral philosopher" seems initially to stretch the bounds of credibility. Nagy rests his claim on the argument that Polanyi is "a moral philosopher in the Aristotelian tradition who anticipated the turn in recent years away from the modern ethics of rules to the classical ethics of virtue"

(Nagy 1996, abstract), and one can find strands in Polanyi's work that prefigure certain much acclaimed arguments advanced by Alasdair MacIntyre. Yet it seems hard to fault moral philosophers and theologians for being less attentive to Polanyi's contribution than epistemologists, social and political theorists, and those who work in the domain of fundamental theology have been. There are at least two impediments in the way of securing the sort of hearing for Polanyi among ethicists that would allow us to proceed to a balanced discussion of his stature as a moral philosopher. First, Polanyi is a very complicated thinker, and it is difficult to assess the value of his thought for ethics and moral philosophy without first understanding his philosophy of science, his critique of critical philosophy and positivism, his social theory, and his account of human knowing. From the point of view of the moral philosopher, this is a lot of work to do for what looks to be, at best, an uncertain gain. Second, those portions of Polanyi's writings in which he is most obviously making moral arguments tend, it seems to me, to actively discourage the required investment of time and study, because on an initial reading, they seem imprecise, mythy, tendentious, ideological, and almost (if not downright) naive.

A case in point is his analysis of what he calls "moral inversion," which may be broadly understood as the process by which the fusion of scientific skepticism ("extreme critical lucidity" [TD 4]) with utopian social aspirations ("intense moral conscience" [TD 4]) produces the dystopia of moral and political nihilism out of which arises the modern totalitarian state, in which the only principle of social order is absolute coercive power and in which material welfare is embraced as the supreme social good. The exposure and critique of moral inversion is a project to which Polanyi reverts repeatedly between 1946 and 1975,[1] and it can fairly be said that diagnosing this pathology, analyzing its causes, and devising a remedy constitute the social objective to which his philosophical work is ordered.

In 1968 Zdzislaw Najder published, in the collection *Intellect and Hope,* an adept, biting, and comprehensive critique of Polanyi's discussion of moral inversion. So far as I know, this powerful set of objections has gone unanswered. There is, of course, no way to establish how influential his essay has been in discouraging philosophical interest in the ethical dimension of Polanyi's work, but I do not doubt that Najder's reaction is emblematic of the response of many readers to this strand in Polanyi's *oeuvre*—certainly my own first effort to engage and assess Polanyi's treatment of moral inversion resulted in dismay and misgivings that closely mirrored Najder's. To the extent that Polanyi's analysis is meant to provide "a historical, social, and political theory," Najder faults it for "oversimplification, hasty judgment, and tendentious interpretation of history" (Najder 1968, 384). According to Najder, Polanyi fails to adequately differentiate Nazism and Stalinism; he romanticizes and distorts the social reality of late nineteenth-century Europe; he "neglects" "social, economic, and sociohistorical factors" (378) and "never pays attention to social and economic causes of revolutions and upheavals" (379); his "pleas for political and moral restraint and moderation sound distinctly conservative" (382) and his "conceptual framework remains thoroughly individualistic or rather, to be more precise, rests on a sort of an individualistic-intellectualistic syndrome" (383). To the extent that Polanyi's analysis is meant to present a "conceptual proposal," "a tool to analyze certain problems of morality and moral behavior, of ethical change and of mass psychology" (365), Najder faults it for lack of focus, as well as lack of clarity and consistency. If it is a proposal about psychological processes, "the meaning of the predicate 'moral' seems to be rather difficult to ascertain: what precisely differentiates moral passions from other kinds of passions?" (367). If it is a proposal about sociohistorical tendencies rather than individual psyches, then Polanyi pays inadequate attention to what Najder calls "the social determinants of morality" (369). If it is a proposal about axiological structures, Polanyi is vulnerable to "accusations of inconsistency and arbitrariness" (372) because he sometimes treats moral commitments as socially grounded professions of faith and other times presents them as "eternal truths." His position, in the end, is indistinguishable from "ethnocentric absolutism" (370).

Najder's criticisms are all weight-bearing objections and can only be answered (if they *can* be answered) by penetrating more deeply still into the logic of Polanyi's arguments. The very gravity of Najder's complaints suggests that moral inversion is an inauspicious place to begin the work of assessing Polanyi's contribution to moral philosophy. Other aspects of Polanyi's thought—his theory of fiduciary commitments, his analysis of the structure of human judgment, and his insistence that there is no escape from risk—seem considerably less problematic and clearly do have implications for ethics. Yet, on his own terms, we cannot take him seriously as a moral philosopher without giving sustained attention, sooner or later, to the metanarrative he develops concerning moral inversion in modernity. Since this account is actually considerably more complex than is usually acknowledged, I will begin by reviewing it. In sections 2 and 3, I will return to Najder's complaints (1) that Polanyi's use of "moral" and his notion of moral passions remain enigmatic (Najder 1968, 367) and (2) that Polanyi's argument offers an unwitting and regrettable example of "ethnocentric absolutism" (370). Najder's other criticisms are equally worthy of attention, but inasmuch as not all of them can be addressed here, I will concentrate on the two that seem most basic.

1. The Process of Moral Inversion

As Polanyi makes clear at the beginning of "On the Modern Mind," he believes that ideas matter, that they have the power to shape the evolution of human history. It is only because thought has "intrinsic power" that freedom of thought matters.[2] Ideas are contextually prompted, he grants, but ideas are not simply symptoms of and legitimations for other social forces that actually do the heavy lifting; on the contrary, ideas are a social force in their own right:

> To accept the indeterminacy of knowledge requires, on the contrary [contrary to the objectivist picture of the "functioning of a mindless knower"], that we accredit a person entitled to shape his knowing according to his own judgment, unspecifiably. This notion—applied to man—implies in its turn a sociology in which the growth of thought is acknowledged as an independent force. And such a sociology is a declaration of loyalty to a society in which truth is respected and human thought is cultivated for its own sake (PK 264).

Accordingly, when people "change their minds," governments rise and fall, despotism advances or despotism collapses (mhr 32, 28). His argument concerning moral inversion is an inquiry into European intellectual history and advances a hypothesis about the way in which the development of certain ideas and the emergence of a widespread disposition to act on those ideas are implicated in the rise of totalitarian socio-political systems in the twentieth century. Indeed, it is his hypothesis that certain combinations of ideas, consistently enacted, entail totalitarian tyranny. There is no getting around the fact that Polanyi believes that ideas are an independent, determining force in political and civic life.

Polanyi also believes that ideas can be correct or incorrect in their bearing on and representation of social as well as natural realities. Incorrect ideas yield patterns of action that are, at best, unfruitful. Moreover, thought constitutes "an autonomous power" because "truth, justice, and morality have an intrinsic [if intangible] reality" (mhr 35, 36). It is not, perhaps, easy to see just what this might mean, but it seems pivotal to understanding Polanyi's conviction that totalitarian régimes, and the condition of moral inversion that supports them, are inherently unstable. Because they invert, misrepresent, and deny real forces, they are riven with contradictions and illusions that cannot be maintained over long periods of time, even when they are instantiated in comprehensive social systems that provide little purchase for doubt or questioning.

Polanyi's counterintuitive thesis with respect to the rise and dominion of totalitarian régimes (on the right and the left) is that the driving power behind these dehumanizing and violently oppressive governments has been essentially and fanatically moral. Whatever else the leaders of these movements may have been about, they understood themselves to be and, in fact, were (in Polanyi's judgment) implementing utopian visions of the common good. Polanyi is probing, then, a moral paradox: namely, that the twentieth century's unprecedented lake of blood had its springs, not in moral decay or complete amorality, but in pathological moralism. The demonic is not a force that opposes the moral; it is Western morality's own deepest and, in ways, most seductive temptation. Although this has presumably been a perpetual danger, in late modernity, the demonic subversion of moral intention became nothing less than inevitable when certain supporting conditions conspired to defeat critical moral self-consciousness. The puzzle that totalitarianism presents to him is, thus, the puzzle of how profound and noble moral aspirations could be so completely twisted and perverted as to result not only in the callous forms of dehumanization epitomized by the unthinkable slaughter of millions of citizens by their own various governments but in the complete subversion of justice, the wholesale sacrifice of freedom, and the systematic substitution of purposeful lies for inconvenient truths. These deaths, this subversion, this sacrifice, this substitution—these are the worldly face of moral inversion, and unlike so many others, from Karl Marx to Karl Polanyi to Zdzislaw Najder, Polanyi believes that the explanation is to be sought, not in (or not merely in) economic systems and social conflicts, but in European intellectual history. It is worth reminding ourselves, at this point, that Polanyi was a gifted Hungarian scientist and intellectual of Jewish background whose family emigrated from Hungary to escape the antisemitic laws and practices of the forces that occupied Budapest in 1919; in 1933 he left Nazi Germany under similar circumstances. Between 1928 and 1935, he made four extended trips to the Soviet Union. He may thus be said to possess a certain indisputable authority in speaking of totalitarian states. While it might be argued that he is wrong or one-sided in his interpretation, he cannot be said to be uninformed about the social conditions he seeks to diagnose.

The intellectual trends that he considers relevant to the rise of totalitarianism are as numerous as their interplay is complicated. The list must include at least these developments:

- The rise of Western science was closely tied to a mechanistic conception of the natural world, which yielded a mechanistic conception of the person, and that, in turn, yielded a materialist view of politics and "a naturalistic explanation of . . . moral and social responsibilities" (tc 41).
- As the physical sciences proceeded from one triumph to another, theorists sought to apply the scientific method to studies of the social order. Wrapped, then, in the authority of science, these interpretations of political trends and these predictions of the political and economic future could represent themselves as objectively unassailable empirical accounts, effectively licensing despotism on the part of those who embraced them.
- Because appreciation of scientific truth was necessarily restricted to a highly trained élite and because material contrivance has always been so important to the physical well-being of humanity, technology, which "requires that an invention should be economic and thus achieve a material advantage" (PK 177), gained ascendancy over scientific inquiry and the cultural values that constitute the framework of science. This gave a distinct boost to an already pervasive utilitarian (means-end; manipulative) mentality: a right understanding of science was further obscured and relations of use, instrumentality, and control were celebrated.

- The relativization of truth and morals that arose with the decay of belief in revealed absolutes and rationally indubitable universals—the awareness of "our own ubiquitous participation in the shaping of truth" (PK 204)—yielded suspicion of all authorities and a species of moral nihilism (a contempt for humane ideals and an inability to respond to them) at both the political/civic and the personal levels. At the same time, it created a public eager to embrace the illusion that it would be possible to arrive at impersonal objectivity (the chief charm of which was the certainty it yielded) by working within the rigid constraints of the empirically provable.
- The scientific/rational challenge to traditional forms of social order and authority resulted in secularism (distrust of the clergy) and the shift from a static conception of society to a dynamic one. The idea that society is progressing toward ever higher and more adequate forms gained wide acceptance, and "the deliberate contriving of unlimited social improvement" was elevated to the status of "a dominant principle" (bn 8).
- With the decay of immemorial customs and unquestionable authority, the internal contradictions between the practice and the rhetoric of any society "professing Christian precepts" became a source of social disruption (bn 5).
- Whereas morality had once been construed as the restraint of passion and the achievement of serenity in the face of fate, it began to be understood in terms of the pursuit of (the enabling or enactment of) the social good; this produced "inordinate aspirations" and opened the way for "moral excess" (bn 3).
- As otherworldly faith gave way to this-worldly enthusiasms, a secularized chiliastic perfectionism was loosed in the civic realm, fanning impatience with the (necessary) compromises of all existing social orders and yielding a ruthless revolutionary political righteousness. With this came the conviction that the end sought will justify whatever means are used to achieve it (see especially the description of the moral zealotry of Russian revolutionaries, mhr 38).
- Romanticism ("a comprehensive movement of thought and feeling" evoked by "[m]an's consciousness of himself as a sovereign individual" [bn 8]) gave rise to the idea that "man's moral responsibility would be safely grounded in nature" (tc 43). This led Jean-Jacques Rousseau, among others, to distrust society (authority, culture, and tradition) as a form of corruption and to place great value on individuality and spontaneity. It also led, in parallel contrast, to the utilitarian view (particularly in the theories of Claude-Adrien Helvétius and Jeremy Bentham) that "reduced man to a bundle of appetites feeding themselves according to a mathematical formula" (tc 43).
- The rise of absolute individualism had the paradoxical result of authorizing the absolute state: "an outstanding individual is a law unto himself and may, as a statesman, unscrupulously impose his will on the rest of the world" (PK 232). A nation, too, has "the right and the duty to fulfil its 'historic destiny' irrespective of moral obligations" (PK 232; see also SFS 78–79, bn 7ff., M 12).
- Whereas freedom and obligation had been seen as inseparable (because freedom was considered to be a function of membership in a community, membership which entailed an obligation to a particular tradition and its values [SFS 65, 74]), freedom began to be conceived as sovereign individuality and as a release from social obligation. Revolt, disorder, and meaningless activity came to be seen as the road to freedom (M 23).
- Growing social disillusionment and contempt provoked self-conscious immoralism. People with developed moral sensitivities thus pursued and flaunted vicious behavior "in protest against the moral shallowness of society" (bn 9). Individuals embraced and were guided in their conduct by the view that "evil may be morally superior to good" (bn 13) because it was honest, natural, authentic, and untrammeled by discredited social conventions

A listing of this sort makes it clear that moral inversion is not being presented to us as a simple, obvious, and straightforward development. Indeed, my own initial impression that Polanyi's theory of moral inversion is too speculative or too sketchy to be very convincing seems, in light of such a list, to have arisen because of the breadth of data that he undertakes to integrate rather than because his analysis is superficial or simplistic. There is, after all, a considerable literature on nearly all of these trends. And if Polanyi has not given us the sort of detailed and specific analysis of intellectual history that we might have found more persuasive, it may be because he could hardly track them all with the same level of intensity with which he has traced the development and effects of positivistic skepticism.

It is, moreover, his argument that none of these trends, taken by itself, would produce moral inversion. What is required is the *fusion* of two or more. In analyzing what fuses with what to produce moral inversion, Polanyi gives different accounts in different places, but in all of these accounts, we find him combining one of the trends connected with the development of scientific rationalism into positivistic skepticism with one of the trends relating to shifts in and intensifications of civic moral aspiration. Moral inversion requires, to use the words of Harry Prosch, "the twin devils of the ideal of knowledge as detached objectivity and the ideal of action as moral perfectionism" (Prosch 1986, 272).
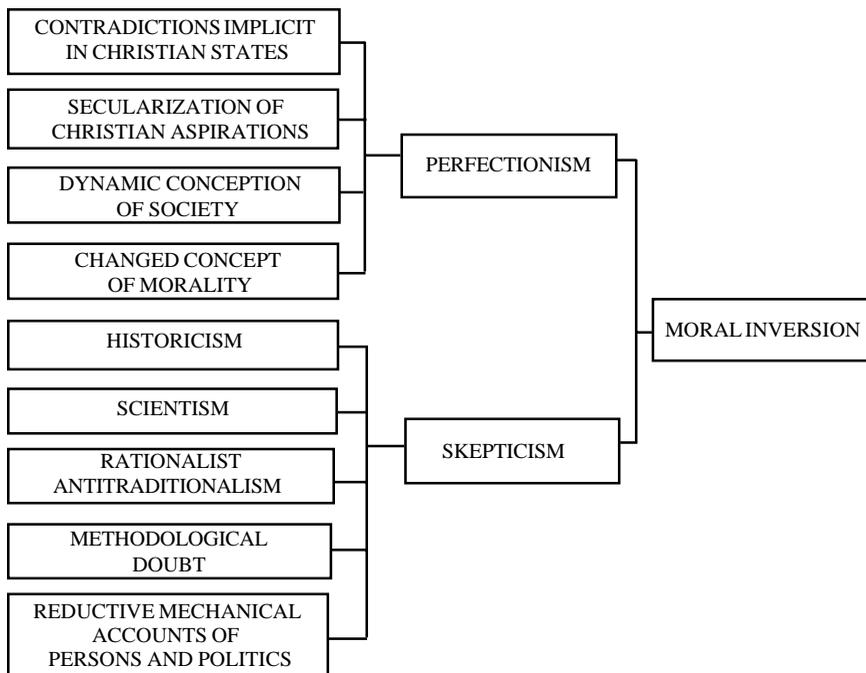
Different permutations of elements from the two basic clusters yield the various summary characterizations of the origins of moral inversion that Polanyi advances in different places. In *Personal Knowledge,* he speaks of the dynamo-objective coupling, by which he means that in any given psyche, the dynamic or motive power of the moral sentiments is fused with the illusion of scientific certainty provided by false theories of impersonal, objective knowledge (PK 230). Or in a slightly different way, the energizing power of moral indignation fuses with a materialistic and utilitarian "interpretation of morality [which] accuses all moral sentiments of hypocrisy" (PK 233). And in the arena of public affairs, "high moral dynamism" fuses with "our stern critical passion which demands that we see human affairs objectively, i.e. as a mechanistic process in the Laplacean manner," or, to put it yet another way, "inordinate . . . moral aspirations" fuse with a "completely amoral . . . objectivist outlook" (PK 228). In *The Tacit Dimension,* he at one point suggests that "Scientific skepticism and utopianism had thus fused into a new skeptical fanaticism" (TD 4) and, at another, describes the effects of "self-doubt coupled with perfectionism" (TD 87). These passages, and others like them, support the view that moral inversion occurs only in the interplay of a double infirmity: a pathologically "misguided" intellectual passion—"a passion for achieving absolutely impersonal knowledge" (PK 142)—enters into a symbiotic relationship with a pathological (or at least invidiously "inordinate") moral passion—the utopian passion for social perfection. There are, however, other passages that look for an explanation, not to some set of pathologies within the normal framework of Western thought, but in the framework itself. In works at the beginning and at the end of his philosophical career, he suggests that the contradiction or antinomy has been built into the Western tradition of thought from its very inception in the imperfect cultural welding of the rational and critical heritage of the Greeks with the moral and prophetic heritage of the Christians. "Modern thought is a mixture of Christian beliefs and Greek doubts. Christian beliefs and Greek doubts are logically incompatible and the conflict between the two has kept Western thought alive and creative beyond precedent. But this mixture is an unstable foundation. Modern totalitarianism is a consummation of the conflict between religion and skepticism" (LL 109–10; reprinted nearly word-for-word in M 20–21). It is as if he supposes that the intractable presence of each exposes the other to novel forms of corruption.

While it is difficult to bring all of the pertinent elements into a lucid comprehensive statement of the interactions of all these intellectual developments in triggering moral inversion(s), I do not see obvious contradictions among the various partial accounts. That the accounts of the origins of moral inversion(s) should be variable in this particular way actually contributes to the force that the notion develops when it is closely studied. The experience is rather like questioning a witness on multiple occasions. The account that the witness gives changes as the questioning probes the event from different angles, but so long as the witness does not give contradictory accounts, the witness's ability to place the same story in multiple contexts enhances the impression of reliability, whereas a rigid account that could only get at the event by approaching it in one way would give the impression of being an invented story rather than the fruit of many-dimensioned experience. Moreover, if Polanyi is at all correct in his analysis, it must be granted that he is trying to track exceptionally complex cultural developments which are interrelated, overlapping, and mutually reinforcing in countless ways.

1.2 SPURIOUS MORAL INVERSION

Words and beliefs matter because people act on them, but Polanyi acknowledges that it is not uncommon for there to be some discrepancy between theory and practice. Moreover, important as ideas are, practices and institutions have their own resistant durability. "[P]eople can carry on a great tradition even while professing a philosophy which denies its premises. For the adherents of a great tradition are largely unaware

of their own premises, which lie deeply embedded in the unconscious foundations of practice" (SFS 76). A scientist can voice a completely wrong theory of science while still managing to function as a fine and productive scientist; likewise, an agent can imbibe and repeat completely false theories of the moral life without ceasing to do the right thing in situations of concrete moral choice. Taught by the disenchanted to be embarrassed by the traditional language of morals, we learn to use other language for what we are doing ethically and politically, giving a false materialistic account of human action and denying that agents have any motive other than material self-aggrandizement, or pleasure, or power. But even in doing so, we might still fail to draw the logical existential consequences of these theoretical accounts, or we might be protected from drawing such conclusions by the existence of institutions incompatible with such conclusions. Such situations constitute spurious moral inversions. He believes that a rich capacity for this kind of inconsistency or "suspended logic" is what has kept the Anglo-American world safe, so far, from the menace of totalitarianism.

Because spurious moral inversion involves a contradiction, it represents a dangerously unstable situation. Thoroughgoing moral inversion is logically more stable because it brings personal conduct and social arrangements into line with the accounts that are given of them.[3] The importation of the corrupted accounts into polities which do not already have the protective institutions and practices in place will inevitably produce complete moral inversion because the community legislates according to the theories it has embraced as true. Moreover, inasmuch as words and ideas are considered by Polanyi to be powerful social forces, untrue descriptions of what we are doing are profoundly subversive even in established, stable institutional contexts. In such settings, the impetus toward greater consistency (the passage from spurious moral inversion to actual moral inversion) comes, ironically, with "a great upsurge of moral demands on social life" (PK 234). In periods of social crisis and social agitation, social contradictions are brought into view and exploited. More important, when traditional moral arrangements and behaviors, *particularly moral restraints on behaviors,* are challenged, their defenders find themselves without any theoretical support, since the regnant accounts explain personal behavior and social arrangements in terms of power and interest. When new social programs are ardently advocated and extreme social change is proposed, existing practices are without defense and are dismissed in contempt. "When injected into a utilitarian framework it [social dynamism] transmutes both itself and this framework. It turns into the fanatical force of a machinery of violence. This is how moral inversion is completed: man masked as a beast turns into a Minotaur" (PK 235; see also 268).

1.3 THE MAKING OF THE MINOTAUR

Yet two questions suggest themselves: Why should the fusion produce a devouring monster, rather than, say, a bungling and inefficient bureaucracy? And if positivistic skepticism functions so efficiently to evacuate the political realm of all moral scruples and content, why not say simply that the rise of totalitarian savagery is, as people intuitively believe, an index of the abandonment of morality, rather than insisting on the paradox of morality running amuck? In considering these questions, we need to examine in more careful detail at least one of his accounts of the process of inversion. Since *Personal Knowledge* offers the most comprehensively developed statement of Polanyi's philosophy, it makes sense to examine the version that we find there, and I want to look less at the actual passages that invoke the term "moral inversion" (the last six sections of chapter 7, "Conviviality") than at three earlier arguments that put in place the groundwork upon which the summary discussion of moral inversion relies. All three preliminary considerations explore the roots of "[t]he moral appeal of a declared contempt for moral scruples" (PK 235).

1.3.1 *The LaPlacean ideal of knowledge*

Toward the end of the subsection "Scientific Value," in chapter 6, "Intellectual Passions," Polanyi discusses at some length the "Laplacean delusion" or "fallacy" (141). This "fallacy" has multiple dimensions, but for our purposes can be summarized as "a conception of science pursuing the ideal of absolute detachment by representing the world in terms of its exactly determined particulars" (139), together with the conviction that an adequate knowledge of these entities and the natural (that is, physical) forces that "animate" them would yield "a complete scientific knowledge of the universe" (140). Laplace, by "substituting" the illusion of "a knowledge of all experience" for what was, in fact, nothing but "a knowledge of all atomic data," set in motion the chain of (self-)deceptions that produced "a mechanistic world view" (141). This conceptual development, grounded in a profound error of oversimplification, constituted a "menace" not only to science itself but also to "cultural values." Captivated by the "Laplacean ideal of knowledge," subsequent thinkers derived from it a widely accepted "conception of man" which was used to guide "the conduct of human affairs" (141). A mechanistic conception of the world thus yielded a mechanistic conception of the person which in turn yielded a materialistic view of politics. This persisting materialistic view of politics has two dimensions. In the first place it produces a cynical and distrustful view of the nature of politics and governance: "Its reductive programme, applied to politics, entails the idea that political action is necessarily shaped by force, motivated by greed and fear, with morality used as a screen to delude the victims" (141). In the second place, it alters the conception of the highest public good, teaching that "material welfare and the establishment of an unlimited power for imposing the conditions of material welfare are the supreme good" (142).

As material welfare is elevated, other goods, such as scientific values and various forms of liberty, are subordinated, devalued, and even suppressed. Thus we arrive at the paradox that a line of interpretation arising from the operation of intellectual passion, specifically, the "passion for achieving absolutely impersonal knowledge" (142), has the consequence of discrediting the intellectual passions and the articulate systems which they express and reinforce. This destruction of intellectual passion by intellectual passion is possible only because the intellectual passion that drives the process is a "misguided" one, a passion hell-bent on achieving a fallacious objective. That it is misguided is shown by the fact that it destroys its very base, and this leads Polanyi to articulate "a criterion of consistency" for assessing theories of human nature and human society: "our conceptions of man and human society must be such as to account for man's faculty in forming these conceptions and to authorize the cultivation of this faculty within society" (142).

This passage is important to a consideration of moral inversion because it introduces the separation of passions from the objectives they seek to achieve. It also is one of the simpler and cleaner accounts of the social degeneration Polanyi is exercised to reverse. But one of the most interesting things about this passage is that he introduces "moral aspirations" into this developmental portrait even though they do not seem at all necessary to the portrait of, and critique of, reductive materialism that I have just summarized. Into the paragraph describing the reconceptualization of the highest public good, he interjects, "But our age overflows with inordinate moral aspirations. By absorbing this zeal the objectives of power and wealth acquire a moral sanctity which, added to their supposed scientific necessity, enforces their acceptance as man's supreme and total destiny" (142).

This observation prefigures, of course, the fusion that is characteristic of the process of moral inversion, but its apparent gratuitousness in this particular passage invites a deeper probing of his thought. Clearly he believes that the moral legitimation of increasingly reductive accounts of human activity, the aura of "moral

sanctity," is not adventitious; neither does it tag along after changes driven by other forces. I began section 1 by drawing attention to Polanyi's conviction that ideas directly influence the course of history, but obviously they can influence history only when they are acted upon. The motives that impel action and sustain citizens through the dislocations of social rearrangements are not intrinsic to the ideas themselves; otherwise, spurious moral inversion would not be possible. Thus, when we set the passage in question in the context of other components of his argument, we can begin to see at least three plausible reasons for his introduction of a reference to moral aspirations into his cognitive account of the extension of reductive materialism into political philosophy.

> 1. A cognitive adjustment that can be tracked explicitly has a tacit dimension that can only be described obliquely. Elsewhere in the book he notes that the success of communication, despite all its specific stumbles and fumbles, arises out of "[t]he interpersonal coincidence of tacit judgments," a coincidence that is "primordially continuous with the mute interaction of powerful emotions" (PK 205). If this is true of communication, how much more true must it be of our capacity for joint action. Our cognitive life as personal knowers has subterranean springs in emotion, and the mystery of agency lies hidden in the vibrant turmoil of volition, desire, need, interestedness, and love that impels us into motion. It is one of the faults of the descendants of LaPlace that they refuse to credit any such bodily grounding of inquiry, let alone knowledge, and Polanyi's work suggests that it is one of the ironies of history that the triumph of the LaPlacean vision of the polis was powered by its infusion with passions and aspirations that it denied.

> 2. The reordering of social goods generated by Laplacean universal mechanics was not, in Polanyi's view, anything like the neutral cognitive "revaluation" that Najder conceives it to have been. It was a reconceptualization freighted with authority and commanding extraordinary sacrifices. It was, in his judgment, the paradoxical combination of alleged scientific inevitability and "moral sanctity" that authorized its ministers to exercise the full force of their power in antidemocratic, violent, and totalitarian strategies for realizing an impoverished social order, which was, in perfect good conscience, represented by zealots as a "destiny." Only this could explain why in totalitarian states, the exercise of coercive power is often supplemented by patently moral denunciations of any deviation in thought or action as "irresponsible, selfish, immoral" (PK 180).

> 3. Parallel to the irony of intellectual passions that destroy their own foundations, is the irony of moral aspirations that motivate action that yields not a better, more just social order, but a worse, less just one. On the LaPlacean reading of the human situation, political action is supposed to be "shaped by force, motivated by greed and fear" (PK 141), completely shorn of any authentic moral inspiration, yet examined honestly, it seems, in fact, to have been driven, as a political program, by a conception of the good and a profound sense of social responsibility.

Reverting later in the same chapter to this "materialistic outlook paradoxically imbued by inordinate moral aspirations," he suggests that by this means "the materialistic interpretation of culture [became] a disguised imperative" (PK 180). This exposes for us the important fact that moral inversions are actually of (at least) two kinds. In addition to the open "moral appeal of immorality" (PK 232), which is most pronounced in the various explicitly nihilistic philosophies (particularly German Romantic nihilism), there are also covert

situations in which moral discourse and moral concern appear to disappear altogether from the public arena, having been driven, so to speak, underground. Morality, ashamed of itself and publically denied, continues to function, adopting the coloration of scientific statement or some other disguise. This picture is later reaffirmed where he writes, "For when open professions of the great moral passions animating a free society are discredited as specious or utopian, its dynamism will tend to be transformed into the hidden driving force of a political machine, which is then proclaimed as inherently right and granted absolute dominion over thought" (PK 214).

Hidden moral passions are the breeding ground of fanaticism. As he says in "Beyond Nihilism," moral passions that are torn from their proper objects or forced into disguised expression cannot "speak in their own voice and are no longer accessible to moral arguments" (bn 17–18). Were it only a matter of deception, of moral motive having to express itself in an alien idiom, the situation "would perhaps be merely pitiful" (PK 231). But the transposition changes the passion in question. It becomes "an isolated passion, inaccessible to moral considerations" (PK 231). In other words, the energy and commitment become immune to public criticism, to self-conscious review, and, perhaps most importantly, to any form of restraint. "[A] dogmatic orthodoxy can be kept in check both internally and externally, while a creed inverted into a science is both blind and deceptive" (PK 268).

1.3.2 *Self-set standards and moral doubt*

At the beginning of chapter 7, "Conviviality," Polanyi sets the "civic predicament" (PK 204) in a different frame. Here he begins by reflecting on the anxiety produced in the individual knower when she absorbs the fact that her convictions, which she holds to be true and upon which she acts, sometimes irreversibly, have been acquired in a particular social location at a particular time from particular fallible peers, teachers, and authorities. This anxiety is partly a function of the historicists' dismantling of revealed and rational "truth," but it is important to see that the anxiety is also, to some large degree, the result of the unreasonable standards for judging knowledge that have been invented by critical philosophy. In any case, suffering from "the internal insecurity of self-set standards" (211), she is vulnerable to a double danger: on the one hand, her convictions suddenly appear to be mindless conventions that have been foisted upon her by others for their own purpose and convenience. On the other hand, to the extent that she can still feel that her commitments are her own at all, her convictions are bound to seem subjective, arbitrary, and capricious (203).

This personal disquiet, pressing toward relativism and provoking self-distrust, is socially magnified into a wholesale suspicion of authority:

> At all points where men in authority are seen to impose on others intellectual values which on reflection may come to appear adventitious, the justification of this authority may be called in question. The exercise of authority will tend to appear as bigoted or as hypocritical, if it asserts as universal what is actually parochial.
>   Thus the disturbance of our own convictions, caused by the sight of our own ubiquitous participation in the shaping of truth, will expand into a civic predicament (203–4).

This gives us, again, a picture of social distrust, public cynicism, and political decay, but the account is different. As we have seen, in chapter 6 Polanyi argues that a reductive view of the human person and a materialist account of social activity produces a cynical and distrustful view of the nature of politics and governance: "Its reductive programme, applied to politics, entails the idea that political action is necessarily

shaped by force, motivated by greed and fear, with morality used as a screen to delude the victims" (141). But here, at the beginning of chapter 7, the cynical and distrustful view of the nature of politics and governance is shown to arise out of the conundrum produced not by what Polanyi judges to be a wrong understanding of knowledge but by what he considers to be basically a right understanding of knowledge. If we run down the road prepared by a deluded conception of perfectly objective, empirically bound knowledge, we arrive at a view of politics as amoral—a rough and unrestrained conflict of power, aimed at survival and dominance. If we run down the road prepared for us by the sociology of knowledge, we also seem to arrive at a view of politics as an amoral realm where the clever and powerful manipulate social arrangements for their own advantage and where the weak and victimized have no protection and no court of appeal.

1.3.3 *The inevitability of imperfection*

In "Two Kinds of Culture," a subsequent subsection of chapter 7, Polanyi offers a third account of the origins of suspicion of politics and governing authorities, and this account is the most fundamental. Here he is writing, not about pathologies that might be cured, but about the human condition itself, as he understands it. Thought and action in the civic realm, even when pursued freely, must necessarily be pursued on a platform of three civic institutions: "group loyalty, property and power" (215). These are the civic institutions that establish social cohesion, ensure the wherewithal for individuals to sustain their lives, and defend the community and its property against various external and internal threats. These institutions, however essential to the existence of a functional society, are not particularly appealing morally: "loyalty is parochial, property appetitive and public authority violent" (215). In other words, the "civic pole" of culture is "essentially at variance with the universal intent of intellectual or moral standards" (215). So moral aspirations will always overleap civic realities, and the more ambitious and unequivocal these aspirations are, the more dissatisfied their proponents will be with social reality. "[I]n a critical age, this intertwining of civic exigencies with the ideals of morality will remain precarious" (215–16).

This social realism is all of a piece with his remarks elsewhere (usually in the context of explicit considerations of moral inversion) concerning the revolution-breeding aversion of the morally righteous to the apparent hypocrisy of régimes that espouse values that they do not practice. But it works in the other direction, too, and it is this other direction that Polanyi underlines in the discussion in "Two Kinds of Culture." The discrepancy between moral ideals and social requirements can make moral criticism seem alternately unreasonably utopian and cynically self-serving. "The genuineness of moral standards will be rendered suspect when it is realized that they are upheld by force, based on property and imbued with local loyalty. . . . Morality will then be [perceived to be] reduced to a mere ideology" (216).[4]

Social life, even under the best of circumstances, will always present us with an impure mix of moral ideals and amoral exigencies. Thus, Polanyi speaks of "the eternally menacing discrepancy between the universalist claims of morality and its actual dependence on power and profit" (231). And at the end of the chapter "Conviviality," he calls this the inherently unstable logic that is built into a free society. The reason that social reality cannot be otherwise is succinctly specified toward the end of *The Tacit Dimension* where he probes "the logic by which successive levels of reality are related to each other" (TD 85). Every level of reality leaves open possibilities, "boundary conditions," that are closed by operational principles at the next level, but what is possible at the higher levels is limited by the lower ones: "All our higher principles must rely for their working on a lower level of reality and this necessarily sets limits to their scope" (TD 85). At one level of reality, we find society "as an organization of power and profit" (TD 86). As such, it leaves many decisions and arrangements

open to determination by higher (that is, less materially determined) moral principles like justice and beneficence, but it remains what it is: a material system for securing material well-being. Accordingly, "moral progress can be achieve only within the medium of a society operating by the exercise of power and aiming at material advantages" (TD 86). This makes it clear why "inordinate endeavors" (TD 85) are misconceived and bound to fail. At the same time, it is equally misguided to resolve the tension by declaring moral aspirations to be fanciful delusions. Though the lower levels of reality set limits to the scope of moral aspiration, it does not follow that our aspirations are reducible to the forces that limit them. We fail equally by refusing to recognize limits or by denying the operation of "transcendent values." And, curiously, both failures produce the same result: a political space evacuated of operational moral purposes and restraints.

In the final paragraph of *The Tacit Dimension*, he observes that "[m]en need a purpose which bears on eternity." This follows, he believes, from the evolutionary "cosmic emergence of meaning" that he has traced—human beings, unlike lower animals, cannot be "satisfied with a brief existence" (TD 92). He offers "truth" and "our ideals" as the objects that can satisfy this hunger and concludes "this might be enough, if we could ever be satisfied with our manifest moral shortcomings and with a society which has such shortcomings fatally involved in its workings" (TD 92). It is the failure to adjust to this reality that has been half of the fatal fusion producing totalitarian horrors.

1.3.4 *The Minotaur at the center of the maze*

These three accounts converge in portraying the development of a conception of the public realm from which moral ideals, moral motives, and moral restraints have been banished. Even though this conception does not accurately represent civic reality (in which moral motives and interests continue to operate, but have adopted displaced forms of expression), public life has been distorted and impaired by being so conceived. The most significant inversion is the subordination of thought to power, an inversion that becomes increasing lethal as a polity approaches "the complete subordination of all thought to the service of one specific centre of power" (PK 243). When this inversion is coupled with the unleashing of fanaticism and the absence of any recognition of limits and moral restraints, the Minotaur is born: a wily and dangerous monster with a bull's head on a man's body, that devours human beings.

Moral inversion is not one thing, but a cascade of paradoxical inversions that break upon us. Taken together, they have the potential to bring to an end the culture and civilization that arose out of the Renaissance and Enlightenment in Europe. In the name of social well-being, society is immeasurably impoverished. In the name of social justice, justice is trampled upon. In the name of self-determination, self-determination is denied. In the name of freedom, freedom is lost. In the name of morality, immorality is celebrated. In the name of truth, the possibility of arriving at truth is denied. In the name of the highest moral aspirations, the West descends into "soul-destroying tyrannies" (PK 265). Liberalism is devoured by her own children, and the Enlightenment is by the Enlightenment destroyed.

Yet this destructive movement, this process of cultural deformation, does not appear to Polanyi to be inevitable or irreversible. It has not resulted because liberalism is some "deception of vain desires." It has come about in the first place through wrong ideas that can, with effort, be set right. But, more fundamentally, the process is rooted in the pathos of deluded hope. Persons aspire to more than the human condition can supply. At the root of moral inversion is a denial of human reality, a basic blindness or self-deception or antirealism that renders our aspirations demonic. It happens when we seek the certainty guaranteed by absolute impersonal

34

knowledge, refusing to recognize our personal participation in all our acts of knowing. It happens when we aspire to a political world free of the operations of interest, power, and possession. And it happens when we reject our flawed and contradictory social traditions in the ardor of self-determination.[5]

2. The Meaning of "Moral"

Having familiarized ourselves with the complexity of Polanyi's consideration of moral inversion, we can now return to Najder's criticisms. He notes that it is not clear whether the frame of reference for moral inversion is psychological, sociological, or axiological—or all three at once. Looked at as a contribution to moral psychology, Polanyi's proposal advances at least two claims—the claim that "moral forces [are] primary motives of man" (PK 234) and the claim that moral passions are separable from moral ideals—that raise questions about how he is using the term "moral":

> Polanyi assumes also that moral *passions* are inherent in all men—while moral *ideals* are not: this separability of the sphere of passions from the sphere of ideals forms, in fact, the core of "moral inversion." According to Polanyi, men can preserve and exercise their moral passions while shedding moral ideas for the sake of "immorality." Seen in this light, the meaning of the predicate "moral" seems to be rather difficult to ascertain: what precisely differentiates moral passions from other kinds of passions? (Najder 1968, 367).

If the concept of moral inversion is looked at, instead, as a contribution to sociological analysis, his use of "moral" becomes problematic from another point of view. To analyze temporal changes or cultural contrasts in ethical conduct or moral beliefs, sociology requires "a neutral concept of 'the moral'" (Najder 1968, 369). The sociological usage of "moral" needs to be neutral in the sense of designating a particular domain of interpersonal behavior in which praise and blame of a certain sort are appropriately apportioned, but, Najder complains, Polanyi's use of "moral" seems always to mean "morally commendable." Sociological and historical studies of ethical change also require a conception of "moral" that is neutral in a second way. The concept of the moral that is being used to understand moral change should not be a concept of the moral that is characteristic of only one of the stages in the process of change that is being studied. Hence, a more careful sociologist would treat the changes Polanyi studies as "'moral revaluation'—a shift from one system to another" (Najder 1968, 373), rather than treating them as a challenge or "crisis" or "inversion." Najder faults Polanyi's use of "moral" on the grounds that it is always evaluative and never simply descriptive.

Najder has put his finger on several fundamental features of Polanyi's approach. There is a sense in which Polanyi, in concert with his sustained attack on the fact/value dichotomy, has dissolved the notion of a distinctively "moral" realm of human activity. Polanyi is also, again by reason of the reorientation characteristic of his entire philosophical program, deeply skeptical of the proposal that anyone can generate a neutral sense of "moral." In the remainder of this section, I will examine his notion of moral passions, trying to clarify what he does and does not mean by the predicate "moral" when he is writing about moral passions and moral inversion. In section 3, I will return to the question of moral neutrality in the evaluation of beliefs, teachings, and conduct relating to social well being.

Polanyi places "passions" among the "pervasive conditions" that "pervade the whole person" (PK 300). Some of these pervasive conditions are purely passive, that is, they do not involve commitment/ affirmation, but some are "actively entered upon" (PK 312), in a deployment of commitment and affirmation. Bodily feelings such as pain, tiredness, or boredom are both pervasively bodily and mental, but they involve no action, commitment, or affirmation. These are pervasive states that we simply "endure." In such experiences, "the personal in us" is not engaged; the condition is a purely subjective one. Pervasive feelings of pleasure can be equally passive, though they are enjoyed rather than suffered. Appetites constitute a motive toward action; the satisfaction of the appetites therefore "entail[s] a manner of commitment" (300). The moment we seek to achieve something by action, we "[submit] to requirements" that we acknowledge to be "independent" of ourselves (300). But the appetites are the lowest and least personal of those pervasive conditions that, being "actively entered upon," involve affirmation or commitment. Passions belong to a level above the appetites, but passions and appetites do have many common characteristics. Both are forms of centered striving that rest on "innate sentience and alertness," "purpose and attention" (PK 96). Both are pre-articulate cravings that impel a creature into action, being "self-moving and self-satisfying impulses" (PK 96). Both share "the same pointed character" (PK 172), that is, both are intentional or directed forms of striving. Both invoke self-set standards since it is the satisfaction of the agent herself which marks the end of striving.

A mental passion is, as it were, a vector extending from a proximate root in my bodily being to an objective that I seek. At its proximate root, it is a communally engendered emotion or a motive—that is, it is a directed longing or desire, a power of acting toward achievement, an impelling of my person toward an anticipated but as yet unreal state of affairs. As such, mental passions, like appetites, belong to the tacit dimension of my being; no fully explicit account of them can be rendered. When we speak of persons, this unsayable motive power, this agency, is part of what we are speaking about.

But if there is a continuum to be traced between appetites and the "higher intellectual cravings" (PK 96), there are also disjunctive differences. Intentionally and actively in movement toward its objective, a mental passion encompasses a goal or ideal, which is a self-set or personally affirmed standard of excellence received from the practice of an established community. Moral and intellectual passions alike can be misbegotten or misdirected. It is possible for them to be misbegotten or misdirected precisely because they are not appetites.

The following table of differences is derived primarily from Polanyi's comparison of the appetites and the intellectual passions in *Personal Knowledge*. So far as I can see, the moral passions differ from the appetites in the same ways, a fact which Polanyi seems to acknowledge in *The Study of Man*, where he uses the more comprehensive term "mental passions" in differentiating our strictly personal powers from the appetitive drives that are also present in animals. The passionate and the personal are very closely linked (PK 77–78), and the table suggests why that is so.

APPETITES	MENTAL PASSIONS
Bodily emotions	"Mental interests" (PK 174); "the essential restlessness of the human mind" (PK 196)
Self-centered drives	Responsible commitment (SM 67); "Heurisitc cravings" (PK 129); "heuristic endeavors" (PK 389)
Lower, or more basic, interests	Transpersonal higher purposes
Self-satisfaction; self-fulfillment	Self-modification; self-transcendence
Body as an instrument of self-indulgence (PK 395)	Body as a condition of the person's calling (PK 395)
Predominately innate; we are equipped with perception, "motoricity," and appetites by nature	Acquired by education
Shared with animals	Not shared with animals
Private	Public: "they delight in cherishing something external to us, for its own sake" (PK 174)
Objects sought are instrumentally good	Objects sought are intrinsically good
Subjective in the sense of being "guided by standards of private satisfaction" (PK 174)	Oriented toward "fulfilling universal obligations" (because satisfaction requires upholding the larger articulate framework from which the standards of excellence are derived) (PK 174)
Self-centered individuality" (PK 395, SM 77)	"Responsible personhood of thoughtful man" (PK 395)
Requiring no framework of articulation and being far older than such frameworks; "mute exploration" leading to "mute satisfaction" (PK 99)	"attached to an articulate framework" (PK 173)
Do not imply any "affirmation . . . about anything outside himself" (PK 172)	Do imply an affirmation of something outside the inquirer
Satisfaction "terminates the situation which evoked them [the activities]" (PK 173).	"Intellectual passions perpetuate themselves by their fulfillment" (PK 173), at least partly because mind continually calls into question previously achieved satisfactions (PK 196)
Satisfaction consumes or "monopolizes" the objects which gratify it, thus creating a scarcity of objects offering gratification.	Satisfaction of the passion "enrich[es] the mind of all" by enhancing the availability of what satisfies; "the gratification of mental passions creates objects destined to gratify the same passions in others" (SM 60).
What satisfies the drive is a source of gratification only	What satisfies the passion is both a source of (personal) gratification and "a voice which commands respect"; thus, yielding to these passions is an effort "to become more satisfying to ourselves" and is an acceptance of obligation (PK 174).
The appetite is aimed at the satisfaction of the agent only.	The agent seeks an achievement that will be "satisfying and compelling both for himself and everybody else" (PK 301).
Control, contrivance, and manipulation	Trust, surrender, dedication, and service

There are several things to be noticed here. The passions arise as a function of the human development of symbol systems enabling speech and writing. Whereas the appetites are grounded in our existence as biological animals and seek nothing but their own surcease in bodily satisfaction (whether the satisfaction of release or the satisfaction of fulfillment), the passions belong to a higher emergent level and are distinctively human and personal. The passions have to do with a layer of reality that is essentially a social construction, a layer of reality which comes into being only insofar as our complex symbol systems enable us to enact into being institutions and practices—an entire convivial order—that, while being contingent upon materiality, cannot be reduced to material conditions. "The articulate life of man's mind is his specific contribution to the universe; by the invention of symbolic forms man has given birth and lasting existence to thought" (PK 264–65). The transgenerational character of these systems of thought explains how it is that we can say both that we are their authors and that they "have power to control our own thought" (PK 265). They are, moreover, malleable systems, and we stand in a critical relation to them in two senses: First, we are not passively shaped by them but actively accredit their authority. "They speak to us and convince us, and it is precisely in their power over our own minds that we recognize their justification and their claim to universal acceptance" (PK 265). Second, by our own appropriation of and original thought within these systems, we alter what we then convey to the rising generations.

A second thing to notice is that while the appetites are what we might properly called subjective (in their arising, their manifestations, and their satisfaction), intellectual and moral passions, being a function of a shared tradition or articulate framework, are not. Mental cravings are learned cravings. To pursue the satisfaction of such cravings is to endorse the social reality of which their objects form an integral part. What will satisfy the cravings is also learned from others, and what satisfies the craving is not an internal state in the agent, but a "public" achievement that further strengthens the practices, tradition, and interpersonal web which awakened the craving in the first place. The standards of achievement are self-set in two senses. Insofar as this layer of reality is a human construction, the standards of excellence intrinsic to it are in some deep sense a human creation, having no grounding in the cosmos apart from being the achievement of human consciousness which is itself an achievement of the cosmos. The particular agent internalizes these standards by dwelling in the framework provided by the articulate system and by being guided by the preceding generation(s) of practitioners. Yet the process of internalization is not some sort of passive imprinting or mechanical conditioning; rather, it is an active affirmation and commitment by which the agent accepts and endorses what is given as worthy of reverence and commitment. As a result, what the individual seeks as personally satisfying will also be what reinforces and builds up the social reality of which those cravings are a part.

And third, the very notion of "satisfaction" changes dramatically as we pass from the appetites to the passions. The creature eats and is no longer hungry. What is eaten is no longer available to satisfy any other creature. There is, then, a sense in which the appetites are decisively self-limiting and necessarily involve a struggle for competitive advantage. But the situation is quite different with mental passions. The passions are never satiated by achievement; they never come to an end. At the same time, their exercise never depletes their environment but always enriches it. Even the dissent of experienced practitioners builds up the shared framework of a profession as effectively as work that adheres to established standards and interpretations. Yet this "environment" is strangely fragile; the articulate system has no reality apart from human memory and the acts that maintain the system of practices. In this work of maintenance, achievements of small compass are comparable in importance to works of genius.

Appetites and passions belong, then, to different levels in the person. The two levels interact: "[d]esire and emotion may educate our intelligence, as they do when we grow up to sexual maturity and parenthood; and the reverse may happen when we control and refashion our appetites in conformity to social custom" (PK 320). However, appetites and passions can and do conflict. As he points out in *The Study of Man,* the objects of the mental passions ("noble actions, works of art or science") "serve no material need, but demand, on the contrary, material sacrifices" (SM 86). It is this conflict that creates the logical space in which it is possible to speak of "self-compulsion"; one dimension of the self must give way to another. Our way of resolving such conflicts is probably the primary determinant of personality and character.

All of this helps us see what makes a person different from the beast to which a human being would be reduced in the absence of such articulate systems. Yet it seems to do little to clarify what he means by "moral" or what differentiates the moral from the intellectual passions. Habitation in a community and trusting reception of a tradition (or, actually, habitation in multiple communities and reception of a rich variety of traditions) are thus the *sine qua non* of distinctively personal knowing, seeking, and acting. From this we can begin to appreciate several important features of Polanyi's conception of "moral." The moral is not grounded pre-culturally in bodily nature or an innate "moral sense." Ego-centered individuality and self-fulfillment have no part in morality, but constitute its contrast. What is thought to be moral cannot be conceived apart from obligations defined by a convivial order. Moral practice involves sacrifices and self-transcendence. Yet all of these characteristics can also be said to apply to the pursuit of science and the fashioning of fine violins and the evaluation of student term papers. We have not, then, yet arrived at the distinctive meaning "moral" carries in Polanyi's work.

2.2 THE RELATION OF THE INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL PASSIONS

Polanyi makes no clear distinction between the intellectual and the moral passions. Both are "mental passions"; both are "fiduciary passions" (PK 303). In *Personal Knowledge,* he refers to the passion for justice as an intellectual passion (PK 309), and surely if any of the passions are moral passions it is the passion for justice. His lists of moral passions sometimes include the passion for truth. He writes that "[m]oral judgments are appraisals and as such are akin to intellectual valuations" (214), and when, in "Conviviality," he turns explicitly to moral aspirations, he introduces them as "an extension of [the person's] more specifically intellectual passions" (PK 214). Once he has discarded critical philosophy's separation of knowledge from evaluation, truth becomes the bearer of value, knowledge claims instantiate appraisals, and moral judgments cannot be considered apart from the perceptions, interpretations, and background understanding out of which such judgments are formed. The distinction between truth and rightness is permanently blurred: "The acts of doing and knowing, the valuation and the understanding of meanings, are thus seen to be only different aspects of the act of extending our person into the subsidiary awareness of particulars which compose a whole" (65).

Why, then, does he not altogether discard the distinction between the intellectual and the moral? Although he does not say, I think his reasons are partly conventional and partly conceptual. On the conventional side, we have a rough and ready distinction between the moral and the intellectual that functions as part of our "common sense." Even if valuation and understanding are "different aspects" of a single sort of act, it is conventional and probably important to recognize that difference within the act of personal extension. We can honor a generalized separation between "codes of behavior" and "forms of knowledge" (333) without introducing an unbridgeable chasm between the practical and the speculative. Moreover, some motivations and

some objectives and some goods seem particularly important in the civic realm, and when Polanyi writes about the moral passions, he is almost always writing about the civic realm: the passions he recognizes as moral passions are predominantly the passions for justice, brotherhood, equality, and freedom.

Nonetheless, Polanyi's continuing use of the distinction between the moral and the intellection is not simply a bow in the direction of common sense. He seems to use the notion of moral passion to uncover layers of motivation that are deeper than conscious volition and interests, motivations that we might name as the power of love and devotion. It is hard to cite conclusive support for this claim, but when he writes of moral passions in "Beyond Nihilism," he speaks of "a fierce passion for humanity" (bn 6), "that sublime and sacred love of humanity," the "deep horror of tyranny," the "compassionate zeal for the oppressed," and the "sacred love of the fatherland" (bn 14). These are motivations of a sort that can make bearable supreme self-sacrifice; they are motivations that therefore open on the sacramental and the demonic. The passion for truth, construed generally, would certainly be a passion of this same sort, but the intellectual passion of, say, the scientist, artist, or engineer in the execution of his calling does not seem to be underwritten by the deepest resources and strengths of personal being in the same way. What Polanyi does explicitly say is that "moral judgments cut much deeper than intellectual valuations" because moral excellence is excellence of "our whole person" (PK 215), and not of some particular faculties or practices. Presumably, then, the exercise of moral passions involves a broader and more complex integration of more variable ranges of subsidiary particulars than even the highest intellectual judgments. Though intellectual judgments may, at the highest levels, organize myriad subsidiary elements into unprecedented comprehensive patterns, they might nevertheless be said to involve the organization of subsidiaries derived from a single dimension of experience.

A further indication of Polanyi's understanding and use of "moral" can be found in his brief 1970 essay "Transcendence and Self-transcendence." He begins by reviewing the hierarchical structure of emergence whereby each "level" of an entity leaves open boundaries that are controlled by principles operating at the next higher level. He there places the "principle of responsible choice" above the "principle of intelligence":

> But the principle of intelligence is not the ultimate principle or the highest level in the hierarchy governing the functioning of living beings. Just as the sensory-motor levels of life leave themselves open to the control of intelligence, so the principle of intelligence leaves its powers open to the still higher principle of responsible choice. Human beings exercise responsibilities within a social setting and a framework of obligations which transcend the principle of intelligence. Responsible choice in a convivial setting controls the indeterminate powers of intelligence and sets the boundary conditions for their applications (ts 91).

This passage is particularly notable for its elevation of the moral above the intellectual, and this initially seems contrary to his earlier treatment of the moral as a subclass of the intellectual. One possibility is, of course, that his thinking altered over the course of time, but we should not be hasty in concluding that. The exercise of responsible choice is not the same thing as a moral passion. One could, I think, coherently hold moral and intellectual passions to be confreres while also holding that responsible choice is a higher order human activity than intelligent inquiry or cognitive knowing. While moral longings and moral judgments are surely very much tangled together, it does seem important to distinguish, at least theoretically, between, on the one hand, the active valuing that constitutes the impulse to strive after the good as one understands it and, on the other hand, the integration and discernment that are involved in the choice of this course of action rather than that and in the evaluation of what has already been done by oneself or another.

These subtle differentiations of the moral from the intellectual do help us understand how the moral or civic passions might more readily become "homeless," separated from their proper objects, than intellectual passions. The restless mind, impelled by the full energy of its capacity for commitment and devotion, is social through and through. Not only is it thrown into a social world, it has received its distinctive passionate being by way of its relations with others. It can be who it is only through embracing some model of proper human interaction. If it confronts, as a convivial setting, a civic vacuum, devoid of any proposed self-transcending possibilities, it can only, as it were, collapse upon itself. The impoverished possibilities that are proposed for realization speak powerfully to the appetites, but not to the passions. By default, the passions seize upon the same objects as the appetites. This leaves the appetites unrestrained (and even overlaid with a new energy and a new determination) at the same time that it cuts away the higher layers of human social possibility.

Nihilism is not the absence of values; it is the reduction or constriction of values to the immediate interests (usually material interests) of the self-referencing agent. The project of the nihilist is therefore to turn us back into very sophisticated (and very dangerous) beasts, with appetites, but without any sense of the intrinsically good. From Polanyi's point of view, the moral emerges only with self-transcending commitment to a social reality whose well-being trumps my own; it emerges only with a sense of responsibility for, dedication to, and service of that transpersonal reality. Thus, there is a sense in which the nihilist, having resolutely denied the reality and operant force of transpersonal moral ideals, gives a true, if not wholly correct, description of the social reality that she inhabits: it is a world in which there are no authentic values higher that the interests of the particular agent, a world in which any residual use of moral language is merely a rhetorical or ideological disguise for material forces, a world in which the "right" belongs to power. Polanyi's point is that such a world constitutes a devastating impoverishment of human possibility, a form of "self-immolation."

Yet Polanyi persists in asserting that this situation is a situation of contradiction. In such a situation, the moral passions are not, in fact, reduced to appetites, and they do not disappear. They continue to operate in an "inverted" way. But what is it, exactly, that continues to operate? As Polanyi tells the story, it seems to be a thirst for a better future, tied now to a vastly impoverished sense of what a better future would be. But there seems to be another hunger as well. Blind to her own errors, the personal or political nihilist takes great pride in incisive, uncompromising honesty, in denouncing and exposing ideology and hypocrisy and self-deception. It seems that nothing can finally stamp out (or at least, more precisely, nothing so far has been able to stamp out) the hope of salvation or the conviction of the righteousness of truth. Moral inversion thus offers mute testimony to what it denies and dismantles.

The powers of self-transcendence are unhoused—cut free from (or taught to distrust) any tradition worthy of self-sacrifice—but they spring from the very traditions that they are now taught to ridicule. Since no one can stand outside of all traditions, the passions shaped and encouraged by a tradition will continue to operate even when the tradition has been called into question (even a post-Christian culture "carries in its blood" the heritage of Christian eschatology [LL 109]). Only by a complete destruction of the intellectual heritage of the West could the moral passions now in play be eliminated. With the emergence of language, and the vast articulate systems that the use of language—particularly the use of durable and transgenerationally potent written language—makes possible, *homo sapiens* has entered into a realm of possibility from which it is not possible to retreat.

3. Ethnocentric Absolutism?

As we have seen, Najder thinks that Polanyi's theory of moral inversion fails as a sociological and historical study in part because Polanyi lacks a neutral conception of "moral." This complaint is closely related to Najder's reasons for asserting that if moral inversion is being proposed as an "axiological scheme," it is a badly flawed one. Under this heading he objects that Polanyi inconsistently claims universal validity for his own socially relative moral values which, as he freely admits, "are derived from nineteenth-century English and American liberalism" (Najder 1968, 370). His "ethnocentric absolutism" (370) or "absolutistic ethnocentrism" (373) guarantees that any other moral system, judged as if it were obscurely and defectively a version of his own, will appear to him to be self-contradictory. And the predictable outcome of his grand narrative of five hundred years of European history is an affirmation of the rightness of the tribal views of displaced Eastern European intellectuals of a certain generation.[6]

Najder thus presses upon us further consideration of what is certainly one of the most perplexing features of Polanyi's work: his determination to accept much of the relativizing force of historicism and the sociology of knowledge without accepting ethical relativism as the logical outcome, without debunking the self-understanding of actors, and without abandoning the public realm to the predations of power and interest. The resolution of difficulties implicit in affirming local knowledge with universal intent is, of course, the burden of his whole argument concerning "personal knowledge" as he develops it over his long career. It is, however, worthwhile to see what can be said about it in direct relation to his treatment of moral inversion.

3.1 THE RIGHT HAND AND THE LEFT HAND

On the surface, Polanyi's argument certainly seems inconsistent. In some respects, he is a thorough-going social constructionist. The noosphere, the realm of culture and history, "was achieved by men who, forming societies, invented language and created by it a lasting articulate framework of thought" (PK 388). Our claims and our values have no foundations apart from our affirmation of those claims and values; in all our knowing and judging we are ultimately only self-reliant. As we have seen above, the great articulate systems that provide the framework of distinctively human social life are brought into being by act and speech. He repeatedly acknowledges that all knowledge claims and all moral injunctions are socially indexed: "Our believing is conditioned at its source by our belonging" (PK 322). Or again, "Looking back from this point on the immensities of the past, we realize that all that we see there, throughout the universe, is shaped by what we now ultimately believe" (PK 404). Yet again, "No one can transcend his formative milieu very far, and beyond this area he must rely on it uncritically" (kb 133). And "To this extent I subscribe to Marx's thesis that the social being of man determines man's consciousness" (SM 83).

Yet he writes with seemingly naive confidence about truth and its accessibility, about reality and our knowledge of it. He is passionately convinced of the rectitude of his own views concerning the good society and brutally critical of positions that diverge from his own. He insists that speculative and moral judgments always are and *should* be put forward with "universal intent." He asserts that "each man has some measure of direct access to the standards of truth and rightness" (SM 89) and that "a rational decision remains valid anywhere and for all times, irrespective of the circumstances in which it was actually first arrived at" (SM 90).

And, of course, it is well known that this having it both ways is not an inadvertent inconsistency that

might have been repaired by more careful conceptualization; this insistence on these contraries is one of the axes around which his thought turns. Forcibly combining the two, he writes, "[W]e hold with universal intent a set of convictions acquired by our particular upbringing" (PK 203). From the point of critically trained intelligence, this amounts to an insupportable self-contradiction. From the point of view of postmodern irony, it exposes the deep fissures in modern thought at the same time that it images the futility of attempts to generate grand narratives. Polanyi, however, believes that he is simply representing the human calling as we all actually experience it. We are born as small, vulnerable, embodied animals with particular natural capabilities, but by virtue of the gift of language and our initiation into the distinctive layer of reality constituted by social practice, we come to be activated by cravings that no other sorts of animals can know. These cravings are shaped by particular contexts, both as to their form and as to the means and ends enlisted in their fulfillment. "[T]his matrix of my thought determines my personal calling," he writes. "It both offers me my opportunity for seeking the truth, and limits my responsibility for arriving at my own conclusions" (kb 133). He does not believe that the cravings themselves, even allowing for their cultural inflections, are much more widely divergent than animal appetites are. We want to understanding rightly and to have our judgments corroborated by social peers whose judgments we respect, to live in a social world governed by just relations, to be able to act as conscience dictates, and to be able to believe that our activity bears on some "eternal purpose." It seems that it would surely have to be the person who wishes to dispute the universality of such cravings who would bear the burden of proof. The cravings can only be fulfilled, of course, in some particular setting by participation in some particular convivial order or community. There is no such thing as general understanding or general justice or general freedom.

So, in a contingent situation that is not of my making, I seek to establish what is true and just in and for this particular situation, and what I then come to believe to be true and just I will believe and declare to be true for all those who share this situation (since it is just that universality—that extension to the community of all concerned—that makes believing it to be true and just different from believing it to be convenient and agreeable to me). The standards of truth and rightness that I employ must, at least in some sense, transcend the particularities to which the standards of evaluation are applied. And if I reason my way, within this situation, to a judgment of the situation that my companions in this situation recognize as valid, then presumably an astute Martian visitor two centuries hence, one who fully understands the situation, including all the presuppositions and beliefs of persons living in that situation, would also be able to recognize the validity of the judgment that I make—or would be able to point out where my error lies. None of this implies, of course, that there will be perfect harmony among knowers. On the contrary, there will necessarily be disputes and conflicts—some of them stubbornly recurrent, some of them perennial, and only some of them resolvable. Polanyi stresses again and again that we are called to commitment and decision *in the face of risk and hazard.*

Polanyi's account of the process and condition of moral inversion in European modernity provides us with a case study of an appraisal, claiming truth, generated from within a tradition and addressed to those who revere that tradition. It is the fruit of his effort to satisfy his craving for understanding of the events that have disrupted his life, called into question his beliefs, and brought him into conflict with other thinkers (including his brother) whose judgment and authority would ordinarily command his respect. It also represents his discovery of a way of coherently reaccrediting his liberal beliefs in the face of critical attacks and, at the same time, contributing (in a way distinctive to his own philosophical, rather than political, gifts) to the understanding and enactment of a more just social world. He presents this account of moral inversion to his readers as a true account, supported by evidence and reasoned argument, of what has actually happened in Europe in modernity and of the political dangers that continue to threaten freedom and democracy. As an account of what has happened, it is meant to support the further normative judgment that what happened constituted nothing less than

an abomination that is beyond any justification; it was an abomination that could and should have been prevented. The ideas that he identifies as implicated in the rise of totalitarianism are judged to be false and profoundly deceptive ideas. He is the first to admit, however, that his own views, which he holds with the full force of his own powers of personal commitment, are the views of a person who is particularly situated and who might be wrong. This is what it means to take personal responsibility for our beliefs. He is particularly explicit about this at the end of *Science, Faith and Society.* Having vigorously criticized the contemporary European situation as one of moral and political, as well as intellectual, crisis, he expresses the hope that false ideas might yet be corrected and that the liberal tradition might be reinvigorated in "a renewal of cultural life and civic institutions stemming from its original civilization" (SFS 80). But having said that, he somberly acknowledges that "of course a very different line of future development may be approaching instead" (SFS 80). Liberal Western civilization may continue its decline, to be replaced by something quite different: "All these different eventualities rest ultimately with the consciences of men" (SFS 80).

His convictions and his values are the convictions and values of a man formed by the liberal European tradition, and since "no human mind can function without accepting authority, custom, and tradition" (tc 41), that is the platform upon which he must stand to try to make his views (and, not incidentally, the views advanced by that tradition) more true. That we must speak from a social location and that we might be wrong are precisely the reasons that we ought to contest opposing ideas vigorously; they are not, he believes, reasons to draw back deferringly. "Human responsibility too is subject to . . . intrinsic limitations; it can operate only if embodied in human beings who are liable to failure. For no responsibility is taken where no hazard is to be met, and a hazard is a liability to failure" (SM 67).

3.2 INNOVATION AND DISSENT WITHIN A TRADITION

To the degree that we understand ourselves to be formed by a tradition, we must also understand ourselves to be responsible to and for it.[7] It is therefore our calling (at once intellectual and moral) to support and refine that tradition, to preserve it, and to hand it on to our children. But this obligation to a tradition is, though a work of service, not an instance of slavery. Our relation to the tradition is critical and creative. We are to press at all points to refine it, to renew it, to reveal its surprising capacity (to the extent that it is true) to bear on new situations and to infuse new experiences:

> [T]he capacity continually to enrich and enliven its own conceptual framework by assimilat-
> ing new experience is the mark of an intelligent personality. Thus our sense of possessing
> intellectual control over a range of things, always combines an anticipation of meeting certain
> things of this kind which will be novel in some unspecifiable respects, with a reliance on
> ourselves to interpret them successfully by appropriately modifying our framework of
> anticipations (PK 103).

We are to show forth its power. Those who possess the most superior knowledge of the tradition have the greatest responsibility to display its interpretive meaning and lay bare its entailments. When it is challenged, they must defend it. When it is corrupted, they must restore it.

So the fact that Polanyi writes all that he writes about moral inversion as a man thoroughly formed by a certain political tradition, imbued with certain political values and ideals, is not an unhappy contingency that must be accepted because it cannot be avoided or overcome. It is, on the contrary, the ground of his calling and

44

the framework of his responsibility.

Although "[m]entally, we are called into being by accepting an idiom of thought" (PK 376), our appropriation of that idiom will frequently bring us into conflict with those from whom we learned it. This conflict is to be welcomed since it is a sign of the vitality of the tradition; moreover, it underlines that it is the whole of the tradition, rather than those who uphold it or any particular ideas or practices within it, which should be the object of our loyalty. "The language of these ideals, anchored in the works and lives of our masters, grants to each one of us the right to uphold these ideals against any particular utterance of these same masters. For it is not to their person, but to what we understand to be their teaching, that we pledge ourselves" (PK 377). I think it is important to appreciate the fact that he considers Marxists, fascists, and nihilists to belong to this same tradition. They are dissenters within it, advancing views of freedom and political life and the highest good that owe much to the Western liberal and Enlightenment tradition, even while some of their central claims diverge from the core conceptions of the liberal tradition. They advance these views with passion, in the name of truth, and they must be engaged with passion, in the name of truth. To do anything else would be the worst sort of dereliction of duty. The absorption of dissenting views into a tradition of thought can only ever be "a decision, originating in our own personal judgment, to modify the premises of our judgment, and thus to modify our intellectual existence, so as to become more satisfying to ourselves" (PK 106). The same thing is true when dissenting proposals are rejected by a representative of a tradition: the rejection is "a decision, originating in our own personal judgment" to resist the modification out of fidelity to the contested beliefs. Thus Polanyi writes:

> Of course, believing as I do in the reality of truth, justice, and charity, I am opposed to a theory which denies it and I condemn a society which carries this denial into practice. But I do not assume that I can force my view on my opponents by argument. Though I accept truth as existing independently of my knowledge of it, and as accessible to all men, I admit my inability to compel anyone to see it. Though I believe that others love the truth as I do, I can see no way to force their assent to this view. I have described how our love of truth is usually affirmed by adherence to a traditional practice within a community dedicated to it. But I can give no reason why such a community, or its practice, should live—any more than why I should live myself. My adherence to the community, if given, is an act of ultimate conviction and remains so whether resulting from mature choice or mainly determined by early education (SFS 81).

To embrace freedom of conscience in full seriousness is to commit oneself to risk, hazard, and conflict. It is to give up all hope of compelling assent, either by force or by demonstration. Nonetheless, where we cannot compel, we may yet persuade. Recall that what marks fanaticism as an exceptionally dangerous social force is the inaccessibility of the agent's moral motives to reason and examination, evaluation and persuasion.

3.3. PERSUASION AS A HEURISTIC PASSION

Persuasion, one of the forms intellectual passions take, is an art of persistent hope. Near the beginning of *The Study of Man*, Polanyi says, "Tonight I shall try to transmit this conviction to you" though "all I have to say may not convince you" (SM 13). It is also an admission of the fundamental limits we face as fallible knowers and socially located self-determining beings:

> I shall not argue with the sceptic. It would not be consistent with my own views if
> I expected him to abandon a complete system of beliefs on account of any particular series

of difficulties. Besides, by this time it should be clear how far-reaching are in my own opinion the changes in outlook that are required in order to establish a stable alternative to the objectivist position. I cannot hope to do more in this book than to exhibit a possibility which like-minded people may wish to explore (PK 315).

Yet the strategies of persuasion that Polanyi employs in his defense of a free society display both how hard-nosed the practice of this art can be and how deeply any effort at persuasion requires us to penetrate both into our own framework of belief and into the conceptual system of the person whose views we aspire to change.

Persuasion requires self-knowledge and honesty. A person unaware of her commitments or unwilling to examine and acknowledge them can only engage in manipulative propaganda. Polanyi believes he has been open and honest about the grounding of his moral judgments in a particular tradition; he believes that his adversary, in contrast, has been deceptive in ways that prevent the tacit dimension of his knowing (i.e., his moral passions) from being recognized and taken into account.

Polanyi believes he can account for features of his adversary's position that the adversary cannot account for—namely, the inconsistencies within it. To the extent that this is true, his is the more comprehensive account of the adversary's own belief and activity. This is why he repeatedly returns to the work of exposing contradictions in his adversary's position, making the case that the alternative that he himself defends avoids similar discrepancies between, among other things, the personal witness of the theorist and the theory itself. This is so because the views with which he is engaged can be shown, he believes, to represent a pathological development within his own tradition, a development that can be identified and analyzed. We confront not two competing traditions but one tradition in healthy and unhealthy forms. He thus believes that his views have a coherence that the competing views lack. A coherent system of beliefs is superior to an incoherent one—this is why our powers of critical analysis are great allies in sorting out truth from error. Nonetheless, he acknowledges that coherence itself is no guarantee of truth. As he says in *Personal Knowledge,* coherence, by itself, is a criterion of stability, not truth. "It may equally stabilize an erroneous or a true view of the universe" (PK 294).

Accordingly, Polanyi builds a case that his views have a heuristic value lacking in the views of his opponent, that his views, if embraced and acted upon, will be fruitful where those of his adversary have proved destructive. To some extent, then, he looks to the future for validation of his views and requires a leap of faith in the testing of his views. However, it is certainly his suggestion that the defeat of fascism, the witness of the anti-Soviet struggles in Eastern and Central Europe, and the severe deprivations and extreme violence required to uphold totalitarian governments ought to count powerfully against the validity of these social arrangements and the theories that legitimate them.

Polanyi makes the strongest case he can in support of his own convictions as to where truth and falsity lie, and he does this in the hope of inducing conversion. Human judgment being what it is, we all must make choices without any guarantee that we have chosen rightly, and we can all only lay out our interlinking beliefs and commitments on the authority of our own conviction. Polanyi has made his case for liberalism; let others make their case for what they believe. Their listeners must decide who is right, and the decisions and actions of those listeners will constitute the socially constructed future. But that construction will necessarily take place within the limits of the human condition, which it cannot violate. Writing, in *Meaning,* of Anglo-American liberalism, he says, "Its program was to let everyone state his beliefs and to allow others to listen and form their

own opinions; the ideas which would prevail in a free and open battle of wits would be as close an approximation to the truth as can be humanly achieved" (M 7).

Abbreviations

bn	"Beyond Nihilism"
kb	"Knowing and Being"
LL	*The Logic of Liberty*
M	*Meaning*
mhr	"Message of the Hungarian Revolution"
mm	"On the Modern Mind"
PK	*Personal Knowledge*
SFS	*Science, Faith and Society*
SM	*The Study of Man.*
tc	"The Two Cultures"
TD	*The Tacit Dimension*
ts	"Transcendence and Self-transcendence"

Endnotes

[1]The term "moral inversion" was not used in the text of *Science, Faith and Society* (1946), but the logic of moral inversion was nonetheless explored in section 3, in which he considered the origins of "the modern crisis," instantiated in both totalitarian states and metaphysical nihilism. The term "moral inversion" appeared in 1951 in *The Logic of Liberty;* see chapter 7, pages 93–110 (much of this reappears word for word in *Meaning,* chapter 1, "The Eclipse of Thought"). Najder asserts that this was the first use of the term (Najder 1968, 365). In 1958, *Personal Knowledge* offered a well-developed consideration of moral inversion (227–45), as well as the arguments on which the theory rested. There Polanyi referred to the discussion in *The Logic of Liberty* as "a tentative study" of the principle of moral inversion, and noted that he had first "outlined" the mechanism of the inversion in *Science, Faith and Society* (PK 232, 233 n. 1). In 1959, moral inversion was discussed in "The Two Cultures," and in 1960, it was explored extensively in "Beyond Nihilism" (both of which are reproduced in *Knowing and Being;* see especially 14, 16–18, 21–22, and 44–45). When *Science, Faith and Society* was republished in 1964, he added new prefatory material, "Background and Prospect," in which he further elaborated the notion of moral inversion (17–18). In 1965, the topic was again explored in "On the Modern Mind" (see especially 12–13, 18–20). Chapter 3 of *The Tacit Dimension* belonged to the same line of development, though the term was not used (see especially 55–63). In *Meaning,* in 1975, he once again discussed moral inversion explicitly, though the relevant passages occurred, for the most part, in chapters drawn from previously published works (see 17–18, 28, 63, 116, 213).

[2] "To deny "any intrinsic power to thought" is to deny "any grounds for claiming freedom of thought" (TD 3–4). Or again: "If thought and reason are nothing in themselves, it is meaningless to demand that thought be set free" (M 14).

[3]Even so, true, complete, or actual moral inversion is not perfectly stable—the contradiction between theory and witness is still there, though it is even more obscured.

[4]It is, of course, the burden of Polanyi's larger argument that this reduction is a mistake. For especially concise statements of the alternative, see SM 67ff., 86, and M 214–15.

[5]In a number of the places where he discusses the limitations reality places upon the realization of our aspirations, he ends with runic allusions to unspecified "religion" (see especially the last paragraph of *The Tacit Dimension*). It is not clear to me whether he is thinking of the means by which Judaism and Christianity have combined a deep sense of fallenness and imperfection with an abiding, though chastened, hope, or whether he has in mind, instead, some sort of recovery ("once religious faith is released from pressure by an absurd vision of the universe" [TD 92]) of the Christian confidence in transcendent, eternal perfection.

[6]Moreover, Najder suggests that Polanyi's unrepentant liberal individualism makes it impossible for him to appreciate the actual meaning and implications of the social constructionist views that he voices but does not instantiate in his work. This is an exceptionally interesting criticism that I hope to explore in another essay.

[7]Here and elsewhere I have used "tradition" and "community" in the singular for simplicity's sake. We all, of course, participate in multiple articulate systems, traditions, and convivial orders.

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Michael Polanyi's Epistemology Of Science And Its Implications For A Problem In Moral Philosophy

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ABSTRACT Key Words: generalism, particularism, moral epistemology, comprehensive entities
Ethical particularists allege that there are, on account of epistemological limitations, no such things as general moral principles. This paper defends the existence of general moral principles by adapting and appropriating Polanyi's epistemology of science to this problem in moral philosophy.

The received view of moral theory is that morality has something of the universal about it. Given that philosophers from Plato onward have almost uniformly affirmed the permanence and universality of important truth, moral philosophers have, with few exceptions, until fairly recently, held that whatever truth there might be in ethics must be permanent and universal.[1] Because philosophy, by and large, is a quest for the universal, moral philosophers have typically tried to determine and codify what is universal concerning morality.

Since Kant, the universal in moral philosophy has largely been construed in a "top-down" fashion. The fundamental idea is that there are principles which hold generally for all situations which have the same morally relevant features. On this view, the task of the moral agent is to correctly identify which principle is applicable to a specific situation and allow it to stipulate the course of action to be taken in that situation. If the correct principle is selected and applied, then *ipso facto* the correct action will have been taken by the agent. On this conception of moral theory a principle is *general* if it can be said to apply to another situation which has the same moral features, and it is *universal* in that it will apply to all such similar situations. The view that there are such general and universal principles has come to be known as generalism. Generalists typically argue that moral principles are necessary for one or more of the following: for helping us to see what action is called for in a given case; for justifying our moral judgements; for explaining our moral judgements, and for assisting us in providing moral instruction, especially to the young.

What and Why Particularism?

This received top-down understanding of moral theory has come under fire in the last twenty-five years or so. What might be called "bottom-up" theorists have criticized generalism on a number of fronts. First, it is thought that the top-down method lays too much emphasis upon the identification of codifiable rules to the detriment of a lived, vibrant moral life. In other words, top-down strategies result in the over-intellectualization of what is involved in being a moral agent in the world. Such a dry, emotionless, exacting approach to ethical decision-making is thought to distort what is actually true about our moral experience.[2] Human beings are not like machines which function algorithmically in a straightforward and inflexible manner. Rather, the moral life involves the agent in a web of considerations which are not capable of being codified into a simple rule or principle. Bottom-up theorists contend that the attempt to reduce moral phenomena to such rules would be to suck the life out of a genuine moral experience of the world. On the bottom-up view, a fully human account of the moral life will not be stifled by principles which preclude creative interaction with the specific circumstances at hand. It will, instead, be vital and attuned to the particular features of the case in question. This bottom-up approach has come to be known as particularism.

Another major worry bottom-up theorists, or particularists, seem to have with respect to generalism is that it does not take adequate account of the complexity of the moral life. The worry here is that principles function like the bed of Procrustes, making moral experience of the world fit them rather than the other way round. As might be expected, the bottom-up theorist alleges that this has resulted in many erroneous moral judgments. Jonathan Dancy, one of the leading representatives of particularism, writes:

> Particularism claims that generalism is the cause of many bad moral decisions, made in the ill-judged and unnecessary attempt to fit what we are to say here to what we have said on another occasion. We all know the sort of person who refuses to make the decision here that the facts are obviously calling for, because he cannot see how to make that decision consistent with one he made on a quite different occasion. We also know the person (often the same person) who insists on a patently unjust decision here because of having made a similar decision in a different case. It is this sort of *looking away* that particularists see as the danger in generalism. Reasons function in new ways on new occasions, and if we don't recognize this fact and adapt our practice to it, we will make bad decisions. Generalism encourages a tendency not to look hard enough at the details of the case before one, quite apart from any over-simplistic tendency to rely on a few rules of dubious provenance....[3]

Particularists are concerned that principles do more to mislead than to assist in making good moral judgments about a given case. In order to make good judgements about a given case the particular features of that case must be allowed to determine the judgement rendered by the agent without recourse to principles. Principles will either miss or obscure the unique features of the case at hand, and that will result in bad judgements made on the part of the agent.

This worry that principles are to blame for much error in moral decision-making is closely related to the frequently aired particularist concern about the *complexity* of the moral life. There is a worry, as stated in the quotation from Dancy above, that principles engender an "over-simplistic tendency to rely on a few rules." Rules, or principles, it is thought, are inherently incapable of accounting for the virtually limitless complexities of a specific case. Dancy, for example, approvingly quotes George Eliot, whom he affectionately dubs the "Patron Saint of Particularists," as saying:

> All people of broad, strong sense have an instinctive repugnance to the men of maxims; because such people early discern that the mysterious complexity of our moral life is not to be embraced by maxims, and that to lace ourselves up in formulas of that sort is to repress all the divine promptings and inspirations that spring from growing insight and sympathy.[4]

Particularists worry that adverting to ready-made principles will frustrate the production of the necessary moral insight and creativity which is called for in the case before us.

What makes the moral life so complex? Part of the plexiformity which particularists contend is part and parcel of the moral life is due to the nature of moral properties themselves. Particularists reject the alleged generalist practice of insisting that if a property makes a difference of a certain kind here, it must do so everywhere. They prefer, instead, to allow that reasons are *holistic*; moral properties can switch polarity and as a result function very differently in different contexts. For example, my doing something which causes you pain might be thought, in many circumstances, to be a reason against the performance of the action. But there

may be circumstances, such as when you need your dislocated shoulder re-set, when my causing you pain is not a reason against the performance of the action. Furthermore, there may even be circumstances when causing someone pain is not only not a reason against the performance of an action, but is actually a reason in *favor* of performing it, such as in disciplining a child. In short, the moral life is not simple and straightforward; it does not easily lend itself to general principles such as "It is wrong to cause someone pain." Dancy writes:

> The only objection we make directly to the possibility of general moral principles was based on the holism of reasons.... But this is just a sharper way of making the familiar point that given the complexity of moral life it is going to be impossible to codify any moral maxim in a way that will render it invulnerable to the vagaries of future situations.[5]

From the particularist's point of view, then, the top-down construal of moral decision-making is inadequate. Particularism supposes that the complexity of the moral life as encountered in concrete situations is not reducible to principles which are generalizable. Moreover, when such attempts at generalization are carried out, they very often result in agents making bad moral decisions.

Finally, particularists, making use of Wittgenstein's insights in the *Philosophical Investigations*, object to generalism on the grounds that the generalist's propensity for following rules is, in the end, ultimately rendered otiose.[6] For, if it is a rule, call it rule1, which is to determine what I should do in this case, then it would seem that I require another rule, rule2, in order to guide me in the application of rule1, and then a further rule, rule3, in order to guide me in the application of rule2, which will guide the application of rule1, and so on *ad infinitum*. One can posit rules for following rules iteratively, and there appears to be no way out of the regress. Rule following, *a la* the generalist, is, according to the particularist, indeterminate and, consequently, ultimately unhelpful. On account of these concerns, the bottom-up methodology of the particularist has been suggested as a corrective replacement for the historic top-down method of the generalist.

In what follows I would like to try to show that the thought of Michael Polanyi may help to shed some light on what is at stake in this debate between particularists and generalists and try to offer a sketch of how Polanyi's thought might provide the theoretical framework for a rapprochement.

Polanyian Perspectives on Particularist Objections
Objection 1—The Unspecifiability of Principles

It is important to note that the generalist tendency to employ rules or principles algorithmically seems to be a characteristic of the modern mind, a characteristic of modern culture which Polanyi stridently opposed. The generalist, it seems, wants to keep all knowledge of particulars in front of himself focally all at once in the form of an explicit principle; he wants the right-making or wrong-making features of any particular case to be formally spelled out by way of a general principle upon which he can focus in an attempt to garner guidance concerning the case at hand. Here, I am suggesting, is what Polanyi might contend is an error on the part of the generalist: he wants to keep the grounds for his judgement about the particular case clearly in his focal awareness; he wants all the features of the case to be clearly specified in a formal principle. But discovery, if Polanyi is correct, does not happen this way. According to Polanyi, when the scientist's imagination is "sallying forth" in an attempt to find the solution to a problem she has set for herself, she is relying upon a vast domain of unspecified knowledge, knowledge of which she can have only a subsidiary awareness. Indeed, according to Polanyi, it would be impossible for her to explore the problem at hand focally if she were not at the same time

relying upon, and making use of, a whole range of subsidiary knowledge about which she is confident and upon which she can draw, but without having to focus upon it directly. The generalist, however, seems reluctant to permit knowledge to function subsidiarily in this way. Refusal to admit of this subsidiary knowledge, however, is, according to Polanyi, a characteristic error of the modern mind. He writes, "The modern mind refuses to accept the necessity for tacit assumptions and *wants to keep the grounds of its beliefs clearly in focus*, as one does in an explicit deduction. Our whole culture is pervaded by the resolve to avoid unspecifiable commitments."[7] The Polanyian corrective for generalists, if my account is correct, is to acknowledge at least some reliance upon unspecified subsidiary knowledge in our discovering the correct judgment to make concerning a particular moral case.

To put a finer point on the matter, the generalist's inclination to draw explicit inferences about what to do in individual cases by subsuming them under general principles is doomed to failure on account of the unspecifiability of principles. Jonathan Dancy has pointed out that particular cases cannot be subsumed under general principles for epistemological reasons. If one has, as is plausible on a generalist scheme, a conflict between principles—such as when, for example, my neighbor asks me how I like her hideous new hat, and my principles "Never tell a lie" and "Never be rude" come into conflict[8]—how is one to resolve the matter by recourse to principle? I can either avoid lying by being rude, or avoid being rude by lying, but not both. The generalist might respond here that principles can be lengthened in order to account for the case which, initially, seems awkward or recalcitrant. Considered judgments concerning lying and rudeness may prompt the generalist to adjust one of her purported principles to more closely approximate the true principle. So the revised principle may be something such as "Never tell a lie, unless it is a matter of trivial politeness" or "Always be polite, unless it would involve telling a lie." Dancy, however, preempts this generalist move. He writes, "[t]here are just too many defeaters for the absence of each one to count among our original reasons, and the general absence of a defeater is not to be thought of as one of the reasons why we judge the first action right."[9] In other words, Dancy is asserting that if there were no other moral considerations involved besides, say, truth-telling, we would not have been inclined to tell the truth while being explicitly aware of the moral rightness of doing so because it did not involve insulting someone, or jeopardizing national security, or putting someone's life in danger, etc. That is to say, we did not read through, in our minds, so to speak, a long principle which took into account all of the possible defeaters, determine that none of them were present, and then proceed with telling the truth. Dancy's conclusion, then, is that we could not have access to knowledge of all of the possible defeaters prior to encountering specific cases wherein they are actually present; and because we do not have recourse to such long, and perhaps disjunctive, principles, we are not, then, appropriating these principles as generalities under which we have subsumed individual cases. In short, we cannot subsume individual cases under general principles because such principles cannot be specified *a priori*.

Now, I think Polanyi would agree that particularism is correct in maintaining that principles cannot be *explicitly* known and specified in this way in advance. Dancy's objection to generalism succeeds because he is assuming that generalism entails that generalizations in the form of principles be *explicitly* known by the agent in order to serve their alleged function. But, from a Polanyian point of view, imaginative moral agents might well be capable of anticipating *tacitly* or intuitively what moral properties, including defeaters, might be relevant. In his essay "Genius in Science" Polanyi heralds C.F.A. Pantin as offering "a brilliant description of anticipation." He quotes Pantin as follows: "[Intuition] does not only suddenly present solutions to our conscious mind, it also includes the uncanny power that somehow we know that a particular set of phenomena or a particular set of notions are [sic] highly significant: and we are aware of that long before we can say what that significance is."[10] To apply this idea to the present matter, we might parody Pantin as follows: "[Intuition]

does not suddenly present solutions to our conscious mind, it also includes the uncanny power that somehow we know that a particular defeater or set of defeaters has no bearing on the case at hand: and we are aware of that long before we can specify what precisely those defeaters are." It is subsidiary knowledge, not explicit knowledge, which is required by an agent in order to correctly subsume a particular case under the appropriate generality. The subsumption of particulars under generalities cannot be explicitly specified, because it requires intuition and reliance upon the tacit dimension. Hence, Polanyi's thought may help to make consistent and intelligible the intuitions of both generalists and particularists regarding this objection to generalism.

Objection 2—The Unformalizability of Following a Rule

This introduces a second reason why particularists deny that individual cases can be subsumed under general principles. The issue here goes back to Wittgenstein on following a rule. If, according to generalists, an agent will receive direction on how to judge a particular case by virtue of subsuming it under a general principle, then it must be clear to the agent that this particular case is an instance of "going on in the same way" indicated by the alleged general principle of which the case in question is presumed to be an instance. In other words, we can group this case before us together with similar cases in the past, and how we judged the past cases will help determine how we should judge in the present instance. In this way the generalist holds that we can "go on in the same way" applying a general rule to specific cases.

However, as Wittgenstein has shown us, it is not possible to formalize what it means to "go on in the same way." If we ask an agent to follow the rule, "add two," and she counts by adding two, we have no way to show her that she is not following the rule if she reaches, say, one thousand and begins to count, 1004, 1008, 1012, etc., all the while insisting that she is continuing to follow the rule, "add two." The lesson here seems to be that, although she may have perfect grasp of the rule, "add two," she may not have the conceptual competence to apply the rule correctly. Rules do not act as "rails" which keep us engaged with reality. Grasping a rule, in other words, will not guarantee a given agent's ability to apply a concept competently. Particularists seem to want to employ this as a defeater for the notion that general principles are truth-makers with respect to the truth of given moral instances. If Wittgenstein is right, the notion of rules acting as rails is bankrupt, and so, consequently, is the notion that rules are truth-makers.[11] It is only if we are confident that we are going on in the same way in our application of a general principle to specific cases that the idea of the principle *qua* truth-maker will be intelligible. So, how is it that an agent can have confidence that she is "going on in the same way"?

Once again, Polanyi's thought, by weaning the generalist from his positivist inclinations, might enable the generalist to respond to this particularist challenge. First, Polanyi is keenly aware that rules require interpretation (and sometimes reinterpretation) and that the interpretation of a rule cannot be made on the basis of another rule, on pain of regress. He writes, "How can we ever interpret a rule? By another rule? There can only be a finite number of tiers of rules so that such a regression would soon be exhausted."[12] In "Reconstruction" Polanyi contends that the application of rules requires subsidiary indwelling. He writes:

> [A]gain as we have seen, our rules for establishing true coherences. . . are and must remain indeterminate. Any rules we have must be applied, of course; and, to do this, we may have additional rules for their application. But we cannot go on having specific rules for the application of specific rules for the application of specific rules ad infinitum. At some point we must have "rules" of application (if we can call them that) which we cannot specify,

because we must simply dwell in them in a subsidiary way. They are part of our deepest commitments. But for this reason they are not specifiable.[13]

According to Polanyi, an agent can have confidence that she is going on in the same way—but not because such a procedure can be formalized all the way down, so to speak. Rather, knowledge of how to go on in the same way in the application of rules entails a tacit coefficient. The knowledge of how to do this, although genuine, is subsidiary.

Objection 3—The Construction of Universal Terms When No Two Tokens of a Type Are Exactly Alike

On a generalist account, certain individual cases—although different in some respects, to be sure—are thought to be similar enough that they can be grouped together under a general classification. For example, if I kill an innocent person on Monday while wearing green shoes and kill another innocent person on Tuesday while wearing blue shoes, the generalist will likely want to say that both instances can be grouped together under the general heading 'murder', even though there are differences between the cases, *viz.*, the day of the week on which the killings took place and the color shoes I was wearing while doing the killing. Generalism, that is to say, entails that moral agents be able to make taxonomic judgments; generalists want to say that cases in the past have had certain features which are similar to this case, and thus by taxonomically grouping this case together with those previous cases we can infer from what it was that we felt compelled to say about those cases concerning what it is that we should say here about this case now before us. Particularists, however, are prone to point out that any differences between cases cannot be judged ahead of time to be irrelevant. After all, if one tells a rich enough story, any feature of a case may be deemed morally relevant. No two cases are really alike. Hence, according to the particularist, the generalist is incapable of making legitimate taxonomic classifications.

Polanyi is aware of this sort of problem. In his essay, "Reconstruction," Polanyi notes how indeterminate all taxonomic classifications are. He writes, "Plato and his school were the first to be troubled by the fact that *in applying our conception of a class of things we keep identifying objects that are different from one another in every particular.*"[14] Plato offers the classification of "man" as an example. If I may be permitted to use some terms anachronistically, if tokens of the type "man" can be distinguished from one another on the basis of particular features, how is it, Plato wants to know, that there can be an archetype for the kind "man"? The archetype cannot at the same time be young and old, as particular men are, or hirsute and bald, or fair and swarthy, etc. But neither can he have any one of these properties as opposed to its alternative; for then those "tokens" with the alternative property could not rightly be said to belong to the type "man." Plato's purported solution to the problem is to hold that the *eidon* of "man," the perfect man, has none of these particular properties. Particular properties are instantiated only in imperfect copies, but not in the archetype. Polanyi notes that this purported solution merely "embodies instead of eliminates the paradox of identifying different individuals." It does not really begin to solve the problem of how it is that we identify individuals as members of a class. Polanyi then further notes that this problem of taxonomic indeterminacy gets solved neither by nominalism (because the problem simply reasserts itself when we inquire as to why it is that we should apply the same label to a collection of different individuals), nor by the use of the notion of open-texturedness (because to have an open-textured term merely means that there are differences in the instances in which the term will apply. But still the term applies to some objects, and not others. How this is determined is still left open.)[15] So, taxonomic identification is difficult, indeed. For the particularist, this fact of taxonomic indeterminacy gives rise to the claim that there

are as many principles as there are cases. Each case has its distinctive, particular features and, thus, is unable to be subsumed under a generality. Any principle general enough to apply to another case, likewise, will fail to take account of the particular features of the individual case. Hence, particularists allege that talk of general principles is mistaken, at worst, or unhelpful, at best.

Polanyi's notion of tacit knowledge, however, may, again, shed light on how it is that we are able to make taxonomic classifications. With respect to Plato's problem about how to establish "man" as a type, Polanyi admits, "This indeterminacy is irreducible." He goes on, however, to claim, in spite of this irreducible indeterminacy, that "its comprehension is safely controlled by tacit integration. Tacit knowing commonly integrates particulars into their joint meaning."[16] Polanyi writes in *Personal Knowledge*:

> Yet it would seem impossible to devise a definition which would unambiguously specify the range over which human shape may, and beyond which it may not, vary; and it is certain that those who recognize this shape are not in possession of any such explicit definition. Instead, they have exercised their art of knowing by forming a conception of the human shape. They have trusted themselves to identify noticeably different instances of what—in spite of these differences—they judge to be the same features, and to discriminate in other cases between things which, in spite of some similarities, they judge to be instances of different features. Sustained by the belief that a human type exists, they have continued to build up their conception of it by noticing human beings as instances of this type. In doing this they have practised the kind of power used for generating a focal awareness of a comprehensive entity from a subsidiary awareness of its parts.[17]

If it is not already obvious, what I am suggesting is that Polanyi's remarks here concerning the taxonomic identification of the human species might equally apply to moral cases and moral principles. For the generalist who is willing to appropriate Polanyian categories, it is tacit knowledge gained through a subsidiary awareness of the previous functioning of properties as right-making and/or wrong-making that makes possible a judgement concerning how those properties are functioning in this present moral instance. By practicing this "power used for generating a focal awareness of a comprehensive entity from a subsidiary awareness of its parts," a moral agent might be able to develop a general principle, albeit one that is not completely specifiable, from his subsidiary awareness of how the relevant moral properties have functioned in previous specific instances in the past. As one makes taxonomic judgments about human beings "sustained by the belief that a human type exists," so one makes taxonomic judgments about moral instances sustained by the belief that a general moral principle exists. If I am correct in holding that moral principles are in some ways analogous to Polanyi's comprehensive entities,[18] then knowing how to make taxonomic classifications is an unformalizable act of personal knowledge.

So how does one build up an awareness of a comprehensive entity? According to Polanyi, it requires experience; knowledge of comprehensive entities is arrived at *a posteriori*. He insists upon "the fact that valid generalizations are commonly arrived at by empirical inquiries based on *informal* procedures."[19] Furthermore, technical, scientific comprehensive entities must be arrived at, according to Polanyi, not only through practical experience, but also through apprenticeship. In "The Scientific Revolution" Polanyi writes:

> This is why zoology and botany cannot be learned from printed pages, any more than medicine can. This is why so many practical hours of teaching in the laboratory has to be given also in many other branches of the natural sciences. Wherever this happens, there some knowledge

of the comprehensive aspect of things is being transmitted, a knowledge of those things which we must acquire by becoming aware of a multitude of clues that cannot be exhaustively identified. We must learn the physiognomy of such things by relying on clues which cannot be exhaustively identified in themselves.[20]

What Polanyi says about mystery of discovery applies equally to the art of making taxonomic classifications: "[T]acit knowing is able to make good sense of an aspect of science that has flatly resisted all efforts to bring it into the ambience of strict formalization."[21] In short, the practice of making taxonomic classifications necessitates reliance upon a tacit coefficient.

One final point might be worth making with respect to how we come to understand universal terms. If my account is correct, it is hardly surprising that philosophers from Aristotle onward have emphasized the necessity of *practicing* the virtues which are learned through *imitation*. Space does not permit me to explore this connection in detail, but the nexus between particularism, virtue ethics and Polanyi, I believe, bears further investigation.

Unspecified and Unformalizable, but Still General

From what I have said so far it might appear that Polanyi's thought has done more to justify and enhance particularism and to critique generalism than the other way round. This is true up to now because I have used Polanyi's thought to challenge the notion, which seems to plague traditional generalists, that ethics is a formalizable enterprise, which it seems not to be. And if the impulse to formalize ethics stems from a desire to be more *exact* and more *scientific*, then, according to Polanyi, that motivation stems from a false and naive notion of what science is. According to Polanyi, science is inexact,[22] riddled with indeterminacy[23] and contains aspects which defy formalization. So, should a moral philosopher following Polanyi's thought adopt a full-blown particularism?

I do not think so. The reasons I believe particularism does not follow from Polanyi's thought are several. First, while I am unaware of any passage within the Polanyian corpus where he explicitly argues for the existence of general principles in science, he never denies their existence. Of course, an argument from silence may not seem a very powerful argument, but it is important to remember that Polanyi's whole project is an attempt to show that perfect codifiability and formalizability in science are impossible; it is a myth which he labors to debunk. His goal is to show that no rules or principles of science are fully determinate or infallible. But his very eagerness to show that they are neither fully determinate nor infallible does seem to entail that he thinks that there are general principles, albeit of this qualified sort. Polanyi, while acknowledging the existence and helpfulness of rules, is quick to point out that, "Verification, even though usually more subject to rules than discovery, rests ultimately on mental powers which go beyond the application of any definite rules." Polanyi's intent is to make it clear that he is not denying the existence of rules, but merely hoping to "put them in their place," so to speak: "Nor am I saying that there are not rules to guide verification, but only that there are none which can be relied on in the last resort."[24] In spite of the indeterminacy of scientific rules, however, they are still necessary: "No scientific discovery can be strictly verified, nor even proved to be probable. Yet, we bet our lives every day on the correctness of scientific generalisations, for example those underlying our medicine and technology."[25] So, for Polanyi, generalizations there are, though they are neither infallible, completely formalizable, nor fully specifiable.

Second, scientific discovery for Polanyi is motivated by the scientist's desire for a "deepening coherence" in his understanding and grasp of reality. Coherence seems to imply generalities which organize particular features of the world. When a scientist believes that he has found a solution to a problem he has set for himself, he "return[s] to the quiescent state of mind from which the enquiry started, but return[s] to it with a new vision of coherence and reality."[26] Much like the example of conflicting moral principles above, the scientist adjusts his view of reality in order to establish equilibrium. Kepler, for example, established the principles of planetary motion as a result of his determination to account for the discrepancy in the position of Mars. The resulting "laws" are generalizations which yield greater coherence and a tightening grip on our grasp of astronomical reality. Discovery yields generalizations.

Of course, just because Polanyi believes that generalities are possible in science does not entail that he necessarily would think they also exist in ethics. Margaret Little, for example, holds that moral particularism is much more viable than scientific particularism on account of the fact that contextualization in ethics is far more thoroughgoing than it is in science.[27] Little contends that there is no 'pure model' in ethics the way there is in physics. A pure model in scientific theory is one which it is believed actual situations can only approximate. Boyle's law, for example, is a pure model of how gasses behave, because Boyle's law does not specify how other factors, inevitably present in any actual situation, will effect gasses. It applies only to an ideal, or pure, situation of which any actual situation will only be an approximation.

I believe, however, that Polanyi would here disagree with Little. Polanyi seems to think that the purity of scientific models is no greater than those of the humanities. Indeed, much of what Polanyi was concerned to do was to "bridge the gulf . . . [which] supposedly separates scientific from humanistic knowledge, attitudes and methods." At the end of his essay, "Reconstruction," Polanyi writes:

> In view of what we have now seen, we can surely bridge this gulf [between scientific knowledge and knowledge in the humanities] completely. We can now see that not only do the scientific and the humanistic both involve personal participation; we see that both also involve active use of the imagination. That the various humanities are heavily entangled with the imagination has always been very clear to almost anyone; but that imagination has an essential role to play in science as well has rarely been glimpsed. . . . If, however, as these chapters have tried to show, personal participation and imagination are essentially involved in science as well as in the humanities, meanings created in the sciences stand in no more favored relation to reality than do meanings created in the arts, in moral judgments, and in religion. . . . To have, or to refer to, reality—in some sense—may then be a possibility for both sorts of meanings, since the dichotomy between facts and values no longer seems to be a real distinction upon which to hang any conclusion.[28]

Given Polanyi's levelling of the traditional distinction between the sciences and the humanities, I believe it is fair to maintain that he would think that there are valid generalizations which can be made just as well in ethics as in the natural sciences.

In conclusion, particularism will win the day if generalism is wedded to a positivistic paradigm wherein it is thought that in order to count as genuine, knowledge must be completely specifiable and formalizable. Contrary to what particularists aver, there is a place in ethics for generalizations which count as genuine knowledge, if such generalized knowledge is recognized for what it is—personal knowledge.

Endnotes

1 In what follows I shall be assuming a cognitivist view of morality.

2 For a discussion of the role of emotion in ethics see Nancy Sherman, "The Place of Emotion in Kantian Morality" in *Identity, Character and Morality: Essays in Moral Psychology*, ed. Owen Flanagan and Amelie O. Rorty (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990).

3 Jonathan Dancy, *Moral Reasons* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 64-65. Italics his.

4 Dancy quoting George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, end of Bk. 7, chp. 2 in *Moral Reasons,* p. 71. Interestingly, Hilary Putnam quotes Eliot *(Middlemarch,* chp. 61) to the opposite effect in "Taking Rules Seriously—A Response to Martha Nussbaum" in *New Literary History*, vol. 15, 1983, p. 195.

5 Dancy, p. 92.

6 Dancy, pp. 83-4.

7 "The Body-Mind Relation" in *Society, Economics & Philosophy: Selected Papers of Michael Polanyi,* ed. R.T. Allen (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1997), p. 317. Emphasis mine.

8 This example is adapted from David McNaughton, *Moral Vision* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 196.

9 *Op. cit.*, p. 81.

10 "Genius in Science" in Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

11 Thanks to Sean McKeever and Michael Ridge for a useful discussion of this issue in their unpublished paper, "The Many Moral Particularisms: An Exercise in Meta-Ethical Discernment."

12 "Authority and Conscience" in *Science, Faith and Society* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1946), p. 58.

13 "Reconstruction" in *Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 61. See also *Personal Knowledge,* corrected ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 324.

14 *Ibid.* , p. 52.

15 *Ibid.*

16 *Ibid.*

17 *Op. cit.*, p. 348-9.

18 I say that principles are only in some ways analogous to comprehensive entities because, while they share with comprehensive entities a fundamental indeterminacy, this indeterminacy does not, in the case of moral principles, produce through subsidiary awareness a quiddity which is logically distinct from the particulars of which it is formed, as it does in the case of the sort of comprehensive entity with which Polanyi is concerned. In his essay "Personal Knowledge" in *Meaning* Polanyi makes a distinction between two different types of unspecifiability. He writes, "Thus subsidiaries are—for this reason and not because we cannot find them all—*essentially* unspecifiable. We must distinguish, then, between two types

of unspecifiability of subsidiaries. One type is due to the difficulty of tracing the subsidiaries—a condition that is widespread, but not universal; the other type is due to a sense deprivation which is *logically* necessary and in principle absolute." P.38. Emphasis his. I would contend that moral principles have the former sort of unspecifiability.

[19] "Reconstruction," *op. cit.*, p. 56. Emphasis his.

[20] "The Scientific Revolution," in Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

[21] "Reconstruction," *op. cit.*, p. 57.

[22] Polanyi begins his essay, "Genius in Science," by saying, "We accept the results of science, and we must accept them, without any strict proof that they are true. Strictly speaking all natural sciences are inexact." *Op. cit.*, p. 267.

[23] Polanyi writes, "[A]ll meaningful integrations (including those achieved in science) exhibit a triadic structure consisting of the subsidiary, the focal, and the person, and all are thus inescapably *personal*." "Reconstruction," p. 64. Emphasis his. In "Creative Imagination" Polanyi writes, "The content of any empirical statement is three times indeterminate. It relies on clues which are largely unspecifiable, integrates them by principles which are undefinable, and speaks of a reality which is inexhaustible." Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

[24] "Science and Reality" in *Science, Faith and Society,* p. 29 and 30.

[25] "Creative Imagination" in Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 262.

[27] Margaret Olivia Little, "Moral Generalities Revisited" in *Moral Particularism,* Brad Hooker and Margaret Little, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 291, n. 5.

[28] "Reconstruction," pp. 64-5.

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Accepting Our Lives as Gift:
Hospitality and Post-Critical Ethics

Elizabeth Newman

ABSTRACT Key Words: hospitality, post-critical ethics, Alistair MacIntrye, Walter Miller, *A Canticle for Leibowitz*

This essay explores the practice of hospitality as a resource for thinking about ethics post-critically. How might the practice of hospitality — rooted in the conviction that our lives are fundamentally constituted by receiving and giving — challenge a modern, critical ethic centered in the autonomous self?

To describe ethics as post-critical indicates that this approach is distinct from one that is "critical." Speaking generally, I define a critical approach to ethics as one that flows from certain modern or Enlightenment assumptions. These include 1) a focus on the priority of the subject, 2) the elevation of doubt as the key means to deeper knowledge, and 3) a search for universal foundations, both in order to gain true knowledge and as the way to secure peace in the midst of difference. From the standpoint of a critical ethic, the individual and tradition exist in inevitable tension. Doubting the particularity of tradition and authority, the individual appeals to a rational foundation, both to gain genuine knowledge and to obtain peace between differing parties. While these modern assumptions have been subjected to criticism many times over, they nonetheless continue to live on in our imaginations. As William H. Poteat notes, "Cartesianism as an explicit philosophical doctrine is virtually without effect in this culture. It functions, however, at a tacit level like a repetition compulsion; it is ubiquitous and pervades the atmosphere in our life like chronic depression."[1] Shaped by modern, critical assumptions, our contemporary culture often assumes that obedience to something outside of oneself negates personal freedom. Even more, we are tempted to ask, "Isn't a too strong adherence to tradition 'fanatical' and the source of much violence in the world?" (a common assumption made concerning the terrorist attacks on September 11). Furthermore, we wonder, "If we have no common rationality, or at least no common understanding of tolerance, how do we resolve difference?"

A post-critical ethic will not only respond to these objections but also provide a radically different starting place, one in which the modern prejudice against faithfulness, obedience and authority will not appear. From a post-critical standpoint, the dichotomy between the individual and community, freedom and authority, or faith and reason makes little sense. In order to develop this "post-critical dwelling place,"[2] I will focus on one key theme, namely *the recognition of our lives as gift*. Such a recognition is not derived from "anywhere" but from those traditions that acknowledge our lives as the gifts of a good Creator such that a certain "givenness" constitutes who we are, how we know and how we live. This means that our ways of knowing and being are always "fiduciary," as Polanyi well knew. As I hope to show, inasmuch as the practice of hospitality trains us to see our lives as gifts, and teaches us how to receive from and give to another, then we can call this a post-critical practice.[3]

The Critical Refusal of Gift

First, however, let us cast a fuller light on a critical ethical approach. I will do this by turning to Alasdair MacIntyre, one of a number of contemporary thinkers who has helped us understand how deeply problematic

is the ethos of our modern world. MacIntyre begins his well-known analysis in *After Virtue* with a "disquieting suggestion." Imagine, he says, that the natural sciences have suffered a great catastrophe so that all we have left are fragments of scientific knowledge but no context which might help us make sense of these fragments. Perhaps we might continue to use certain scientific terms, but such use appears arbitrary since the speakers are ignorant of the larger stories and standards. As MacIntyre himself has acknowledged, he draws this disquieting suggestion from the opening scene in Walter Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz,* where a nuclear war has destroyed most of "civilization," especially its scientific and technological knowledge.[4] In Miller's tale, the monks of the Order of St. Leibowitz see it as their calling to preserve these scientific fragments, trusting that some day they will make sense and benefit the world. MacIntyre compares this opening scene to our modern situation. We, too, are left with fragments in our contemporary context, only the fragments are moral ones: "[The] language and the appearances of morality persist even though the integral substance of morality has to a large degree been fragmented and then in part destroyed."[5]

It is not my intention to recount the whole of MacIntyre's well-known and groundbreaking argument. Rather I wish simply to lift up one of his defining characteristics of modern ethics, namely its inevitable degeneration into emotivism. As MacIntyre defines it, emotivism "is the doctrine that all evaluative judgments and more specifically all moral judgments are nothing but expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character."[6] For those formed by modernity, who have lost sense of the ways in which particular contexts and histories generate certain convictions, emotivism often seems to be the only alternative. Such emotivism, as MacIntyre indicates, is parasitic upon a sharp distinction between moral and factual judgments: a moral judgment, in contrast to a fact, is neither true nor false, but rather the expression of a criterionless choice. Thus values become primarily personal choices.[7]

Examples of the kind of ethical thinking MacIntrye describes abound, as anyone who has taught ethics to undergraduates well knows. In fact, most of the time the language of "values" is used, "choice" will predictably follow. To take one of many examples, the University of North Dakota recently claimed that:

> Education concerning values is important in general education – not seeking one right way to behave, but recognizing that choices cannot be avoided. Students should be aware of how many choices they make, how these choices are based on values, and how to make informed choices.[8]

While rightly seeing a problem with the ethical void in many educational curriculums, this approach fails to see how "values as personal choices" continues to underwrite this void. Once the dichotomy between facts and values shapes the terms of the debate about education, then "facts" will be seen to have an unchallenged place in the curriculum while the place of values will be more contentious.[9] Should values be taught? If so, then whose values ought to prevail? Does moral instruction even belong in the classroom? Isn't attention to values best done in the extracurricular spheres of the institution, or, even more, in the private sphere of the home?

Theologian Rowan Williams rightly warns against what he calls this "nostalgia for values." While he acknowledges that this nostalgia is understandable given "diffuse discontent" with consumer pluralism, he warns that "values language" easily becomes "a kind of window dressing [that] echoes the individualistic and facile language of moral retrenchment that often accompanies a further intensification of administrative control and the attrition of participatory politics."[10] That is, talk of "values" easily ends up presupposing rather than challenging a market, consumeristic framework. Even more, when we come to believe we simply "choose" our personal values, we then fail to see how this whole framework relies upon a set of assumptions that we did not

explicitly choose. As exemplified in the North Dakota statement, "values education" all too often trains us to think about ethics in terms of individual choice, not unlike going to the mall and choosing what to buy.[11] Indeed, we might say that "values" talk today more often than not forms us to believe that "our choices" constitute *the essence of our identity*. Again, as MacIntyre observes, "choice" today is not taken to be revelatory of character, but rather of identity, which is entirely self-generated: "I am what my choices have made me." The individual has no alternative other than that of now choosing what is to become good or bad for her. To criticize one's choices is to take a negative view of the individual making the choices, and more often than not the response is a retreat into solidarity with those with whom one agrees.[12]

Thus while our modern discourse often links freedom of choice to a celebration of "pluralism," the fact is that more often than not we are left with fragmentation. In a well-known passage, William James enthusiastically compares our contemporary situation (especially in the university) to a kind of hotel:

> Innumerable chambers open out of it. In one you may find a man writing an atheistic volume; in the next someone on his knees praying for faith and strength; in the third a chemist investigating a body's properties. In a fourth a system of idealistic metaphysics is being excogitated; in a fifth the impossibility of metaphysics is being shown. But they all own the corridor, and all must pass through it if they want a practicable way of getting into or out of their respective rooms.[13]

As indicated, James intended this to be a positive description of our modern "pluralistic" context. In light of a post-critical posture, however, we can see this metaphor as deeply problematic. The common space is the hotel corridor through which "all must pass," but what constitutes this space? As George Marsden rightly notes, the corridor in James' vision is open to those who can "readily share basic standards of evidence and argument. These standards work in separating good arguments from bad…"[14] The difficulty with such an account, however, is the failure to see that "standards of evidence" or what counts as a good argument cannot be separated from the larger mythos or story that forms one's assumptions about the good. Thus, a kind of hegemony rules the "corridor" as one must accept a particular mythos (which more often than not its endorsers fail to fully acknowledge) in order to get in or out of his or her respective room.[15] James failed to see how this foundationalist account would eventually lead to the enervating pluralism we have today, where multiple values simply co-exist with no way to adjudicate among them.[16] Communities are easily reduced to like minded individuals, who have no way to resolve differences, and even more, no reason why to interact with someone who is not like minded.[17] William Cavanaugh makes the further point that such "pluralism" really exists only at the private level. "In the public sphere, the State itself is the ultimate good whose prerogatives must be defended coercively…the liberal State is by no means neutral. It defends and imposes a particular set of goods – e.g., the value of the market, scientific progress, the importance of choice itself – which excludes its rivals."[18]

To summarize my all too brief account, our modern/postmodern situation has produced an ethic rooted primarily in the individual and his or her choices. This is problematic at a number of levels. First, while it assumes that it frees the individual from authority and tradition, in reality it binds the individual to one particular tradition, and a narrow one at that that emphasizes the individual as the creator of his or her identity. Secondly, this tradition of modernity, while advocating pluralism actually suppresses it; James' image of the supposedly neutral "space" in the corridor can only be entered by those who share certain foundationalist presuppositions, and thus certain assumptions about the good. Since the corridor is a deceptively coercive space, this "modern hotel" (an interesting image in and of itself as it suggests an abstract and rootless place) cannot offer genuine

hospitality. It is my argument that the inability to offer hospitality is related to the refusal to see our lives as gifts. It is to this point that I now turn.

A Post-Critical Turn: Our Lives as Gifts

As indicated, MacIntrye points to the necessary givenness of all ethical and philosophical inquiry when he states that "There is no standing ground, no place of inquiry, no way to engage in the practices of advancing, evaluating, accepting and rejecting reasoned argument apart from that which is provided by some particular tradition or other."[19] Thus, following MacIntrye, we could say that we are not "free" simply to choose our morality. We cannot, in other words, abstract ourselves from our own context to reach a place where such lucid choice would be available. Nor even, we might add, would this make us "free" if it were a possibility. Some tradition or other always informs "freedom," and thus we deceive ourselves if we imagine freedom lies in abstraction or escape from our particular context.

Polanyi adds to MacIntyre's post-critical approach by analyzing even more fully the ways in which all our knowing is fiduciary; our knowing involves a relying upon or a "faithfulness" to what is given. What does Polanyi mean by this description of knowledge? First, like MacIntyre, Polanyi points to the fact that our knowing calls for and, in fact, requires immersion in a tradition, a particular community where we are able to become apprentices of other persons. Thus, for example, "to be trained as a medical diagnostician, you must go through a long course of experience under the guidance of a master." A doctor comes to recognize certain symptoms "only by repeatedly being given cases for auscultation in which the symptom is authoritatively known to be present, side by side with other cases in which it is authoritatively known to be absent, until he has fully realized the difference between them and can demonstrate his knowledge practically to the satisfaction of an expert."[20] Secondly, the fiduciary aspect of knowledge reveals itself in the tacit dimension of all knowing. As is well known, Polanyi describes in rich detail how we tacitly rely upon some "givens" in order to arrive at more explicit knowledge. In a sense, we absorb or know tacitly by indwelling a given "place," whether this is before a telescope, on a bicycle or while making an esoteric philosophical point. Thus, as those familiar with Polanyi well know, for Polanyi, knowing is irreducibly personal, where "personal" does not mean subjective but the immersion of our whole persons in that which we are seeking to know. Or, better stated in Polanyian terms, we immerse ourselves in that to which we are called. Faithfulness to our calling yields certain truths; those truths with heuristic depth (those that reveal more to later eyes) show that our antecedent faithfulness was indeed warranted.

So understood, we can claim, as does Poteat, that all our knowing is a bonding, and that "our *ultimate* relation therefore all of our *derived relations* to existence are fiduciary."[21] Poteat can thus make the claim that our "modern derangement" results from a kind of "infidelity." Such language contrasts sharply with the modern emphasis on the choosing self, the self that achieves "freedom" by standing apart from all those "bonds" that constitute its identity. As Poteat notes, "even though *de facto* we exist amidst a plexus of bonds, *de jure* all the gnostic images of our being in the world can only see these as a *bondage*, a falling into a worldly prison from which we can alone be saved by the *gnosis* of our *in principle* ecumenic doubt. By contrast, only when we remember that nature is our mother can we embrace and affirm these bondings as the very substance of our incarnate existence."[22] Poteat thus interprets our incarnate place not as a kind of bondage and imprisonment from which we must stand apart, as a gnostic would, but as essentially gift. From such a post-critical posture, the image of the choosing self is inadequate because it blinds us to all we are that we did not explicitly choose. In other words, it blinds us to the givenness and giftedness of who we are.

One might easily object, "Not everyone can see their lives as 'gifts.' Certainly, the terrible suffering of some would seem to be clear evidence that the language of 'gift' misdescribes some lives." These observations are certainly true; many of us, probably most of the time, fail to think about our lives as gifts. Even more, we would not want to advise the one suffering from physical abuse, for example, to simply see this as gift. This is rightly described as an injustice. The point I am making, however, is a *logical* one: we can only come to know, come to hold certain convictions, come to see certain things in a particular way through our bondedness to the world. It is through our reliance upon a tradition formed place that we are able to see and name something as an injustice. This place is not a place of bondage but a place of fidelity. As Nicholas Lash rightly notes, "Whether in physics or in politics, in psychology or prayer, to grow in knowledge is to grow through trust: trust given, trust betrayed, trust risked, misplaced, sustained, received, and suffered."[23] A post-critical ethic then rests in the conviction that trust, faithfulness and obedience, and therefore a reception to that which is given, *precede* and *necessarily form* our ethics.

Election and Hospitality

To develop this point, I will now turn to a fuller examination of the theology that sustains a post-critical ethic in which the practice of hospitality is central. As MacIntyre, Polanyi and Poteat all in various ways indicate, all approaches to ethics are sustained by some kind of tradition. I would add to this that all ethics are sustained by some kind of theology or *mythos*.[24] In my analysis of hospitality, I will describe hospitality primarily from within the Christian tradition; this is because I believe our Creator's own hospitality is most fully displayed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. This does not, of course, negate the fact that hospitality is practiced well in a variety of traditions and cultures nor that Christians have much to learn from others about hospitality and how to practice it.[25]

Just as a more gnostic ahistorical theology sustains the critical approach to ethics, Christian theology, rightly understood, sustains a post-critical approach because it is rooted in the conviction that our lives and calling, indeed our very identities, are gifts. Augustine even went so far as to claim that we do not choose our friends; God does. The language of "election," as well as that of "calling," serves to remind Christians (as well as Jews and Muslims) of the gift nature of their lives. God is the One who elects or chooses us, not the other way around. Yet, the language of election has been met with numerous objections. Why does God choose some rather than others? Is choseness simply a category invoked to justify or privilege one's particular self or tradition? Doesn't our response to God involve some choice on our part?

First, it is important to note that "choseness" or election is not intended to point to moral superiority, a misinterpretation that has no doubt been invoked at times by Christians and Jews. Even so, Jewish theology is careful to deflect this misinterpretation. For example, in one *midrash* the Jews do not even want to be chosen; in another, God has gone to other people but was turned down.[26] Similar to Jewish self-understanding, the Christian claim that God is the electing God rests not in the fact that Christians are somehow better than others. The lives of the saints often repeat the *midrash* insight, namely the saints do not want to be "chosen," or set aside as saints. Rather "election," first and foremost, is a conviction about who God is, a conviction that points to God's deep desire to be embodied and enfleshed in the world. Thus, the notion of "election" radically affirms creation and our humble creaturely status. God Himself enters history and becomes a body, i.e., the body of Israel and subsequently the body of Christ for the sake of drawing the whole world back to God's own self. (For gnostics, the notion of God becoming a body is distasteful; creation, flesh, and bodies are simply places of limitation from which we must escape.)

Jews and Christians, of course, differ in important ways in understanding the embodiedness of God. For Jews, God himself does not become a body but rather, through the covenant with Abraham, calls forth the body of Israel. Jewish theologian Michael Wyschogrod reiterates this conviction when he observes that Nazi antisemitism had a theological dimension, namely, "It was the assault by evil on God *through the body of Israel*. This is the only interpretation of the Holocaust that even begins to do justice to that inexplicable mystery."[27] Wyschogrod's claim reflects the Jewish self-understanding that identifies God with the very body of Israel. So also, of course, Christians identify God with the Body of Christ - "For in him (the Beloved Son) all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell…" (Colossians 1: 19) – an identification later extended to the church as Christ's body. Despite their differences, both Jews and Christians speak of election in order to affirm the essential goodness of creation; God himself desires to enter our time and space.

All this is to emphasize that the language of "election" rests upon a radical affirmation of our creaturely status and of a God who "gifts" us with His presence in and through creation. In other words, the fact that God chooses us and that we are to receive our status as creatures (who inhabit a particular time and place) as gifts are interconnected. To understand our own place as gift contrasts sharply with a modern view that can only imagine our particular place in terms of bondage and limitation. To receive the gift of ourselves from others, and ultimately from God (rather than imagine we have to generate our own identity) enables us to become faithful recipients and practitioners of God's own hospitality.

Hospitality and "Christian Homelessness"

If it is true that our lives are not our own but are given to us – by our places, by others, ultimately by God - it is also true that we are not entirely "at home" in the world. For early Christians, in fact, hospitality is linked to a certain kind of homelessness. Thus early Christian writers refer often to God's command to the Hebrews to welcome strangers because they too were once strangers and aliens in the land of Egypt. As Augustine writes: "You take in some stranger, whose companion in the way you yourself also are, for we are all strangers. This person is a Christian who, even in his own house and in his own country, acknowledges himself to be a stranger."[28] Hospitality then appears to rest on a paradox: Christians are called to welcome the stranger even though they have no home, even though they are a diaspora people with no fixed place to call their own.[29] Christians are called even to give up their fixed place in the world –their land, their country, their family (Luke 14: 24-33)– for the sake of the kingdom of God.

We seem to be left with an apparent contradiction. Henri Nouwen reminds us that it is inhospitable to welcome others and then leave. He reminds us, rightly, that good hosts need to have a place from which to extend hospitality.[30] How can Christians really practice good hospitality if they themselves are also displaced and homeless? How can strangers and sojourners offer hospitality?

Yet Christians (and Jews) are only "homeless" or "displaced" in a sense. They are called to turn from identifying themselves primarily by their nation or their family or their position in society in order to draw their identity from God, where God is understood as a purposeful actor who acts in and with a *people*, for the sake of the world. Thus God calls Abraham to leave his home in Ur of Chaldees for the sake of the newly established covenant between God and Israel, and Abraham follows. God calls Moses to lead his people out of Egypt and Moses follows. God the Father calls Jesus to establish and embody a new community, one characterized by enemy love and Jesus follows to the point of death. In each instance, the particular "home" of the individual is in a community that understands itself, however dimly, as living before the "face of God."

How does such participation in what God is doing, in God's purposeful activity relate to our earlier question: namely how to practice hospitality when we are strangers and sojourners in the world, when we are called to have no place, as Jesus had no place to "lay his head"? The resolution lies in understanding our "place" or identity as resting in God's purposeful activity with a particular people. We are called to be strangers to all that denies or negates God's purpose. Thus, for example, we are called to be strangers to the idea that our families or our nations are our primary identity-givers. We nonetheless find our "home" in the world (and thus can become good hosts) because our home or place is before God, in God's own kingdom which, Christians believe, is now present but not yet fully realized.

Thus hospitality is parasitic on first being guests in God's house; we must first receive the truth of our lives as gifts in order to become good hosts to others. If who we are is primarily self-generated, if our choices constitute the essence of our identity, then the practice of hospitality will quickly atrophy as we will see no *need* to truly receive from another. As others have noted, however, such hoarding (refusing to give and receive) paradoxically leads to scarcity rather than abundance. If it is true that who we are is a gift of others and ultimately God, then by refusing to receive from another, we are denying ourselves and others a certain abundance.

We can say, then, that the "home" from which Christians offer hospitality, God's household or *oikos*,[31] reflects an economy that differs from our market economy, which operates on assumptions of scarcity and savings. God's *oikos* rather rests on the assumption of superabundance, one in which there is no need to hoard and save. This abundance is reflected in the well-known biblical stories where God provides daily manna in the wilderness, and loaves and fish for the multitudes. Gerhard Lohfink argues in fact that the fish and loaves parable, in the way it orders the people in groups, recalls the manna in the wilderness story.[32] The abundance of God's provisions in these biblical stories points not only to the continuity of God's hospitality across time, but also proleptically to the abundance of life itself, which becomes reality after Easter. Even death cannot make of life a scarce commodity. Thus Lohfink rightly claims, "Excess, wealth, and profligate luxury are thus the signs of the time of salvation – not economy, meagerness, wretchedness, and neediness. Why is that so? – because God is overflowing Life itself, and because God's whole desire is to share that life. God's love is beyond all measure, and God's gifts to human beings are not measured by their good behavior or deservingness."[33]

Such extravagant hospitality draws people together without obliterating their differences. Indeed the uniqueness of each person is necessary so that there will be a fuller abundance, a genuine giving to another and receiving of what we do not already have. To refer back to James' analogy, a hotel with a common corridor through which people merely pass fails to grasp the extravagance and abundance of this hospitality. It is perhaps best captured by a household (*oikos*), the heart of which is a large common table, where strangers are welcome, and food and wine are generously shared.[34] Since such hospitality is parasitic on an understanding of our lives as gifts, the proper end or *telos* of hospitality is imitating and participating in God's own hospitality to us. As is well-known, of course, early Christians enacted, and continue to enact, this participation in God's hospitality through the celebration of a common meal, the Eucharist.

The Hope of Hospitality: A Possibility in Our Current Context?

To relate this practice of hospitality more fully to a post-critical ethic in our current context, it would be instructive to revisit MacIntyre in light of the practice of hospitality, as described above. As indicated earlier, MacIntyre's profound description of our modern moral dilemma, his disquieting suggestion, was influenced by the beginning of Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*. But what about the ending of Miller's novel? How does

MacIntyre's resolution compare? I shall suggest that the ending of Miller's tale provides us with important insights into the practice of hospitality, resources that even MacIntyre himself does not fully take into consideration.

MacIntyre ends *After Virtue* with a chapter titled, "After Virtue: Nietzsche or Aristotle, Trotsky and St Benedict." In this chapter, MacIntyre asks whether we can recover a shared conception of the good and of the narrative unity of a moral tradition *or* whether we must accept Nietzsche's conclusion that morality is simply a disguise for the will to power? Given the fact that, as MacIntyre argues, advanced capitalism lacks the political and economic structures to sustain an Aristotelian understanding of the moral life, it would seem we have little hope for the recovery of such a tradition. MacIntyre maintains, however, that his solution does not commit him to a "generalized social pessimism." We must now cease to shore up the *imperium*, our current political structure, and instead foster new forms of communities "within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us."[35] Since MacIntyre does not elaborate on whether these communities exist or, if not, how one might develop such a community, his solution might well sound utopian. Elsewhere, however, MacIntyre defends himself against such a charge. In *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry*, he states that his proposal for a new form of community, a postliberal university of constrained disagreements,[36] is not utopian because, first, something like this has already existed (the University of Paris in the thirteenth century). Secondly, the charge of utopianism is "sometimes best understood more as a symptom of the condition of those who level it," of their failure to imagine a genuine alternative to the current predicament, or even to see this as a predicament.[37]

While MacIntyre defends himself against utopianism as well as pessimism, he does not fully extricate himself from these charges, it seems to me. At a recent conference at the University of Notre Dame on the "culture of death," MacIntyre again insightfully diagnosed our modern dilemma, repeating many of the important themes in his published works: moral belief is construed purely in terms of personal choice, the self-created "individual" has replaced character formation as constitutive of identity, and compartmentalization has fragmented our lives such that adaptability is the new virtue and inflexibility the new vice. Further, MacIntyre noted that whereas earlier debates took place in societies that shared standards and attitudes, since we now lack these our modern forms of public debate are generally *counter-productive*. When asked whether or not the public participation and intervention of someone like Pope John Paul II had been counter-productive, MacIntyre responded that Pope John Paul's service had been to provide "those who were lacking it an idiom," a rhetoric for those who were already in agreement with him. While this has been an important task, MacIntyre noted, it has not significantly altered our impoverished forms of public conversation.[38]

An emphasis on our public efforts to engage another as generally counter-productive would seem to make the public practice of hospitality – the possibility of a genuine giving and receiving from the stranger – unlikely. It might well be that MacIntyre's philosophy is more focused on analyzing our current situation (certainly a crucial task) than it is on proposing or developing alternatives. Even so, if hospitality is to serve as a "post-critical dwelling place," we need to consider *how* such a practice might be a possibility in our current context. *What* might it look like?

To respond to these questions, let us now turn to the powerful ending of Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*. In Part Three of Miller's novel, *Fiat Voluntas Tua* (Thy Will be Done), we discover that the scientific fragments have been recovered and placed into a coherent schema so that once again science makes sense. Civilization, no longer "barbaric" (Part One), has not only passed through a renaissance (Part 2) but has now

"advanced" to the point where atomic destruction has become a real threat once again. The story that clearly dominates the culture in Part Three is the "scientific story": understandings of the good are read in light of scientific technological solutions. So, for example, local authorities have set up euthanizing centers to extend "mercy" to those suffering from radiation poisoning due to the nuclear fallout. In one telling exchange, the euthanizing Doctor Cors confronts Father Zerchi, the abbot of the order:

> "Listen Father. They sit there and they look at you. Some scream. Some cry. Some just sit there. All of theme say, 'Doctor, what can I do?' And what am I supposed to answer? Say nothing? Say, 'You can die, that's all.' What would you say?"
> "'Pray.'"
> "Yes, you would, wouldn't you? Listen, pain is the only evil I know about. It's the only one I can fight."
> "Then God help you."
> "Antibiotics help me more."[39]

Clearly, the narrative embodied in the person of Doctor Cors – one that witnesses to the triumph of death rather than life – appears to have won the day.

We need to remember, however, that Miller has titled this section "Thy Will Be Done," an indicator that Doctor Cors will not get the final word. As the nuclear war is about to destroy civilization, Miller has two significant things happen. First, the Church carries forward with its plan to send a spaceship into outer space to preserve a small human colony. Those who are to make the trip include bishops, priests, monks and children.

But secondly, and I think more importantly, Miller develops the strange character of a certain bicephalous woman, Mrs. Grales, a grotesque reminder of the effects of an earlier nuclear fallout. Throughout the final section of the novel, Mrs. Grales pleads with Father Zerchi to baptize her other lifeless head, which she has named Rachel. He declines, claiming it a matter for "your parish and diocese." In the final scenes of the novel, as Father Zerchi is hearing Mrs. Grales' confession, a nuclear bomb strikes. As Father Zerchi lies dying, the buzzards circling, he discovers that while Mrs. Grales' "head" has died, Rachel has come to life, watching him "with cool green eyes and [smiling] innocently."[40] He makes an effort to baptize her but she leans "quickly away from him. Her smile froze and vanished. *No!* her whole countenance seemed to shout." Then, Rachel offers him, despite his initial refusal, the wafer and wine. Miller continues:

> She used no conventional gestures, but the reverence with which she had handled it convinced him of one thing: *she sensed the Presence under the veils*. She who could not yet use words nor understand them, had done what she had as if by *direct instruction*, in response to his attempt at conditional baptism.
> He tried to refocus his eyes to get another look at the face of this being, who by gestures alone had said to him: I do not need your *first* Sacrament, Man, but I am worthy to convey to you *this* Sacrament of Life.[41]

Father Zerchi, as he draws his final breath, weeps in gratitude that "he had seen primal innocence in those eyes, and a promise of resurrection. One glimpse had been a bounty…,"[42] a passage that recalls Simeon's seeing the baby Jesus before his death (Luke 2:25-32).

What are we to make of this mysterious ending? Theologian Ralph Wood notes that Rachel "seems thus to be a figure of the remnant church that God raises up even when the world collapses. This Rachel is indeed a dispenser rather than a receiver of grace, as she places the final viaticum in the dying abbot's hand…this new Rachel embodies the hope that can save the world because it is the hope that dissolves all bitterness…It comes whenever the saving words are pronounced…Thy will be done."[43] Wood is right to note that the hope that presents itself at the end of the novel, in the person of Rachel, lies not simply in human action (we do not know the final outcome of the spaceship) but in the purposeful action of God with a concrete people: Rachel and Fr. Zerchi.

How does this ending compare to MacIntyre? MacIntyre, of course, puts forward a philosophical analysis that in some ways does not lend itself to a neat comparison with a piece of creative fiction. Even so, we can see that the formation of the spaceship community is a possible example of what MacIntyre has in mind when he states we need new forms of community that no longer shore up the *imperium*.[44] At the same time, however, we might note that the spaceship has to *leave* the world, thus lending some credence to those who would call such communities utopian.

Yet what about Miller's bicephalous woman? It is clearly in the story of Rachel that Miller's tale unfolds as one of hope in the midst of despair, rather than one of utopianism or pessimism. And the hope Miller describes is rooted in God's own hospitality. As Miller recounts, Rachel has been *given* the preternatural gifts of Eden, "those gifts which Man had been trying to seize by brute force again from Heaven since first he lost them."[45] It is through Rachel, a fellow creature, that God offers Father Zerchi his presence in the bread and wine – the body and blood of Christ – and in the promise of resurrection. Father Zerchi gratefully receives God's abundant hospitality: "one glimpse had been a *bounty*, and he wept with *gratitude*."[46]

In comparing MacIntyre to Miller at this point, it seems as if the narrative of which MacIntyre himself bemoans the loss does not *fully appear* in MacIntyre's own thinking.[47] As MacIntyre himself acknowledges, even if we are able to "out narrate" our opponents, it often does not seem to matter, i.e., public debate seems counter-productive. Others continue to be aesthetic Nietzscheans, or Enlightenment emotivists, and people retreat into solidarity with those who already agree with them. Even Miller's tale registers this dark pessimism as the priest's attempt to "out-narrate" the doctor does not work. Civilization continues on its same destructive path.

At this point, however, we can turn to the Jewish theologian Michael Wyschogrod who reminds us of a key point central to both the Jewish and Christian tradition: "…the redeemer whom God sends is not a brilliant orator but a stutterer who seems least fit to persuade the tyrant to let the people go… it is God and not the talent of his messenger that deserves praise." In the novel, hope rests not in the "rational" people but appears in the least likely of places, the bicephalous woman, who stutters and who to all appearances seems irrational. What is the relation between this hope and the practice of hospitality? Wyschogrod continues: "The deepest sign of the presence of God, the fundamental reason for the wonder that is evoked by all contact with the spirit, is the occurrence of the unexpected. Salvation comes from unexpected quarters, at unexpected times, and through *unexpected agents*…"[48] Wyschogrod rightly reminds us that genuine hospitality always involves welcoming the *stranger,* someone who may not be able or inclined to reason as we do. Such hospitality is sustained not by human ingenuity but by the promise that through this practice the "hosts" will encounter the presence of God, a presence which might well be as discomforting and it is comforting.

Such hospitality does not fit on the pessimism/utopianism grid. Certainly in our welcoming of the stranger we seek to engage her in debate, to have discussion about the good, etc. In fact, as Reinhard Hütter importantly notes, hospitality and honoring the truth are practices that require each other.[49] Such hospitality is admittedly difficult and might even be painful. The guest or host (roles which are fluid when hospitality is rightly practiced) might refuse the truth and even seek to annihilate it, as in the case of martyrdom. Even so, wherever and whenever we live with the conviction that our lives and callings are gifts from a gracious God, we have no "choice" but to practice hospitality. This is because the "fiduciary" framework is not the solitary individual, nor is it our human effort to achieve peace. Rather the dwelling place that sustains genuine hospitality is the life of God. Thus while I agree with MacIntyre on the need for "new forms of community within which the moral life could be sustained," I would add that these need to be communities of hospitality sustained by faithful worship of God.[50]

In conclusion, the post-critical practice of hospitality enables us to turn from the modern autonomous choosing subject, and not only turn but see this subject for what it is: a modern piece of fiction that has blinded us to all of the giving and receiving that constitutes our lives. Hospitality thus enables us to truly engage others, not by means of some abstract foundation, but in and through our particularity, even as we trust that God's grace is present in the "stranger." Such a post-critical dwelling place calls for us to rely upon our incarnate place in the world, just as God relied upon the incarnation to make Himself more fully known. It also calls for us, again in imitation of God as Trinity, to have the courage to be willing to give and receive from another.[51]

Endnotes

[1] William H. Poteat, *A Philosophical Daybook, Post-Critical Investigations* (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1990), p. 5.

[2] Poteat uses this term throughout his published works. See especially *Polanyian Meditations, In Search of a Post-Critical Logic* (Durham, NC: Duke University, 1985).

[3] My turn to practices as a way to understand ethics "post-critically" is influenced by the work of Stanley Hauerwas, James McClendon and Ludwig Wittgenstein, among others, though I do not cite them specifically.

[4] For a discussion of the connection between MacIntyre and *A Canticle for Leibowitz,* see Ralph Wood, "Lest the World's Amnesia Be Complete: A Reading of Walter Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*," in *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 27:1 (Spring 2000), pp. 83-97. Wood also provides an excellent theological analysis of Miller's novel.

[5] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1984), p. 5.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[7] Murray Jardine nicely summarizes the impact of an Enlightenment epistemology as follows: "The application of the Enlightenment model of acceptable knowledge has thus had the effect of progressively shrinking the domain of intelligible human experience. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, what is now called 'religious belief' conflicted with the model of exact, impersonal knowledge and was relegated to the realm of mere opinion; by the late nineteenth century, morality, which the Enlightenment philosophers had thought could be placed on a firm, secular footing by skeptical rationalism, was in serious danger of becoming a matter of subjective value; and by the mid-twentieth century it had become an open question whether even the hardest sciences could meaningfully be described as objective," in *Speech and Political Practice, Recovering the Place of Human Responsibility* (New York: SUNY, 1998), p. 2.

[8] Cited by Dennis O'Brien, "The Disappearing Moral Curriculum," *The Key Reporter* 62:4 (Summer 1997), p. 4, my emphasis.

[9] In saying this, I do not mean to obscure the fact that how we understand which "facts" should be taught today is a hotly contested issue.

[10] Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 35.

[11] As Nicholas Boyle observes, "The market does not concern itself with whether my choice is rational, whether

it is identical or consistent with choices I made yesterday or may make tomorrow, nor does it concern itself with any purposes I may have in making my choice, or any consequences of my choice insofar as these do not themselves involve further market decisions," in *Who Are We Now? Christian Humanism and the Global market from Hegel to Heaney* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1998), p. 153.

[12]Alasdair MacIntrye, Lecture, Culture of Death Conference, University of Notre Dame, October 13, 2000. A video tape of this lecture is available from the Notre Dame Center for Ethics and Culture.

[13]As quoted by George Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (New York: Oxford, 1997), p. 45. Marsden at this point is not criticizing James, but finds his image "quite congenial."

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 47.

[15] Stanley Hauerwas makes a similar point when he notes that James assumed "that the hotel corridor he imagined could be maintained nonviolently. Yet we have learned that no such corridor exists, even in universities," in *With the Grain of the Universe, The Church's Witness and Natural Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2001), p. 86.

[16]As Murray Jardine notes, pluralist cultures are not really pluralist anyway. They have been characterized by the dominance of scientific rationalism in early stages and watered down Nietzchean aestheticism more recently, representing the Enlightenment model both in its prime and decadence (in Jardine, personal correspondence).

[17]As Nicholas Boyle again insightfully observes, "Those who speak different idioms in the (post-) modern pluralist academy cannot talk to each other, and usually do not want to. No wonder the spokespersons in the administration buildings find it difficult to explain to the inquiring outsider why they are all *there*, and that is the most literal sense: why these windowless professional non-communicators need to be housed side by side on the same, no doubt expensive, humanities campus," in *Ibid.*, p. 150.

[18]William T. Cavanaugh, " 'A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House': The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State, " in *Modern Theology* 11 (October, 1995), p. 409. Cavanaugh is discussing Kant's philosophy of the State as the guarantor of peace.

[19]Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1988), p. 350.

[20]Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge, Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1962), p. 54-55.

[21]William H. Poteat, *Recovering the Ground, Critical Exercises in Recollection* (New York: SUNY, 1994), p. 193.

[22]*Ibid.*, p. 210.

[23] Nicholas Lash, "Contemplation, Metaphor and Real Knowledge," unpublished paper, delivered at "Knowing God, Christ and Nature in the Post-Positivistic Era," Symposium, University of Notre Dame (April 14-17, 1993), p. 4.

[24] From this perspective, even the Enlightenment (its condescension of myth to the contrary) feeds off of *myth* and relies upon a *liturgical reenactment*. See especially William H. Poteat, *A Philosophical Daybook,* p. 89.

[25] Reinhard Hütter notes that hospitality as well as honoring the truth "are practices held in high regard by many people. Indeed, one might claim that they are - if not universally practiced – at least widely acknowledged as central to human life." He locates this observation theologically in "the distinction (*not* dichotomy) between God's economy of creation and God's economy of salvation." See his "Hospitality and Truth: The Disclosure of Practices in Worship and Doctrine," in Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass, eds. *Practicing Theology, Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), p. 206. I return to Hütter's fine analysis later in this essay.

[26] In the first *midrash*, only when God threatens to drop Mount Sinai on the Israelites if they refuse the Torah do they respond, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do and we will hear." In the second interpretation, God offers the Torah to many other nations, but they all refuse. As recounted in Stephen J. Einstein and Lydia Kukoff, *Every Person's Guide to Judaism* (NY: UAHC, 1989), p. 10.

[27] My emphasis. The fuller context is as follows: "…I do attribute to Hitler the insight that killing Jews drives God out of the world. Hitler's hatred of the Jews was not rooted in the 'normal' criminal's desire to obtain the land, property, or personal service of his victim. History is full of conflicts over property and territory and of the enslavement of one people by another. In all such conflicts, surrender yields peace. Slaves were exploited and not murdered as long as they were useful. Nazi murder of Jews was not driven by any interpretation of self-interest – however distorted – but by the desire to achieve a world without Jews, who were seen as the embodiment of evil. Nazi antisemitism therefore had a theological dimension,"

in Michael Wyschogrod, *The Body of Faith* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1996), p. xxix.

[28] As quoted in Amy Oden, ed., *And You Welcomed Me, A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press), p. 45.

[29] For a fuller discussion of Christians as a diaspora people, see Barry A. Harvey, *Another City, An Ecclesiological Primer for a Post-Christian World* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1999), especially Chapter 5, "Madness, Truth and Diaspora: The Post-Christendom Form of the Church as *Altera Civitas*," pp. 135-165.

[30] Henri Nouwen, "Hospitality," in *Monastic Studies* 10 (Easter 1974), p. 26.

[31] For the connection between economics and household see Sharon Daloz Parks, "Household Economics." She notes, "Like the words *ecumenical* and *ecology*, *economics* is rooted in the Greek word *oikos*, meaning household, and signifies the management of the household – arranging what is necessary for well-being," in Dorothy Bass, ed., *Practicing Our Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), p. 44.

[32] Lohfink states that "they sat down is groups of one-hundreds and fifties" clearly refers to Exodus 18:25, which "describes the order of the camp of the people of God on their way through he wilderness," in *Does God Need the Church? Toward a Theology of the People of God* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 147.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 149. Lohfink importantly adds that the superabundance of God's grace appears precisely in the "weakness and distress of the faithful in order that it may be clear that the overflowing fullness of glory comes not from human strength, but from God alone," p. 150.

[34] The common meal is, of course, a practice that crosses traditions and cultures. In analyzing 1 Corinthians 11:20-22, a passage about early Christians failing to celebrate the Lord's Supper truthfully, Lohfink notes that in antiquity "there was a well-known form of the common meal called *eranos* at which the host only provided the space but not the food. Each brought to the meal what she or he had and ate of what all had brought. We have the same practice; it is what Americans call the potluck," in Lohfink, p. 256.

[35] *After Virtue*, p. 263.

[36] Such a university, MacIntyre maintains, will support systematic debate about standards of rational justification among rival traditions, such as the Thomistic and genealogical. The "winner" of such debate will be the tradition that can resolve problems posed by a particular tradition which that tradition is unable to resolve within its own system of thought.

[37] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1990), pp. 234-235.

[38] MacIntyre, Culture of Death Conference, op. cit.

[39] Walter M. Miller, *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (New York: Bantam), p. 275.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 309.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 311.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 312.

[43] Wood, p. 97.

[44] Wood draws this connection, p. 85.

[45] Miller, p. 312.

[46] *Ibid.*, my emphasis.

[47] It might well be that the full implications of Christian theology do not appear in MacIntyre's thought because of the kind of distinction he draws between philosophy and theology. MacIntyre argues that the integrative tasks of philosophy, rightly understood, "can be carried out only by rational enquiry, independently of faith and revealed truths, enabling enquirers to understand how the specialized disciplines contribute to, but cannot themselves supply an understanding of the overall order of things…And there is a second set of tasks that can be carried out only by enquiry into the bearing of revealed truths, truths to be acknowledged only by faith, on the work of the university. These are the tasks of theology, rightly understood," in "Catholic Universities: dangers, hopes, choices," Lecture delivered at the University of Notre Dame, October 13-14, 1999, p. 5. I find it misleading, however, to talk about an intellectual space, or a space of inquiry, that is independent of faith and revealed truths. All philosophy draws, even if not explicitly, from some kind of theology. My concern with MacIntyre at this point is that his philosophy fails to draw as fully as it could from a Christian future or eschatology, a future which is as present to us as is our past, which MacIntyre so hopes to reclaim

[48] Wyschogrod, p. 231, my emphasis.

[49] In discussing C.S. Lewis's *The Great Divorce,* Hütter observes: "..acknowledging and therefore receiving, the

truth of who and whose one is liberates one for genuine hospitality. Yet because the inhabitants of Twilight City lack this truth, they are intensely absorbed in themselves – the self-absorption of a void in search of a substance. They want to grasp and own what can only be received as a gift: the gift of a self transparent to the truth that it owes its existence not to itself, but rather to the Giver of Life. Honoring this truth in its constant reception is what makes the self open to the other, to genuine hospitality," in "Hospitality and Truth," p. 209.

[50]Examples of such communities of hospitality include, among others, the Catholic Worker Houses of Hospitality for the poor and homeless (founded by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin); Brother Roger's ecumenical Taize community in France; and the L'Arche communities for mentally handicapped (founded by Jean Vanier). In addition, a number of people (myself included) are exploring the relevance of hospitality for higher education. See Aurilee Hagstrom, Richard Kyte, Scott Moore, Elizabeth Newman and Amy Oden, *Hospitality and the Christian College* (forthcoming).

[51]I am grateful to Paul Lewis for his insightful comments on an earlier draft of this essay.

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REVIEWS

Philip A. Rolnick, ed., *Explorations in Ethics*. Greensboro, NC: Greensboro College Press, 1998. Pp. xix + 231. ISBN: 0-9667374-0-7.

This collection of essays revolves around the Ethics Across the Curriculum program at Greensboro College, a United Methodist affiliated liberal arts institution located in Greensboro, NC. These essays, originally produced in faculty training seminars, represent the first fruits of the program, which began in 1995. The contributions, which come from Greensboro College faculty and scholars who have been guest lecturers for the program, have been arranged into three sections. The first contains an introductory article that asks and answers the question, "What is Ethics?" The second section of the book contains a range of perspectives on Christian ethics, with essays that focus on love, ethics in Methodism, the Golden Rule and covenant. These essays represent the disciplines of Biblical Studies, Theology, Philosophy and Theological Ethics, respectively. The final section of the book contains essays written by faculty members from "across the curriculum." Disciplines represented in this section include Economics, Education, English, Fine Arts, Foreign Languages and History.

As is true with any collection of essays, the authors present a considerable variety of perspectives. On the whole, however, it is fair to say that this book has more affinities to virtue or character ethics than to either deontological or teleological orientations. Over half of the essays explicitly touch on themes associated with character ethics. Rolnick offers an extended and approving discussion of Aristotelian excellence (5ff). Rolnick, Tatum and McCoy all suggest that love is the central Christian "virtue." Wattles argues that the Golden Rule is a valuable tool for moral formation. Rolnick and McCoy stress the fact that character/ ethics is formed in community with others rather than in isolation from others. Crane offers a character study and McElveen sheds historical light on the virtues thought necessary for a ruler.

Ethics Across the Curriculum clearly also represents post-modern and post-critical sensibilities. It is post-modern in the sense that the essays are polyphonic. As noted above, there are indeed thematic affinities between many of the essays, but no single, unified expression emerges from the work. In fact, contrasting perspectives are allowed to sit side by side (e.g. Cheatham and Hebert). Another way in which the book is post-modern is its emphasis on the particular. Thus essayists tend to begin with a particular religious tradition (Methodist for Langford and Tatum), a particular case in medical ethics (Sasser), a specified historical periods (McElveen) or a biography (Crane). The essays are post-critical, as well, in that they simply do not celebrate the particular, but try to learn from it. Nor do many of the essayists give up on shared standards of conduct, the existence of truth and the possibilities of doing ethics (see Keck, Rolnick and McCoy, in particular).

Aside from the range of perspectives, discussion questions add to the book's utility for the classroom. Of course, some essays are stronger and more self-critical than others. In some, the connection between the topic and "ethics" is explicit, at other times the connection is unstated or left to be inferred. The main drawback to the book, as I see it, is that the conversation did not include representatives from the natural sciences or political science. That, however, is largely a function of the pool of faculty who participated in the original seminars. Overall, the book ably demonstrates the multi-disciplinary, "liberal arts" character of ethics. It will be useful for illustrating the problems and possibilities of holding discussions of ethics across the curriculum.

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Polanyi Society Membership

Tradition and Discovery is distributed to members of the Polanyi Society. This periodical supercedes a newsletter and earlier mini-journal published (with some gaps) by the Polanyi Society since the mid seventies. The Polanyi Society has members in thirteen different countries though most live in North America and the United Kingdom. The Society includes those formerly affiliated with the Polanyi group centered in the United Kingdom which published *Convivium: The United Kingdom Review of Post-critical Thought*. There are normally three issues of *TAD* each year.

Annual membership in the Polanyi Society is $25 ($10 for students) beginning in the fall of 2002. The membership cycle follows the academic year; subscriptions are due September 1 to Phil Mullins, Missouri Western State College, St. Joseph, MO 64507 (fax: 816-271-5680, e-mail: mullins@mwsc.edu). Please make checks payable to the Polanyi Society. Dues can be paid by credit card by providing the card holder's name as it appears on the card, the card number and expiration date. Changes of address and inquiries should be sent to Mullins. New members should provide the following subscription information: complete mailing address, telephone (work and home), e-mail address and/or fax number. Institutional members should identify a department to contact for billing. The Polanyi Society attempts to maintain a data base identifying persons interested in or working with Polanyi's philosophical writing. New members can contribute to this effort by writing a short description of their particular interests in Polanyi's work and any publications and /or theses/ dissertations related to Polanyi's thought. Please provide complete bibliographic information. Those renewing membership are invited to include information on recent work.