Morality: Emergentist Ethics and Virtue *For Itself*

Charles Lowney

Key words: post-critical epistemology, meta-ethics, emergentist ethics, virtue, tradition, utilitarianism, deontology, moral psychology, tacit knowing, emergent being.

New moral ways of being are answers to fundamental problems in the human condition regarding the best way to be and the best way to be with each other. Entering a new way of being entails crossing a logical gap into a new interpretive framework. Michael Polanyi's from-to structure of knowing and discovery is used to show both how we can acquire the state of the good person through an imitation of their behaviors and why those behaviors must be practiced for themselves. The good person experiences a happiness that the person pursuing happiness as a goal cannot fully understand. One thus practices virtues, and heeds their codification into law, not for the sake of one's own happiness, but for the sake of the happiness of the person one will become.

In a paper titled "From Science to Morality: A Polanyian Perspective on the Spirit and the Letter of the Moral Law" (*TAD*, 36:1 [2009-2010]: 42-54), I embarked on a Polanyian exploration of moral philosophy by presenting an answer to the riddle posed by a tension between the letter and the spirit of the law. Here in this paper I continue to develop this emergentist moral philosophy by solving the riddle of why we must practice virtues *for themselves*, when virtues are purportedly designed to bring about the goal of happiness. In "From Morality to Spirituality," a third and final paper in this series to be published in a later *TAD* issue, I will explore how Michael Polanyi's notions of tacit knowing and emergent being can apply to the problem of whether or not there is an ultimate fixed goal towards which we are developing.

To solve the first riddle, I showed how an extension of Polanyi's post-critical epistemology of tacit knowing into ethics produces strong similarities to Aristotelian virtue ethics, with its reliance on practical wisdom developed through experience. This epistemological-ethical framework also brought forward a role for sentiments and intuitions as tacitly conditioned guides capable of validating moral knowledge. Polanyi's concepts of commitment and universal intent also conveyed the importance of Kantian aspects of moral knowing and displayed an objective content that could command our assent. A picture began to form of how different moral theories fit together by the light of Polanyi's conceptions of tacit knowing and emergent being. Solving the second riddle will now provide a richer picture of how consequentialist and deontological ethics may come together and be surpassed.

According to Polanyi's structure of tacit inference, background clues are integrated into a focal meaning, which then may act as a lens or "interpretive framework" by which particular actions are understood. Furthermore, this integration in knowing can reflect an integration in being. By looking at Polanyi's approach to discovery in science, I proposed that the way of being of the good person was the emergent answer to questions in the community or tradition about the best way to live. The good person sets the standard, and principles or explicit rules are important but incomplete expressions of his or her way of being.

In "From Science to Morality," I focused on Polanyi's conception of knowing as a skill based in tacit knowledge and the heuristic nature of the question which drives the emergence of an answer. Here I will build

on these conceptions and also develop Polanyi's intentional, *from-to* structure of experience to answer some problems Aristotle leaves us with (e.g., How do *we* know who the good person is? Why should we perform virtues *for themselves*? What conditions are required for happiness?). In "From Morality to Spirituality," I will raise questions that Aristotle does not address (e.g., Given the structure of moral discovery, what can be said about spirituality?). Polanyi's notion of how interpretive frameworks shift and develop without one antecedent eternally fixed *telos*, will point beyond Aristotle's conservative approach and allow more radical possibilities for moral development and spiritual transformation.

I. The Evolution of Achievements: Moral Emergence

Polanyi's understanding of emergence and discovery allows for the possibility of moral, as well as biological, evolution or change. Just as a particular person can have questions that drive him forward in search of truth, a particular society can have questions that drive it forward in its development. By looking at the process of personal discovery and the manner in which entire interpretive frameworks can shift, we will begin to see how new, discontinuous developments can take place at the individual, social and historical levels. Traditions have longstanding questions that drive them and humanity in general has its fundamental questions, and, when answers come, they can be far-reaching and transformative.

1. Heuristic Achievements Leap Across a Logical Gap

What Polanyi shows us in his *epagoge* from experience to principles that Aristotle does not is the extent to which heuristic striving crosses a "logical gap" (*PK*, 125).[1] For Polanyi, subsidiary clues that are logically incompatible at a lower level of meaning can be integrated in a joint focal meaning by which they are coherently comprehended. This structure is exhibited in the performance of a skill, the development of concepts and conceptions, and in basic cognition. An example is the way in which images from two eyes are integrated in the joint meaning of three dimensional vision. We will now see how this same sort of achievement happens when one makes an important discovery, both at the level of individuals and at the level of societies.

Polanyi develops Poincare's stages of discovery to show how truly novel advances are made. First, there is the emergence of the question. An engaging problem itself can reflect a dissonance between the present structure for understanding, and a structure by which the answer can be obtained. Second, there is a stage of conscious striving. Information is collected and ideas are explored. This sets the imagination to work. The seeker, fully engaged in the problem, with a focus on the solution, has "anticipatory intuitions" which guide the search (" Creative Imagination"[*Society, Economics and Philosophy: Selected Papers, Michael Polanyi*], 262; *KB*, 149). But then there can come the dark night of the soul in which all understanding appears to be lost. At this stage, the normal ways that clues or information are integrated into focal meanings have broken down. Finally, in the successful search, there is the *Eureka!* moment, when the answer appears, as if on its own. The old clues and the new have re-formed, some take on less significance, some take on more. The prior system of meanings changes as the novel integration provides the new lens from which the answer to the question becomes apparent.

This model of creative discovery, which Polanyi uses to describe the emergence of new interpretive structures in science, also describes the emergence of moral knowledge in a tradition or culture, with the proviso that moral knowledge affects the person more comprehensively (*PK*, 215).

Moral laws and maxims that guide behavior are essential for an apprentice. If the novice is *seeking* a new way of being that has emerged as a moral discovery, he *cannot understand* experiences and events properly from his *current* tacit background and his current integration from clues to focal comprehensions and back. He cannot fully understand the explicit statements made by the moral exemplar or the laws that attempt to express that way of being. Only after he has come to authentically embody the new principles himself, i.e., after he has leapt across a logical gap—that "dark night" in which his old framework collapses—can he understand the meaning of the prior activities that he engaged in as an apprentice to that way of life.

In contrast to Aristotle's conservative approach, the strong parallel Polanyi makes between intellectual and moral knowing leaves open the possibility of radical developments on the order of scientific revolutions. The entire interpretive framework of moral understanding can shift. In the realm of intellectual achievements, paradigm shifts can be of the order of a Copernican revolution, or the shift from Newtonian to Einsteinian physics. In moral achievements, these shifts can be epoch-making transformations of personal or historical consciousness, such as a shift in moral conceptions from those that allowed for slavery to those that see it as a great evil. As the transition is made, the explicit expressions of one comprehensive doctrine are now understood in the light of the meaning generated by a new comprehensive doctrine. And so the statement of a principle, such as "All men are created equal" receives a new meaning in the new moral framework.

Alasdair MacIntyre's work charts such developments in history, both within a tradition and between traditions, in a manner consistent with Polanyi's insights. He provides an example of the shift in framework that took place in the development from the Homeric virtues to the virtues of the *polis* of classical Greece.[2] He also shows how the intersection of two incommensurable traditions can be combined in a creative synthesis that leaps across that logical gap to bring a new understanding. He describes how Augustine's Platonic view of Christianity came together with Aristotelian philosophy in Aquinas' theology. It is particularly important to note, as MacIntyre does, that when a shift in moral framework occurs the same words can be used with a new meaning. This is natural, since from the vantage point of the seeker who becomes the innovator, the new meaning can be seen as the fulfillment and realization of what the old concepts and their signs were striving toward; for instance, Plato's "Good" becomes identified with the Christian God in Augustine's understanding. This shows us that words like "courage," "justice" and "love" are likely to have different meanings for the moral novice, than for the moral virtuoso, especially if that virtuoso is displaying a way of life that is a Herculean achievement, which has yet to find the behavioral and structural support of a shared community.

As a tradition achieves a new comprehensive response to old and new challenges, the conception of *who* the excellent person is will change. Aristotle proposes such a development synchronically, distinguishing the life of pleasure, the life of honor and the life of contemplation, but that development may also be construed diachronically as an evolution of discovery. Just as Polanyi places living beings in a hierarchy of achievement, so there might be answers to the best way to live that mark important accomplishments in an emerging human consciousness. It is thus possible that the moral exemplars of an age exhibit the objectively best way of life for that area, that era, or for humanity at large in that stage of its formation.

2. Recognizing the Excellent Person

Polanyi's understanding of the question as a heuristic that calls forth an answer, applies not only to remembering a name, or making a scientific discovery, but also to the moral and aesthetic dimensions of our lives

at individual, social and historical levels. Such answers are not always amenable to discursive explanations, e.g., a symbol, a poem, or even a person may fit as an answer that satisfies the restlessness excited by an explicit or a subliminal but driving question. The moral virtuoso embodies an answer to questions about living that are more comprehensive than intellectual questions. But how do *we*, who are novices or at best competent, recognize the excellent, good person? Polanyi may help Aristotle here.

Customs, laws, and moral principles are explicit expressions of tacit knowledge, but like a craft's rules and techniques, they bring about a goal of living well, and so are subordinate to that goal. We are trained in society's customs and laws, just as the virtuous person is. We share in a form of life common to human beings and we share the same special knowledge of our culture and tradition (*PK*, 375). We can recognize the excellent person, not because we are all excellent people, but because we share so much of the background knowledge and the heuristic striving of our society. Just as a scientist, who is working toward a solution to a problem can recognize when he, or a fellow scientist, is following clues in the right direction to find an answer, we too can (or *should*) recognize an action as good and be able to locate the moral exemplar as an answer to our comprehensive moral questions about the right way to live. The reformer who is an innovator is thus not always wrong in a tradition that values inquiry; she can be the herald of solutions to problems that have arisen and gripped the social conscience for generations.

As members of the same society, we are embroiled in the same questions. We can have anticipatory intuitions and recognize the proper direction in which to find an answer. Through our own moral passion we can recognize the virtuous person. This is why we can attempt to discover a sense of what the virtuous person would do in thought experiments, and we can affirm that course of action as right with universal intent, even if our habituated character does not make it easy for us to choose it with ease. Rather than being an actual person, the *phronomos* can be an ideal that acts as an effective procedure.[3] When we ask, "What would the virtuous person do?" we take the actions of the virtuous person and attempt to integrate them into a comprehensive whole that would show us how certain rules of action might apply in particular new cases. This, of course, does not always issue in what the virtuous person would actually do. Not only are we missing many actions that would provide background clues toward a correct frame of judgment, but the integration here is primarily an intellectual exercise and the resulting maxim is an external prescription rather than something that flows from a way of being.

The expert is still the best judge, but this does not mean that we cannot recognize when the virtuous person has fallen by the light of his own standards. As the Dalai Lama says….

> I normally recommend to Buddhist practitioners not to see every action of their spiritual teacher as divine or noble. There are specific, very demanding qualities that are required of a spiritual mentor. You don't simply say, 'It is good behavior because it is the guru's.' This is never done. You should recognize the unwholesome as being unwholesome.[4]

So we may trust the judgment of the expert, but not blindly, since we have our anticipatory insights as well. When the excellent person is not a member of our society or tradition, and we can still recognize her authority, we do so at a level at which we share a common background or aspirations with her society or with our deeper humanity; we appreciate the answer she provides to questions we have that arise from the human condition.

Aristotle does give us one general feature that helps us to locate the excellent person. The virtuous, excellent person lives in such a way that his or her life is a happy one. *Eudemonia*, blessedness or *happiness*,

is the end to which all other actions are subservient. Aristotle defines happiness as an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue over a complete life (NE,1098a16-19).[5] Happiness is not simply pleasure, but the happy person experiences the highest and best pleasures. This highest sort of pleasure is the affect of a way of being that expresses the excellences of character and intellect. The current use of the term "happiness" presents it as more of a sentiment than an enduring state. We can reconcile our use with Aristotle's somewhat by calling the pleasurable affect of the state of happiness "the experience of happiness" in a qualified sense, since the total experience would, among other things, involve the activity of the virtues, which those pleasures accompany.

So, if Aristotle is right, finding the virtuous person to whom we should apprentice ourselves would entail finding the person who we would rightfully consider happy or blessed.

II. Behavior and Consciousness are Integrated in a Way of Being

In this next section, we will look at the mechanism by which the moral apprentice might become a virtuous person. The way of being of the good person, i.e., the moral exemplar, becomes manifest in his or her actions. The actions, though they naturally flow from the good person (as if from spirit), can be assembled into maxims for action (laws) for the moral novice to follow as he seeks initiation into the expert's way of being. Dwelling in such actions can help one to achieve the state of being lived by the exemplar, but such actions necessarily form incomplete clues towards that transformative joint significance and they can be misdirected and misunderstood. Skillful means may therefore be required to transform the novice into the way of being of the moral virtuoso.

1. Knowing the Mind as an Integration of Behaviors

Skilled living is a way of being that is contiguous with actions/doings and affects/feelings. For Aristotle, the moral expert is happy; the virtuous person experiences *eudemonia*. Polanyi's way of understanding the body as clue to mind and mental states, shows that by doing what the master does we can better become like him, better understand him, and even experience as he experiences.

According to Polanyi, if we share enough background knowledge, then through someone's behavior we are capable of knowing his thoughts. Intelligent behaviors are clues which we can integrate tacitly and unify into the focal awareness of another person's mind. When we dwell in particular behaviors subsidiarily, when "we observe these particulars comprehensively, we are in fact focusing not on the behavior, but on the mind of which they are the workings" (*PK*, 373). In "The Logic of Tacit Inference," Polanyi says, "…the human mind works and dwells in a human body, and hence the mind can be known only as working and dwelling in a body. We can know it by dwelling in that body from the outside (*KB*, 152).

We can also better attend *from* a person's behavior to his mind by imitating his behavior. "Chess players enter into a master's thought by repeating the games he played. *We experience a man's mind as the joint meaning of his actions* by dwelling in them from the outside" (*KB*, 152). Dwelling in a set of intelligent behaviors can provide access to a way of thinking and, by extension, dwelling in set of moral behaviors can provide insight into a way of being.

Even in attacking behaviorism, Polanyi recognizes that behaviors provide important clues. "Thus the behaviourist analysis is intelligible only because it paraphrases, however crudely, the tacit integration which it pretends to replace" (*KB*,152). Polanyi acknowledges that simple descriptions or re-enactments of behavior are

inadequate to catch a higher-order phenomenon, such as mind, that supervene upon the behavior and other bodily clues. Similarly, our appreciation and performance of virtuous acts is inadequate to provide us with the state of being of the moral virtuoso. But, the behaviors are important clues. Just as the body and its actions are contiguous with the state of mind that supervenes upon them, so the virtuous behaviors are contiguous with the state of consciousness of the exemplar.

Religious ritual is a way of engaging in the behavior of the faithful and participating in ritual, according to Polanyi, can help one to experience a religious way of being. Polanyi says that ritual

> is potentially the highest degree of indwelling conceivable. For ritual comprises a sequence of things to be said and gestures to be made which involve the whole body and alert our whole existence. Anyone sincerely saying and doing these things in a place of worship could not fail to be completely absorbed in them. He would be partaking devoutly in religious life (*PK*, 198).

This seamlessness between the subsidiary clues (ritual actions) and focal experience (being engaged in worship) shows why acting "as if" one had faith, as Pascal advised, can assist a person in coming to genuinely have faith. It shows why imitating the master can lead one to become like the master, not just in affect but in substance.

2. Focus on the Unknown to Discover without Awareness

Along with behavioral clues, another important ingredient toward seeing what the virtuoso sees, and experiencing life the way the virtuoso does, is to fix one's intentions on a focus beyond the clues. This technique assists in the proper integration of those subsidiaries activities that act as clues.

In tacit knowing we move from tacit clues to focal knowledge. When the clues change or are differently integrated, the focal experience changes. It may happen that all the clues appear to be the same but are integrated differently into an alternate focal awareness. Polanyi uses the example of inverted spectacles. If one puts on spectacles that turn the world upside down, eventually one will reintegrate the same visual clues and be capable of moving masterfully through the world once again. We learn to function with what we see as if it were right-side up. We accomplish this re-integration by looking ahead to the new framework one cannot yet perceive, and not by attempting to relate particular clues in the framework in which they are currentlypresented.

> Telling ourselves that what we see above is really below may actually hinder our progress, since the meaning of the words we use is inappropriate. We must go on groping our way by sight and touch, and learn to get about this way. *Only by keeping our imagination fixed on the global result we are seeking, can we induce the requisite sensory re-integration and the accompanying conceptual innovation* ("Creative Imagination," 259, my italics).

Having the right questions and the right forward focus is part of what brings about the ability to shift into a new interpretive framework. Organizing the clues into the appropriate order involves establishing and experiencing the right focal intent.

In discussing how a scientist can have an anticipatory sense of the right direction in which to search for an answer, Polanyi introduces the notion of *subception*. Subception is "a process of learning without awareness" (*KB*,143). This is the way a dog or a person can be trained by being shocked or rewarded, without consciously realizing that his body is learning new behaviors. Polanyi reasons that if there is "learning without awareness" there is also "discovery without awareness, since discovery is but learning from nature" (*KB*,143). This form of subception accounts for how the scientist pursuing a question can come to guess correctly. He has "anticipations" that "contain a deepening sense of the nature of things and the facts that might serve as clues to a suspected coherence in nature" (*KB*,143). He has these anticipations and others do not because he is steeped in the question, focused on the goal of its answer, and he is tacitly as well as explicitly learning information that can bring about a solution.

Focusing on a goal, i.e., aiming toward the answer to the question, however nebulous, helps us to achieve the means of reaching the goal. This focus allows the subsidiary clues to fall into place differently than how we might explicitly engineer. We can gain a new perspective that solves problems by focusing ahead to the goal and letting this focus help re-arrange, re-rank order, and add to or subtract from the clues that go into the focal understanding.[6]

What is the focus when we are groping in search of an answer? Polanyi quotes Polya on mathematical discovery: "*Look at the unknown. Look at the conclusion*" (*PK*, 127, his italics). Polanyi says, "a heuristic striving evokes its own consummation" (*PK*, 127). The process, as Polanyi sees it, is similar to recalling 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 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* (*PK*, 127-128 , his italics).

To discover and live a new way of being—that of the virtuous person—the behaviors, i.e., the virtuous actions, will need to be understood in a way that is different from how we currently conceive them. Unlike simply remembering a forgotten name, discovering a new way of being is heuristic act that "leaps across a logical gap" (*PK*, 125) to provide a new interpretive framework. When the novice reaches his goal, the subsidiary clues—virtuous behaviors, and the moral rules—will be understood in the light of a different meaning.

III. Toward Transforming One's Way of Being: Rules Out of Duty and Virtues *For Themselves*

Rules are understood differently from below, by the apprentice, than from above, by the virtuous person. Rules bear content, but they function instrumentally. They are the explicit rendition of knowledge that acts subsidiarily in the goal of living right and well, hence they are guidelines and useful means to right and good actions. Similarly, performing such virtuous actions is a means to achieving happiness. Now that we have seen that the way of being of the virtuous person is a discovery, and we have seen how subception works to achieve

discoveries, we are in a position to see two reasons why virtues should be performed *for themselves*. Understanding the mechanism behind the reasons why virtues should be performed for themselves shows in what ways, from a Polanyian perspective, Kant is misguided in his emphasis on duty to the law, Mill misconceives the relation of the virtues to happiness, and Aristotle is most on target in approaching both the nature of the law and the role of virtue.

1. Happiness is Intrinsic to a Way of Being

Are virtues means to an end? Are they practiced in order to achieve a state of being that we call happiness? At one extreme, Kant and othe deontologists advocate performing virtuous acts, those in accord with the moral law, for their own sake and not for the sake of *any* benefit of pleasure or happiness. In sharp contrast, Mill and other utilitarians believe that virtues get their value from the consequences that they can generate. For Mill a virtue was originally a means to an end, rather than an end, or a part of the end, in itself.

> Virtue, according to Utilitarian doctrine, is not naturally and originally part of the end… There was no original desire of it, or motive to it, save its conduciveness to pleasure, and especially to protection from pain. But through the association thus formed it may be felt a good in itself, and desired as such with as great an intensity as any other good.[7]

Mill makes an analogy between practicing virtue for its own sake and the desire to accumulate wealth. Money initially has its value for the sake of the goods it can buy. Nonetheless, according to Mill, money can become strongly associated with the good ends it can procure, and in turn becomes valued as a good in itself. One might then enjoy the pursuit of money and enjoy attaining riches as much as one would enjoy the goods that money, as a means, could procure; similarly, the virtues brought good and pleasurable results. Courage, for example, brought victory in commerce and war, and so courage itself became valued, even when it showed no result. Although there are utiles to be gained in the simple performance of a virtuous act itself, this utilitarian conception of virtue justifies the practice of skipping over the good feeling that the courageous act might bring, in a particular case, to look at whether the act is likely to increase the overall happiness of the individual or procure the greatest happiness for the great number. If being cowardly can tally more utiles, turn tail and run.

Mill's analysis of the virtues would be much to Aristotle's distaste, for Aristotle considered the pursuit of money for its own sake a perversion. For this reason Aristotle did not consider the life of a moneymaker choiceworthy; its concern was with means and not legitimate ends that are good (*NE*, 1096a6-8). Mill does do his best not to denigrate virtues; he emphasizes that their pursuit makes one a "blessing" to others, while the pursuit of money, power and fame as ends in themselves can make one "noxious" (Mill, 1153), but by instrumentalizing the virtues in a way that makes their practice external to genuinely pleasurable affects, he misconstrues the function of their practice.

Aristotle agrees with Kant that we should treat acting virtuously as a duty and an end itself rather than as a fungible means to an end. Aristotle acknowledges the virtues as ends in themselves by seeing the life of honor and the life of contemplation as each choiceworthy (*NE*, 195b15-30). Along with Kant, Aristotle honors the courageous act for itself, he honors an act of benevolence, and he respects the laws. Unlike a utilitarian, the *phronomos* may judge that the right thing to do is act according to the law, or act virtuously, even when it does not bring happiness to us or others. And yet, according to Aristotle, we also practice the virtues in order to achieve happiness (*NE*, 1097b).

Aristotle discusses the virtues as being both ends in themselves and as being subservient to the end of happiness. While this sounds like Mill's answer, for Aristotle simple psychological association is not the solution, otherwise any act could be just as valuable to happiness and its pleasure as any another.

The disposition to virtuous acts, and their performance, is not so easily separable from the condition of happiness that is the goal of the virtue. This is shown in the contiguity between the tacit clues and the focal experience. The experience of happiness, i.e. the pleasurable affect that the utilitarian would measure, is not simply an end extrinsic to the performance of the virtues; it supervenes on the way of being of the virtuous person.[8] This is similar to the way pleasure supervenes on a natural activity and completes it for Aristotle (*NE*, 1174b32-35).

For Aristotle, the source of happiness is the state of character that provides the disposition to virtuous behavior and which naturally engages in virtuous activities. There are also other conditions such as having friends, having leisure and having enough money. These give the structural support that provides the capabilities for sustaining some of those virtuous activities that the feelings intrinsic to happiness supervene upon, such as engaging in friendship, having time for contemplation, and being generous. Each virtuous practice has its own completing pleasure. "The pleasures that complete the activities of the complete and blessedly happy man…will be called the fully human pleasures to the fullest extent" (*NE*, 1176a27-28).

The contiguity between behaviors and states we see in Polanyi's *from-to* structure of tacit knowing shows us why virtues should be practiced for themselves. Virtues do not merely get value from a strong association with the good or pleasurable end they produce, as Mill thought. To perform the virtues in the right way is not performing them for an extrinsic end, but it is behaving—and being—the way a virtuous person behaves and is. The way of being of the virtuous person is happy, regardless of whether he is slain on the battlefield or whether his right actions do or do not produce the good and sort of happiness that we, with a utilitarian mentality fostered by consumer society, believe should be the end of moral actions. The excellent person is happy doing the right thing, i.e., performing virtuous acts, and doing the wrong thing pains him.[9]

2. Habitual Integrations Must Be Disrupted

Polanyi's logic of tacit inference also gives a second reason why virtuous acts must be performed for their own sake: the novice must practice virtues for themselves in order to be reconstituted in accord with the character of the master. In the transition from competence to mastery a logical gap is crossed. In crossing the logical gap to attain an answer to a comprehensive question, the habitual integration of clues that the novice is accustomed to in his old way of being must be disrupted.

At the stage in which the apprentice seeks the transformation of his way of being, the performance of the virtues should be *for themselves* and the adherence to the rule or law *should* be from duty. Such actions are part of the *method* for achieving the way of being of the moral master and achieving his level and sort of happiness.[10] This approach provides an openness to the restructuring of the meaning of behaviors. It helps take the actions out of the interpretive framework and way of being of the apprentice and makes it possible to take on the way of being of the master, whose actions are naturally contiguous with these sorts of virtuous activities.

We can see how this works by looking back at how Polanyi understands the process of discovery. One must pass through the "dark night of the soul" where clues lose their meaning and are reevaluated—as they must be—in order to be reconstituted in terms of the new interpretive framework that jumps the logical gap and provides the solution to the inquiry. During this dark night, one focuses ahead toward the unknown solution.

The transformation into a new moral framework would thus involve three tasks 1) disrupting the old integrations, 2) practicing the behaviors of the moral virtuoso, and 3) focusing ahead on an unknown goal. These tasks are accomplished by practicing the laws out of duty and the virtues for themselves. Accomplishing these tasks allows the clues to take their more natural integration, i.e. as behaviors of the virtuous person, and assists one in understanding and truly becoming a virtuous person.

I am suggesting that when the clues are already seen as best fitting together in a certain way, in an old vision that must be surpassed, one must break apart the clues and disrupt any current integration in order to be able to gain a grasp of the new vision all the way through. We dwell in aspects of the new framework in order to break out of our own. Performing the virtues for themselves thus plays a double role. It disengages the clues/ behaviors from their current context of understanding and simultaneously provides the sort of experiences required that allows one to dwell in the behaviors of the virtuous person and come to experience and understand as the virtuous person does.

In the operation of a skill, there are many behavioral clues working together subsidiarily that come together in a focal performance. For instance, in playing the piano masterfully, the pianist is not attending towards what her fingers are doing; she is focused ahead at producing the music. If the fingers become the focus, the performance can be disrupted.[11] Similarly, when a word is repeated over and over again, the focal meaning dissolves. Our attention gets directed toward the sound, which was a subsidiarily working tacit clue that helped bring us the focal meaning.

When the tacit clues are focused upon directly, the focus that those clues would typically subsidiarily support for us gets disrupted. Performing the virtues for themselves has the same effect as *looking at the clues* in isolation from their current joint meaning. Polanyi says specifically *not* to look at the clues in themselves, but to "look at the unknown" goal so that the clues acquired and amended *via* subception may take their proper place. More properly, however, we are not to look at the clues *as we currently understand them*, and focusing on the clues or behaviors directly for themselves can disrupt the current integration and create an openness to alternate configurations of meaning. Focusing ahead on a vague and generally empty notion of good allows for the emergence of a new understanding and experience of the acts performed; clues are compiled, reformed and submerged into a new focal whole *via* which we can better understand what we have done.

When we, as moral novices, perform examples of virtuous acts and obey maxims and principles that encourage virtuous behavior, we do not understand them as the moral master does. In the novice's way of being, with its old vision, for example, I might look to some incidental but inessential benefit of doing a virtuous act and thus commodify the act.[12] Perhaps I would see courage, as an expression of power that elevates me in a particular way. Or I would see charity as a precautionary move, just in case I ever needed a helping hand myself later on.

If we perform the acts from our old frame of mind, with our old focus, we are reinforcing those old habits of integration. So for the novice, the right focal goal. Even for a moral virtuoso happiness itself is not the goal. As we see with Aristotle, the experience of happiness comes together with the activity of the virtues, when the

acts are done in the right way for the right reasons. The experience of happiness is not sought by the virtuous person but comes as an accompaniment of a virtuous way of being. Happiness itself is not the focal goal, but neither is the good person focused on the rules. Just as the good judge is focused not on the explicit letter of the law, but on justice, the moral virtuoso is not focused on the rules and obedience to them; his focus is ahead, engaged in a vision or *telos*. For a morally virtuous person, the focus might simply be on excellence, or the Good, or a loving God, but the focus is *not* on the subsidiary clues that support his excellence.

In our apprenticeship to the good our focus is similar but different. We are focused on the actions of the good person in a rough imitation. His or her actions are not natural for us and will not have the same affects. The good person expresses his way of being in natural actions, i.e., virtuous behaviors, but until we have transformed our own way of being, those actions are not natural for us in the same way. Just as we might attempt to understand the mind of a chessplayer through imitating his moves, we attempt to get into the way of being of the good person by imitating his actions. For us as apprentices, this is an effort at sense-reading confounded by the difference in frameworks between us and the good person. Just as the mind is the joint comprehension of actions, the joint comprehension that the good person lives out from, that center from which his actions flow, is the nebulous answer to our question. When we have shifted frameworks at a comprehensive level, we will live out from that center and do good actions naturally and experience their attendant pleasure; we will experience the way of being of the good person and live in that state of happiness.

By performing virtuous acts without attending to a further purpose colored by a current framework, we free ourselves for a new integration from acts to meaning, and from doings to being. If we focus on the virtues for themselves, and *do not* focus ahead to what we *imagine* is the happiness they bring –because *that* focus is what's getting in the way of our transforming achievement— we can disrupt the established pattern. At this stage, actions will lose their customary meaning but thereby become free to be experienced differently. Since the sort of behaviors that characterize the virtuous person are contiguous with his way of being and state of happiness, practicing *those* sorts of behaviors *without* the wrong focal meaning, but looking ahead to the unknown, can allow those clues to fall more naturally into place.

Dwelling in those sorts of behavior that the master engages in, without the wrong ideas about what they may bring, is a way of achieving the state of the master. This is similar to the way a chess player can dwell in the mind of the master chess player, and similar to the way a person engaging in religious practices can come to authentically participate in religious life. We engage in the virtues for themselves because by doing so we are preparing for a transformation of our understanding, dispositions and feelings in the light of a different integration of clues that comes with a new way of being.

The tacit knowledge by which good behaviors are understood and integrated by the novice needs to be radically changed. Looking *at* the behaviors—the virtuous acts—for themselves is a way of stopping the automatic, customary way we look *through* them to a purpose. If we can disrupt the habitual way of integrating those behavioral clues into a focus, we have a better chance of achieving the way of being that replicates that of the master. Old patterns of integration must be disrupted, in conjunction with practicing the behaviors of the moral virtuoso.

3. Goals and the Good Will

Along with Kant, we respect those who can abide by their principles even when the outcome is not the happiness of the individual nor the society. Perhaps we respect the person who, like us, is part way there and must fight himself and baser instincts to be virtuous. But Aristotle is right: the truly virtuous person no longer has to struggle, hence he or she is more apt to be congratulated as blessed rather than praised (*NE*, 1101b25). The truly good person acts not out of dutiful resolve to the moral law, but out of what Kant calls the "good will". Polanyi might call this good will the joint comprehension of meaning towards which the laws and their prescribed behaviors point and out of which the laws are properly understood. The good will might then be a name for the center out of which the good person acts. This will of the good person has attendant feelings and inclinations that point it in the right direction, for if it did not the act might not be done in the right way, according to Aristotle. While Kant recognized and valued this motivating force, he quickly progresses to discount all emotional inclination in the assessment of morally good action. A human will that acts for the sake of duty is a good will and to act for the sake of duty is to act out of reverence for the law. Kant goes on to say that "an action done from duty must altogether exclude the influence of inclination."[13]

There is certainly a sense of duty toward doing what is right, and Polanyi emphasizes this commitment in *Personal Knowledge*, but Polanyi also notes that this sense of duty cannot be restricted to the explicitly formalizable laws. Kant emphasizes that following the law out of duty and not inclination is what gives an action its moral worth. Perhaps this emphasis originates in his noumenal-phenomenal divide, since we are never in a position to *know* whether or not we are acting from an impure psychological inclination, and thus merely obeying a hypothetical imperative rather than a categorical command of reason. Perhaps this emphasis originates from Kant's conception of freedom, which we acknowledge in our ability to act against our inclinations and in accord with reason. Kant recognizes and Polanyi praises the commitment to the law that one makes for oneself; the categorical imperative reflects the universal intent of a personal yet objective truth. But in his moral work Kant fails to give proper emphasis to the way in which *inclination* and *duty* are united in the good will of the good person. What the moral novice must perform out of duty to the law, the good person performs out of natural inclinations.[14]

From a Polanyian perspective, we also see that the inclination of the good person may be right when it conflicts with the letter of the law. The emphasis on duty over inclination reveals that we are not yet imbued in the moral framework Kant's philosophy aspires toward. Acts directed by the good will are not understood via the inclinations or desires we typically possess, thus we must constrain our inclinations in order to behave as the virtuous person does.

In the moral-epistemological approach we have been considering, we can see the source of the good will as the gestalt integration that acts as the consummatory source from which individual actions are motivated and the lens through which they are understood. Acting from the good will is acting from a different, developed moral framework *via* which the actions of the virtuous person might indeed be understood as associated with a positive feeling or desire. This way of being, with its inclinations and affects, transcends the inclinations and feelings at work in the current frameworks that we might use to understand our maxims. Kant provides the example of a tradesman who demonstrates the good will when he acts honestly—but only because acting honestly is *right* and *not* because it would promote the future success of his business by insuring his reputation. Kant understands the moral act to be in accord with the good will because it is done out of duty. But following the good will presents itself as duty for us, rather than a joy, because we do not fully comprehend the happiness that can result from acting in accord with a better way of being, and a better way of being together.

Kant recognizes that we do not live out of the proper moral framework. If we did, our inclinations could play a functional role in making the moral decisions that promote the good we seek. Mill's mistake is to believe that we do have an adequate conception of what will make us happy and that this collection of goals can be divorced from the actions of the virtuous person. Mill is working with a more instrumental notion of reason in a more primitive framework, even though he ameliorates that deficiency by acknowledging higher pleasures. Kant recognizes that the goodness that answers to our higher nature is placed in a higher moral framework towards which we must aspire.

IV. Breaking Out

We sense the promise of a new way of being as a resolution to deep and abiding questions. We seek to be like the moral master, the exemplar, but we bring a lot of baggage. We are cast in our old ways of seeing and will not perform the virtuous act in the right way for the right reasons until we have broken out into a new way of being. This is what training with the master is geared to achieve.

The joint focus that gives the clues their meaning is different for the expert than for the novice. If our clues to the new focal center, the virtuous behaviors, are already conceived in a particular way, it is difficult to let them serve a new, largely unknown, vision. The same act performed by the moral virtuoso and performed by the novice will not foster the same sort of experience. Virtuous behavior will be co-opted into the skins of old understanding. Old conceptions will block the manifestation of the focal experience that is the solution of the sage. The moral apprentice must thus attempt to understand the virtues dissociated from the benefits he can understand from his old framework. Disrupting habitual ways of integrating behavioral clues into an established focal performance provides an opportunity for the transforming achievement of an enriched moral state. Polanyi's from-to structure of tacit integration shows us how practicing virtuous acts for themselves aids in this disruption, while his understanding of the contiguity between behaviors and mind shows how integral virtuous acts are to the good person's understanding and experience of the world.

We dwell in a framework that is beyond our current understanding in order to break out of our current way of being. Focusing on rules or moral laws as categorical and not hypothetical imperatives aids in dissociating the actions from their current joint significance, while it simultaneously encourages the practice of the actions that the good person naturally performs and the good person's good will naturally commands. Focusing on performing the virtues *for themselves* rather than for the end of pleasure or happiness advances the end of reconstituting the person toward *being* the good person, who in turn experiences the sort of happiness that only the transformed person can experience.

One thus practices virtue, not for the sake of one's own happiness, but for the sake of the happiness of the person one will become.

Endnotes

[1] See Lowney, *TAD*, 36:1, 2009, 48-49 regarding this *epagoge*.

[2]See *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981)and *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989) for an account of matters noted in this paragraph. In "From Science

to Morality," I showed how MacIntyre's notion of a *tradition* of *inquiry* can be considered a development of Polanyi's notions of *superior knowledge* and *heuristic passion* (*TAD*, 36:1 [2009-2010]: 47-48).

[3]The *perfect* moral exemplar need not actually exist, but that *a person* is conceived as the ideal shows the degree to which this knowledge is embodied in doings, and how these doings form a joint comprehension through which we judge a particular situation. For Polanyi, perfection is an ideal, which gives the rules and duty more force. "The notion of perfection in any pursuit is an imaginative projection of what the full and unlimited operation of the principles governing these higher mental levels would look like" (*Meaning*, 209). Socrates notoriously had difficulty finding moral exemplars, but this concrete ideal does seem to have instances, indicating we can move beyond our rule-based conceptions and share in the way of being of a moral exemplar. There exist connoisseurs and experts according to Polanyi, with their foibles and imperfections, who can still act as exemplary guides.

[4]Carol Kelly-Gangi, ed., *Dalai Lama: His Essential Wisdom* (New York: Fall River Press, 2007), 112.

[5]Happiness for Aristotle comes from engaging in all the virtues, including and especially the intellectual virtues that Polanyi describes so well. Happiness is not a fleeting emotion. Just as a virtuous character is not formed or judged by one virtuous act but requires the constancy of a habituated character, so a happy person is not judged by one or several days, but over the course of a lifetime.

[6]An example of this learning is staring at a two dimensional holographic image with the intent of seeing a three dimensional picture that it can project. Eventually, you learn to integrate the clues in a way that reveals the picture.

[7]*Utilitarianism* in *Classics of Western Philosophy*, ed., Steven M. Cahn (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1995), 1152-1153.

[8]As John Dewey might say there would only be an arbitrary cut here between what is instrumental and consummatory; the event is continuous and contains both. See *Experience and Nature* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1929).

[9]Sorting out differences in the orientation of the moral philosophies of Aristotle, Kant and Mill is extraordinarily complex. For example, Kant and Mill have a more instrumental view of reason than Aristotle, and they each have different understandings of what " happiness" means. Not only are they asking slightly different questions from their basis in different cultures, the presuppositions of the questions can be viewed in the light of historical changes. Charles Taylor in *Sources of Self* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992) provides an analysis of such complexity.

[10]In "From Science to Morality" I argued that moral rules should be followed out of duty as a methodological tool toward achieving a way of being. Here we see the Polanyian mechanism for why that works: doing the behaviors out of duty provides an openness to a transformation of the meaning of the action that is consistent with the way of being that naturally produces such behaviors. It should also be noted that by "method" I now mean a pathway that includes tacit knowing and not a strictly explicit method the sort of which Polanyi criticized in his work.

[11]Looking explicitly at the clues that we are normally subsidiarily aware of when performing a skill masterfully can throw a monkey wrench into the performance (*Meaning*, 40). Focusing on the subsidiaries, e.g., attention to what the fingers are doing, can also improve skills and help the next performance, when the integration once again is properly performed. So there is another benefit to practicing the virtues for themselves, we can refine subsidiary skills while aiming for the way of being of the master.

[12]See Ursula Goodenough and Terence Deacon: "The commodification of morality is, to our mind, one of the most dangerous things that we do, quite as dangerous as fundamentalism or moral relativism " ("From Biology To Consciousness To Morality," *TAD* 30:3 [2003-2004]: 18).

[13]Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* in *Classics of Western Philosophy, op. cit.*, 1067.

[14]Robert Pirsig captures the role of inclination for one who has learned to dwell in the law when he writes: "You want to know how to paint a perfect painting? It's easy. Make yourself perfect and then just paint naturally" (*Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values* [New York: Morrow, 1974], 293).