The Projects of Michael Polanyi and Charles Taylor

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ABSTRACT

This essay contends that Polanyi's groundbreaking effort to formulate a more adequate understanding of scientific knowing by acknowledging its practice of operating on the basis of shared assumptions bears striking parallels to Taylor's subsequent efforts to disclose the cultural assumptions sustaining our sense of identity. Both projects had to uncover normally ignored cultural values and practices sustaining scientific knowing and our identities as moral beings. Given this connection, students of Polanyi would be well-served to explore Taylor's works in order to develop further implications of Polanyi's thought. Given Taylor's later exploration of belief in a secular era motived by his Catholic faith, he offers additional examples of developing Polanyi's thinking for students exploring theological questions.

My earliest encounter with the thought of Michael Polanyi came as a result of the recommendation of John Brennan, a former teacher, who had returned to England to continue his studies. He observed how, upon the recent publication of *Personal Knowledge,* Polanyi's theory had become all the rage among the Oxbridge intelligentsia.[1] Once I began to engage this work at the beginnings of my graduate studies, I came to understand why: here was a physical scientist who challenged the dominant understanding of detached scientific activity by uncovering the actual, normally unnoticed, practice of working scientists. Polanyi had created a project whose aim was to overturn the positivist picture of objective, scientific knowledge upheld impersonally by verifiable—or, for some, falsifiable—empirical evidence. He painstakingly illustrated how every stage of inquiry was carried forward by the personal engagement of members of the scientific community relying on a broad range of assumptions sustaining the endeavor. Not only did his comprehensive theory challenge the dominant philosophical orientation of the analytic tradition, he did so as an "outsider," a scientist who had become a public intellectual without the requisite apprenticeship in the guilds of professional philosophy. Even more profound were the implications of Polanyi's theory beyond the practice of science for understanding wider cultural issues, such as aesthetics, morality, and our highest transcendent values, including religious visions. Here I had found a project that I could incorporate into my own goals of studying religious traditions intelligently.

Toward the end of my graduate studies I encountered the work of Charles Taylor through reports about him in the student newspaper, the *McGill Daily*. The favorable stories appearing there were about an up-and-coming political scientist who engaged students morally in public fora and who participated actively in a left-leaning political party in Quebec, something which resonated with my Catholic social sensibilities. I was strongly tempted to try to meet Taylor, but the press of my own work, reinforced by my American presuppositions regarding the practice of political scientists, which assumed that Taylor's disciplinary assumptions probably would not fit my Polanyian-informed project, led me to drop the attempt. Some twenty years later, after I began reading *Sources of the Self*, I discovered how wrong I was.[2] Taylor's self-acknowledged ambitious project (ix) of attempting to articulate the constitutive features of our cultural heritage which shaped our sense of being a self was groundbreaking in a manner

reminiscent of Polanyi's earlier work on the practice of science. Just as Polanyi attempted to uncover the features of scientific practice that were hidden or obscured by the dominant philosophical tradition of analysis, so, too, Taylor attempted to delineate the contours of our identities that were hidden or obscured by the dominant philosophical assumptions of modernity. It was as though Charles Taylor had taken up the larger project of Polanyi and begun to apply it to an exploration and defense of our morally informed heuristic visions with a philosophical rigor of a trained philosopher. His was a project that a student of Polanyi should find invaluable.

Polanyi devoted the latter part of his career to exploring the implications of his theory of knowledge for our larger cultural meanings and values. The last part of *Personal Knowledge* consisted in his initial foray into this effort (*PK* 327-405). He began to solidify his understanding in his characterization of a "Society of Explorers" in the *Tacit Dimension*.[3] His final efforts to formulate his position on our ability to discover and uphold our highest cultural values were expressed in his lectures, delivered under the title of "Meaning," that were brought to print with the help of Harry Prosch.[4] Throughout this final period of his career as a public intellectual, Polanyi was attempting to provide an account, and support for, our holding to transcendent values and ideals as necessary for our self-understanding as humans continuing to "break out" toward ever greater discoveries of reality (*PK* 196-197). Polanyi was painfully aware that his account was his "best effort" at formulating and defending his position. His theory of knowledge precluded any attempt to prove impersonally or objectively his view. Indeed, he acknowledged the possibility that his efforts could be wrong (*PK* 404). That was inherent in the risk of knowing as he understood it. His initial project was rather successful in transforming the understanding of science in Western culture.[5] Because of its ambitious, fundamental character, however, his larger project of applying his basic insights to sustaining the values of our cultural heritage required an ongoing and continuous effort.

This is where I believe the student of Polanyi can fruitfully enter into the project of Charles Taylor. This does not mean that Taylor should be taken to be a "disciple" of Polanyi in any straightforward sense. Rather, it would be much more helpful to approach Taylor's work as a political philosopher by acknowledging that early in his career he assimilated many of the basic insights of Polanyi's thought along with a broad array of thinkers required for his apprenticeship into the guild of professional philosophers. Then, in light of this more expansive framework, he formulated many of Polanyi's fundamental insights about our cultural condition in way that went beyond Polanyi's own abilities insofar as they were dependant on his more focused apprenticeship in physical sciences. Taylor's thinking, then, should not be taken as merely a commentary on, or development of, Polanyi's work; it is his *own* project which has been influenced by Polanyi's earlier efforts but recast by Taylor in a way that he believes addresses the wider philosophical community. Because both thinkers are trying to draw their readers' attention to the hidden assumptions shaping our understanding of reality, there are many possibilities for considering the connection. What I am attempting here is to highlight a few pertinent examples of the way in which students of Polanyi can appreciate how Taylor's reflections expand and clarify Polanyian insights with the hope that they may take up their own reading of Taylor's works.

Let me begin by portraying how Taylor depicts the fundamental reality of the self in *Sources of the Self*. Keep in mind that Taylor is attempting to uncover normally hidden assumptions to which we rarely advert: the self, as is often assumed in modernity, is not an isolated consciousness with an articulate picture of external data, but a reality that is constituted by a vast array of relationships, most of which function in a pre-articulate manner. In its most basic case, this is certainly presumed in our ability to acquire and uphold simple factual knowledge based on our perceptions. Our presumptions that we know where we are, or can correct what we thought we saw, are based on our sense of a "perceptual purchase" on things (74-75) which is implicit in our normal daily maneuvering through life. Analogously, the locus of our existence as a self is most correctly acknowledged to be in the "webs of interlocution" (36) through which

we come to constitute ourselves. Included in this ability to have an identity is our sense of the good, in particular our "location" or "how we are placed" or have a "contact" with respect to the good (44). This characterization of ourselves within some sense of the good and its bodily, linguistic, social, historical, and cultural embodiments points to "transcendental" conditions (39) necessary for the constitution of our identities. Moreover, our selves cannot be adequately identified only by knowing who we currently are; we must also address the matter of what we can become, so that the location of our sense of the good must include a narrative form (47).

Even if we grant this depiction of significant features of a "self" which are normally unnoticed by the larger culture's understanding, we need some assurance that this is realistic and valid. For Taylor it is necessary not to confuse or reduce this issue with what the natural world is like (56). Here an impersonal, third-person account may be adequate. But when the meaning of our lives and what we value as human beings is at stake, our personal involvement in these meanings must be acknowledged. Any attempt to account for our selves solely in terms of material constituents or mechanical processes is incomplete. What we need is the "best available" account at any given time (57-59) that realistically and fairly explains our identities in relationship to the goods that sustain us.

A major feature of any best available account, according to Taylor, requires the articulation of our "hypergoods," those "goods which not only are incomparably more important than others but provide the standpoint from which these must be weighed, judged, decided about" (63). Since these are qualitatively different from and establish a hierarchical ranking of other goods, they are a potential source of conflict because of the substantial differentiations they inspire. There is no way of adopting independent criteria allowing one to stand outside one's identity to evaluate these goods. Rather, accepting a particular formulation of a hypergood signals the transition to what appears a superior stance (72). This very articulation of hypergoods, that which enables us to make qualitative distinctions in our lives, provides the reasons for our accepting them (76-78). We judge that our articulation has withstood all relevant challenges, so that it is our (provisionally) best available account (74).

Clearly such a representation of the validity and reality of our moral goods presumes that articulating them (in a broad sense) is a necessary (but not a sufficient) condition for their existence, in the sense of their availability for us and our ability to recognize them (91-92). Moreover, since a defense of any particular account of the validity of a hypergood depends on a reading of its genesis (73), it is necessary to examine concretely the way in which the identity of the self has developed in the West by means of its transitions to presumably superior relationships with the source of the good. This effort indicates the intrinsic connection between the first, philosophical, part of Taylor's work and the last four, cultural-historical, parts.

Even though these broad strokes that attempt to encapsulate the thrust of Taylor's uncovering of the modern sense of the self are all too brief, any attentive student of Polanyi's thought can easily detect many features of his own program of personal knowledge here. There is, of course, a significant difference insofar as Taylor's background concerns, deriving from political philosophy, lead him to focus on hermeneutical questions of meaning and value instead of the practice of scientific knowing and epistemological matters in general (I intend to return to this point later in this essay). Still, even with Taylor's hermeneutical focus, the similarities with Polanyi's thinking emerge when we consider Polanyi's reflections on what he terms "indwelling" and the process of validation.

In order to support his theory of personal knowledge, Polanyi takes great pains to examine pre-articulate patterns of intelligence, including the ability to recognize signs and solve problems shared by animals and children (*PK* 71-75). This bodily indwelling provides the perceptual basis for our meaningful

dealings with our environment. It is an active process enabling all animate life to recognize shapes that now have coherence in order to appear as physiognomies. This process of recognizing patterns in sensory experience involves two elements, the subsidiarily known disparate features whose integration allows the meaningful whole to emerge and with which we interact.

This fundamental capacity is vastly expanded by the use of our linguistic powers (*PK* 69-131). Grounded in the activities informing perception, our linguistic indwelling relies not only on our pre-articulate sensory experiences, but also on our subsidiary grasp of the potentialities of our language. Language is far from being merely denotative; it forms a system of meanings upon which we rely in order to dwell in a meaningful world of practices, social relationships, values, and transcendent ideals in addition to objects. Only by relying tacitly on words can we use their potential for discovering novel meanings. Just as in the case of perception, then, our linguistic indwelling also operates as an activity relying on subsidiaries to comprehend a focal whole, which in its highest forms include our ideals.

Polanyi understands knowledge not as a static achievement capable of detached or impersonal analysis in the manner of the modern objectivist ideal, but as an activity always in process. As we observed above, our perception involves a process of attending from subsidiarily known particulars which we integrate into a focal whole. A similar directedness and duration is discernable in our linguistic indwelling. Aside from the fact that we must learn a language over time, the very use of a language is conditioned by its involvement in time. Insofar as our language functions as a repository of our frameworks through which we meaningfully understand the world, its present development is not ultimate. We expect our reliance on our intellectual assumptions to allow us to expand the realm of meaningful experience, thereby modifying our conceptual systems. Historical indwelling constitutes the matrix upon which we rely to break through to new discoveries.

Just because we acknowledge that our cultural horizons are historically conditioned, this does not mean that we are condemned to some form of relativism as an objectivist framework tends to assume; rather, we must judge that our cultural horizons are reliably true and that through them we can continue to break through to new discoveries.[6] Keep in mind that for Polanyi this does not mean that our present horizons embody the fullness of truth as some rationalist posture may affirm. This claim means, more modestly, that our reliance on our cultural horizons provides us with an adequate orientation to reality in our present historical situation. Through our cultural indwelling, we have an ability to discern and formulate expressions that we judge to be true, some of which allow us to go beyond the historical limits enabling these expressions. At the level of transcendent ideals, the degree of personal participation is greater and the existential import of accepting a new insight is more profound. Consequently, Polanyi describes such judgments as "validation" instead of "verification." "But both verification and validation are everywhere an acknowledgment of a commitment: they claim the presence of something real and external to the speaker" (*PK* 202). As we explore new and sometimes even alien frameworks, we must hold fast to our ultimate aim: individuals can rely on their cultural background as a basis for probing the frontiers of knowledge in responsible dedication to the truth and, once they discover something valid, they affirm it with universal intent (*PK* 379). Accepting such a project constitutes our "calling" as members of a "society of explorers" (*TD* 80-82).

This brief overview of pertinent elements of Polanyi's account of "indwelling" should suffice to mark out several ways in which Taylor's position develops significant features of Polanyi's. Both projects aim to uncover normally hidden and unnoticed presuppositions that influence our understanding of our selves and our natural and cultural worlds. Both, in addition, aim to challenge the dominant philosophical outlooks that, they contend, restrict a richer understanding of science and our ability to discern meaning and uphold values. Even granting such fundamental similarities, little has been presented so far to commend inquiring

into Taylor's thought to a student of Polanyi. When I claimed at the beginning of this essay that such an effort would be invaluable, I did so because of the way Taylor's reflections are developed in dialogue with the philosophical traditions of the West. Precisely because of the similarities in their projects, his more technical reflections provide, indirectly, a rich resource for contextualizing and developing Polanyi's thought. The breadth and diversity of Taylor's dialogue with modern and contemporary philosophical and cultural movements is almost overwhelming. The examples I offer here are not so much representative of the breadth of his corpus as more an idiosyncratic selection that I hope will be helpful for exploring Polanyi's thought. Let me turn then to a few of Taylor's analyses that I have found valuable.

That our knowing has a bodily component is a commonplace. What do we mean by embodied agency? This does not mean merely that we are causally dependent on bodily features, such as not being able to see if we are blindfolded. This claim is not in the first instance an empirical one. Polanyi grasped this by proffering an array of scientific cases of divergent interpretations of data. Underlying this was a structure, our tacit reliance on bodily processes that were known subsidiarily and interpreted by a focus on a pattern. Can this be clarified further? Taylor utilizes Maurice Merleau-Ponty's analysis of perception to clarify how embodiment is essential to our activity as agents.[7] Perception has an orientational structure because it is a field of potential action. It is pre-articulate and functions as an essential basis for articulation. It functions as a permanent background to the kind of agents we are. This is not something we discover empirically, but rather provides the framework enabling a field of potential action. It represents the kind of beings we are. This sense of ourselves as embodied agents is constitutive of our experience. This background understanding of ourselves as embodied agents exhibits these features: "it is a form of understanding, a making sense of things and actions; at the same time, it is entirely unarticulated; and third, it can be the basis of fresh articulation."[8]

This tacit basis grounding our experience allowed Polanyi to develop a rich understanding of the varying dimensions of language, including how language functions to allow us to create and communicate meaning.[9] This represents a major advance and challenge to the dominant representational view of language that presumed totally explicit accounts which limited meaning to corresponding to objects in the world. Taylor very helpfully offers an expansive account of this view by showing how it has sources in the Romantic heritage represented by Herder and subsequently developed in contemporary philosophy by the later Wittgenstein and Heidegger.[10] The use of language constitutes new dimensions of meanings for human agents, which cannot simply be reducible to rightness of identification or even tasks.

Opening up discussion of worlds of meanings eventually requires some understanding of how developments in such worlds take place and how the multiplicity of such worlds might be acknowledged. Polanyi has treated these issues in a variety of ways in his own creative fashion. He discussed, for example, how fundamental systems of beliefs sustain themselves by a consideration of anthropological research on the Azande (*PK* 288-292). Similar processes are at work to sustain scientific practice in Western culture. The major difference is that this is a tradition fostering the growth of thought. It expects individuals who have submitted to the authority of scientific tradition to strive to uncover new truths which, upon discovery, transform the existential stance of the person who declares the new insight with universal intent and invites others to do likewise (*TD* 63-84). Taylor helps clarify these issues through his consideration of Hans-Georg Gadamer's notion of "fusion of horizons." The acknowledgment of multiple worlds of meanings upon which humans tacitly rely has raised the specter of relativism—particularly from within the tradition of detached, impersonal knowing. One response Taylor notes is the sort of non-realism espoused by the pragmatism of Richard Rorty.[11] But this still is implicitly captive to the thrall of the impersonal ideal of knowing. Even a view which strives to replace a point-of-view-less science by developing as complete an account of language to which, somehow, all cultural frameworks might subscribe misses the mark because it must develop anew once future changes are acknowledged.[12] To deal with a plurality

of horizons in a realistic manner we must recognize three important features of such efforts: they are bilateral, they are party-dependent, and they involve revising goals.[13] This means that in order to come to understand the other with some degree of accuracy we must enter into the other's framework; and this entails some modification of our goals and our selves. The challenge is to recognize their different and perhaps disconcerting way of being human while still being able to live ours. Such responsible judgments resulting from this sort of fusion of horizons made with universal intent will modify our sense of identity and—we trust—will have a reciprocal effect on our dialogue partner.[14]

When reflecting on such ultimate beliefs, Polanyi acknowledges the circularity involved in upholding, modifying, or transforming them. The structure of commitment, nonetheless, allows such responsible judgments to be personal, as distinct from subjective or impersonally objective. Here truth is rightness of action, with varying degrees of personal participation. Our fundamental commitments provide us the opportunity to exercise our personal judgments, which constitutes our calling (*PK* 299-324). Setting our acceptance of fundamental beliefs within such a historical and cultural panorama is valuable, but falls short of providing explanations in specific instances. Is there any way of specifying in some sense how we might defend our upholding some articulation of a fundamental belief? I would suggest that Taylor's reflections on his analysis of "transcendental arguments" may contribute to a clarification of how we accept or validate our position on some fundamental questions. The impetus derives from the thought of Kant, but Taylor's concern is their applicability to contemporary questions. They typically adjudicate questions about our fundamental assumptions. They work by a regressive argument to some strong conclusion about our selves or our purchase on the world from some features of our experience which are generally taken to be indubitable.[15] The stronger conclusion, if formulated adequately enough, is seen to be necessarily based on the features of our experience. "So transcendental arguments are chains of apodictic indispensability claims which concern experience and thus have an unchallengeable anchoring. What they show things to be indispensable *to* can't be shrugged off."[16] Since they purport to demonstrate the point of some of our activities, that specific formulation is open to debate and improvement. Still, I believe Taylor has offered an interesting way of getting at some of the justifications for our fundamental beliefs that may be applicable to developing Polanyi's insights.

Any attentive student of Polanyi's thought will have noticed by now that there is a glaring omission in my topics of comparison with Taylor's thought. Where is the discussion of epistemology proper? After all, developing, expounding, and defending his theory of personal knowledge was a primary concern of Polanyi's later public career. In my reading of his thinking on this topic, Taylor exhibits a fundamental ambiguity here. When he discusses cultural matters and our moral thinking, Taylor operates much as Polanyi would expect, namely that we rely tacitly on our values and assumptions to attempt to understand various dimensions of our world. Relying on our subsidiarily held premises and ideals, we focus on meaningful wholes that our horizons open up for us. While he would not articulate it precisely in this manner, this basic "from-to" intentional structure operates continuously and pervasively for Taylor. The glaring exception arises when he considers natural science. In her fine early study of Taylor's philosophy, Ruth Abbey seems to attribute this tendency to distinguish sharply between the natural sciences and human sciences to his concern to defend the fundamentally different kinds of meaning examined in the human sciences.[17] His basic attitude may be detected in the title of his important essay, "Overcoming Epistemology," in which he contends that it is insufficient to "replace" an inadequate epistemology with a more adequate version.[18] The principal reason for such a judgment is that the epistemological tradition is part of a wider cultural heritage that made epistemology possible in the first place: the view that knowledge is a correct representation of an independent reality, an inner depiction of an outer reality. This in turn is connected with a mechanistic view of nature discovered by a proper method – all of which implicitly becomes a moral ideal upholding a detached, disengaged subject. Granted the way in which epistemology is implicated in such a variety of objectionable assumptions, a significant debate has emerged into just

what it means to overcome epistemology represented, for example, by disputes between neo-Nietzscheans and defenders of critical reason. How one even approaches this issue is tied in with some of the most important spiritual and moral issues of our time.[19] When viewed in this way, it is difficult to fault Taylor for making such a sharp distinction between the realms of scientific and humanistic meanings. For the sake of a more adequate appreciation of science, however, I would commend Polanyi's understanding of the various modes of tacit knowing as forming a continuum between minimal participation in scientific indwelling and the maximal participation in religious indwelling.[20] When viewing personal knowledge as a heuristic endeavor seeking various dimensions of meaning, the result is not only a more integral understanding of scientific inquiry but also an ability to uncover the sorts of values and meanings that Taylor is aiming to highlight in contemporary Western culture.

A new facet of Taylor's project emerged explicitly once he delivered his Marianist award lecture, "A Catholic Modernity?" in 1996.[21] Here he acknowledged in a public, academic forum that he operates out of a committed, Catholic perspective. There were numerous instances in his previous works that indicated his appreciation of the religious heritage of the West, as when he explores how the contemporary emergence of pluralism opens the possibility for our culture to reconsider that our modern senses of the good had its sources in Christian faith or how the best available interpretation of moral resources requires a God.[22] But these were more like tentative possibilities, rather than firm declarations that they provided the best possible explanation in our post-modern, pluralist context.[23] After this, though, Taylor does begin to explore the value of religion in a more positive and open manner, especially in his recent *A Secular Age*.[24] The general topic he examines here offers a clarificatory background to his earlier reticence in defending appeals to a transcendent reality: how is it that over the course of the past half millennium the West was transformed from a culture where the default, unarticulated position moved from a posture of belief to unbelief?[25] To speak to reflective human beings in contemporary Western culture requires acknowledging this pervasive and largely unexamined presupposition. This is not simply a pragmatic matter of obtaining tenure at a major secular research university; more importantly it is essential to gain a respectful hearing among one's peers. The esteem with which Taylor is held by the academic world of Western scholars is an indication of his success in this effort. Even now that he more explicitly acknowledges his religious commitments, he still proposes his arguments in a manner that is understandable to colleagues with alternative fundamental frameworks.[26]

Once we take this formally explicit development of Taylor's project into account, it becomes necessary to adjust our efforts to relate his thought to Polanyi's. Throughout his efforts to defend the practice of scientists as members of a community of inquirers seeking truth, he understood this to be providing a clearing within Western society for a more meaningful appreciation of religious values. Up until his last published works, he defended the value of religious ideals for sustaining a proper understanding of science (*M* 132-160). But Polanyi's appreciation of religion was that of a respectful outsider. He never made a commitment to a specific Christian (or other religious) tradition. Consequently, his appreciation of religion was not existentially grounded in his practice.[27] The significance of this observation becomes evident when we consider that, while Polanyi made important and helpful cultural observations defending religious practice, he was not able to speak in a similar manner to those dwelling within religious traditions. His theory of knowing accounts for this sort of deficiency. So the latter phase of Taylor's career addresses issues Polanyi never could have.

Let me illustrate this with a few examples. In "A Catholic Modernity?" Taylor calls for the Catholic community to recognize the service that modernity has provided it by ending Christendom, which allowed the flourishing of implicit Christian values of human good to emerge. The Church needs to become a community of compassion and love, not exclusive rules. (Undoubtedly, it's too much to presume that, while still Jorge Bergoglio, Pope Francis I had studied Taylor and taken his advice to heart;

but his papacy marks an uncanny turn of events in light of Taylor's reflections.) In his reflections in *A Secular Age*, Taylor not only points to the limitations of an exclusive humanism which an openness to a transcendent reality might address, he calls on religious traditions to make adjustments to accept many of the human goods and social forces which the modern era has unleashed. More specifically, he calls on the leadership of the Catholic Church to modify its modern attempt to impose a reform clericalism on Catholics by acknowledging alternative forms of human expressions of love. The flaw in this moralist version of clericalism, Taylor has contended, "was to make this take on sexuality mandatory for everyone, through a moralistic code that made a certain kind of purity a base condition for relating to God through the sacraments. What Vatican rule makers and secularist ideologies unite in not being able to see is that there are more ways of being a Catholic Christian than either have yet imagined."[28] The fact that as a committed, reflective Catholic Taylor is able to make significant recommendations for modifying the practice of the Church is a significant contribution that someone with Polanyi's outsider stance might appreciate but would not be able to originate.

One final example of the way in which Taylor's commitment to the Catholic tradition allows him to interact creatively with it can be adduced by recalling Polanyi's early reflections on authority. Polanyi claimed that authority promoted freedom in science provided that it functioned in a general way; any specific authority, determining the conclusions of research, for example, would destroy scientific practice. In illustrating this distinction Polanyi pointed to the structure of authority as he saw it practiced in the Catholic Church.[29] His analysis depicted the way the Vatican exercised authority since the end of the nineteenth century fairly accurately. But he could do no more than portray this from the outside and express the judgment that it would impede mature judgments and could not function in science without destructive consequences. Here is where Taylor has been able to go beyond Polanyi's appraisal. In a recent essay he argued on the basis of teachings from Vatican II that ecclesiastical authorities should not impose abstract norms on contingent, particular situations:

> In the final analysis, to recognize that freedom of conscience is a fundamental right, that it is an essential component of human agency, must require a recognition within the church itself that each Christian must be free to exercise his or her judgment in applying the gospel to contingent moral or political circumstances, in finding a language to articulate the faith, and to make whatever sense they can of the enigmas we live with and in. Each Christian can (and should) be part of the conversation from which the *consensus fidelium* will emerge….[30]

What has happened in the past century, Taylor argues, is that the *magisterium*—the teaching authority embodied in the Vatican—has failed to observe four limits: there have been failures to respect the contingency of moral judgments, the application of a false sacralization, an imposition of legalism, and a lack of reserve before the enigmatic.[31] This latter deficiency is particularly grating in the context of our contemporary awareness of pluralism. To affirm the truth of the faith does not require denying that some very saintly and spiritual people practice alternative faiths. We must learn how to live with such uncertainty and ambiguity while attempting to grow spiritually. The point of such reflections is not to declare the superiority of our modern age over the past formulations of the Catholic faith, but more humbly to take "our modern civilization for another of those great cultural forms that have come and gone in human history, to see what it means to be a Christian here, to find our authentic voice in the eventual Catholic chorus."[32]

I trust that this exercise in comparing the projects of Polanyi and Taylor has been enlightening. Polanyi's earlier breakthroughs in exposing the unnoticed assumptions operating in the practice of science and his attempts to expand this effort to exploring how we uphold our cultural ideals have been appropriated and developed by the more technically informed analyses of Taylor. Additional or alternative examples

could just as well have been explored. Nonetheless, I trust that a sufficient exposure to Taylor's project has been provided to entice students of Polanyi to work through Taylor's corpus to discover even more profound meanings.

ENDNOTES

[1]*Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958). The Harper Torchbook edition of 1964 includes a new introduction by Polanyi. Subsequent references to this work will be indicated parenthetically as *PK*.

[2]*Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989). Subsequent references to this work are indicated parenthetically in the text of the essay.

[3]*The Tacit Dimension* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., Image Book, 1967), pp. 80-92. Subsequent references to this work will be indicated parenthetically as *TD*.

[4]Michael Polanyi and Harry Prosch, *Meaning* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975). Subsequent references to this work will be indicated parenthetically as *M*.

[5]See Mary Joe Nye, *Michael Polanyi and his Generation: Origins of the Social Construction of Science* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 259-95.

[6]*The Study of Man* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Book, 1972 [1959]), pp. 86-89; see also pp. 76-77.

[7]"The Validity of Transcendental Arguments," in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 23-26.

[8]"To Follow a Rule," in *Philosophical Arguments*, p. 173.

[9]For a representative sample of these reflections see "Sense-Giving and Sense-Reading," in *Knowing and Being: Essays by Michael Polanyi*, ed. Marjorie Grene (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 181-207.

[10]See "The Importance of Herder" and "Heidegger, Language, and Ecology" in *Philosophical Arguments*, pp. 79-126.

[11]"Rorty in the Epistemological Tradition," in *Reading Rorty*, ed. Alan R. Malachowski (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 258.

[12]"Understanding the Other: A Gadamerian View on Conceptual Schemes," in *Dilemmas and Connections: Selected Essays* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 32. This is parallel to Polanyi's claim about understanding history in *The Study of Man*, pp. 11-12.

[13]"Understanding the Other," p. 26.

[14]*Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

[15]"The Validity of Transcendental Arguments," p. 20. Here following Merleau-Ponty Taylor argues that our awareness is necessarily embodied.

[16]*Ibid*., p. 28. I would argue here that so conceived "transcendental arguments" have a pedigree that goes beyond Kant to several medieval thinkers. For example, Bonaventure argued on the basis of the features of our experience (or powers) of our self-identity (memory), of our making truth claims (intellect), and of choosing goods (will), that a necessary condition for these to operate is an openness of our minds to God. See *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, III, 2,3,4. That he did not take such arguments in the manner of "moderns" who presumed these were positing "evidence" for the claim that God exists is clear from his characterization of such arguments as "exercises of the mind" to get us to think properly. See *Quaestiones disputatae de mysterio Trinitatis*, I, 1, resp. 12.

[17]Ruth Abbey, *Charles Taylor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 152-65. She notes, however, that Taylor does not intend to make a radical separation between the domains; just enough to maintain the way that human sciences must take into account the self-interpretations of its subjects. I call her study "early" because it appeared before Taylor's most recent formulations of the place of religion in secular culture.

[18]"Overcoming Epistemology," in *Philosophical Arguments*, pp. 1-19.

[19]*Ibid*., pp. 17-19.

[20]See, *inter alia*, *The Study of Man*, pp. 73-93; "Faith and Reason," *The Journal of Religion*, 41 (1961), pp. 237-247; "Science and Man's Place in the Universe," in *Science as a Cultural Force*, ed. Harry Woolf (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1964), pp. 54-76; and "Science and Religion: Separate Dimensions or Common Ground?" in *Philosophy Today*, 7 (Spring, 1963), pp. 4-14.

[21]The lecture was published as *A Catholic Modernity? Charles Taylor's Marianist Award Lecture with responses by William M. Shea, Rosemary Luling Haughton, George Marsden, Jean Bethke Elshtain*, ed. James L. Heft (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 13-37. This essay is also available in *Dilemmas and Connections*, pp. 167-187.

[22]See, e.g., *Sources of the Self*, pp. 312, 319, 342.

[23]Indeed, in his reflections on Taylor's lecture, George Marsden wonders "if *Sources* would not be a more complete, well-rounded, and effective book if it included something like the present essay as its conclusion." See his "Matteo Ricci and the Prodigal Culture," in *A Catholic Modernity*, p. 89.

[24]*A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

[25]*Ibid*., pp. 12-14.

[26]For an example, see William E. Connolly, "Catholicism and Philosophy: A Nontheistic Appreciation," in *Charles Taylor*, pp. 166-186.

[27]For a fair and balanced treatment of Polanyi's religious posture, see William T. Scott and Martin X. Moleski, *Michael Polanyi: Scientist and Philosopher* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 287-291.

[28]"The Future of the Religious Past," in *Dilemmas and Connections*, pp. 251-52.

[29]*Science, Faith and Society* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Books, 1964), pp. 57-59.

[30]"Magisterial Authority," in *The Crisis of Authority in Catholic Modernity*, ed. by Michael J. Lacey and Francis Oakley (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 265.

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

[32]*A Catholic Modernity?* p. 15.

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