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Preface

This issue includes David Nikkel's "Discerning the Spirits of Modernity and Postmodernity," which is an interesting effort to chart the course of what he terms a "moderate postmodernism." Along the way to this path, Nikkel provides interesting criticisms of modernist and immoderate forms of postmodernism. Dale Cannon has a review article on David Naugle's book, *Worldview: The History of a Concept*. Cannon both appreciates and challenges Naugle's analysis of the concept of worldview, which is drawn from an Evangelical Reformed perspective with the aim of converting the concept to Christian use.

The program for the upcoming Polanyi Society annual meeting in Washington is included. "News and Notes" identifies a new book on Polanyi and reports on a number of changes on the Polanyi Society web site. Again in this issue, there is information about the Polanyi Society Travel Fund which was created to help supplement meager travel funds for those who wish to come to the annual meeting. At this writing, I think there have been a couple of applicants. While the deadline is past, it might be possible to squeeze one more allocation into this allocation cycle. The Travel Fund, of course, welcomes contributions. Simply mark any donation as intended for the Travel Fund. In this issue, there is stuffed the colorful flyer designed to get your attention and remind you that this is the beginning of the season in which members are requested to pay dues.

Phil Mullins

Tradition and Discovery is indexed selectively in *The Philosopher's Index* and *Religious and Theological Abstracts* and is included in the EBSCO online database of academic and research journals.

NEWS AND NOTES

Mark Mitchell's introduction to Polanyi's thought, in the Library of Modern Thinkers series published by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, has just been published. The book is titled *Michael Polanyi: The Art of Knowing*. Go to <http://www.isi.org/books/titles.aspx?SBy=Title&SFor=Michael%20Polanyi> for more information.

The Polanyi Society web site's collection of primary materials (<http://www.missouriwestern.edu/orgs/polanyi/essays.htm>) now includes an audio file of the 1966 dialog between Michael Polanyi and Carl Rogers. You can play the MP3 file or you can download it. A text version of this dialog that was later published in William R. Coulson and Carl R. Rogers, eds., *Man and the Science of Man* (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1968), pp. 193-201 is also available on the site. Thanks go to William Coleson for permission to use this material, and to William Coleson, Jere Moorman, Phil Mullins, and John Flett for working to put this together.

Plans are being made soon to post links, on the Polanyi Society's web site, to audio files of Polanyi's 1962 McEnerney Lectures in Berkeley, California. Polanyi gave these four lectures in February and they were recorded by a local radio station, KPFA, that is owned by the Pacifica Foundation. The lectures were apparently played on air in the summer of 1962, but have been, since then, a little-known recording in the Pacifica archives. The lectures had the general title "History and Hope; An Analysis of Our Age." The four lectures had the following titles: "The Destruction of Reality," "The Realm of the Unspoken," "The Vindication of Reality," and "A Society of Explorers." John Flett and Phil Mullins have been working on this material along with the folks at KPFA.

Two additional photographs have been added to the collection on the Polanyi Society web site. There is now a photograph of some faculty, including Michael

Polanyi, of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institutes from about 1930. There is also a photograph of Polanyi standing with other members of the physical chemistry faculty of Manchester University from 1933 or 1934. These photographs were donated to the Polanyi Society by John Martins whose father came from the Kaiser Wilhelm Institutes to Manchester with Polanyi and served for a period as Polanyi assistant in Manchester.

The Polanyi Society web site now has a link to the finding aid for the Guide to the Michael Polanyi Papers, 1900-1975 in the Special Collection Research Center at the University of Chicago Library. There has for several years been a link to the version of the Guide published in *TAD* 23:1 (1996) but that version of the Guide has now been updated.

Electronic Discussion List

The Polanyi Society supports an electronic discussion group that explores implications of the thought of Michael Polanyi. Anyone interested can join. To join yourself, go to the following address: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/polanyi_list/join. If you have difficulty, send an e-mail to Doug Masini (masini@etsu.edu) and someone will see that you are added to the list.

Support Welcomed For Polanyi Society Travel Fund

The assumptions and paradigms that Michael Polanyi brilliantly challenged in the middle of the twentieth century still, sadly, dominate much of academic thinking to this day. Nearly half a century after the publication of his major epistemological and social works, it is not at all unusual to receive blank stares from philosophers, social scientists, and physical scientists – even in major colleges and universities — at the mention of Polanyi’s name.

For several decades the Polanyi Society has devoted its efforts, through its journal and its annual meetings, and – more recently – through its internet discussions and website, to the dissemination and further development of Polanyi’s seminal ideas. Many of those who have taken a lead in these efforts find themselves in the ranks of graying emeriti and are acutely aware of the urgency of reaching out to more young people – undergraduates, graduates, and post-graduates – to assure the perpetuation of Polanyi’s rich legacy.

To promote this effort, the Society has established a modest Travel Fund to assist those young people who have an interest in attending its annual meetings but whose financial conditions make this difficult. Recently, as we have attempted to spread the word regarding the availability of this fund, an unprecedented number of prospective beneficiaries of this assistance have been brought to our attention.

This is a most encouraging development in terms of the Society’s central objective of furthering Polanyi’s influence within academia and the larger society. However, it appears that we may end up this year with considerably more eligible candidates than available funds. We can think of few projects more worthy and in-line with our common purpose than the expansion of the resources of this fund.

Any contributions, however modest, that Polanyi Society members would care to make to this fund will be welcomed. They are fully tax-deductible. Checks for this purpose should be made out to the “Polanyi Society Travel Fund” and sent to Walter Mead, the coordinator of this fund, at the address below, for deposit in the Society’s fund account. If you wish to consolidate a contribution to the Travel Fund with a check for annual dues or a general contribution to the Society, be sure that you clearly identify your intentions. Questions can be addressed to Walter Mead by regular mail (4 Kenyon Court, Bloomington, IL 61701) or e-mail (wbmead@ilstu.edu).

Procedure For Applying For A Polanyi Society Travel Grant

The purpose of the Polanyi Society Travel Fund is to assist those with a strong interest in Michael Polanyi – especially undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate students – who have an interest in attending the Society’s annual meeting in November but whose financial conditions make this difficult.

Although the Society is interested in providing funding sufficient to make attendance at its annual meeting possible for eligible candidates, because of the modest amount of funds available, the Society must be selective in awarding a limited number of travel grants. The decision to award a grant and the amount of that grant will depend upon an evaluation of the following information to be provided by the applicant:

- (1) the applicant’s institutional affiliation, mailing address, e-mail address, and phone number (in each case, alternate summer addresses and phone numbers should also be supplied);
- (2) the estimated cost for traveling to and from the Polanyi meeting by the most cost-efficient means (perhaps a shared automobile, where distances are short);
- (3) the most affordable housing for one night’s lodging between the two days of Society meetings;
- (4) the degree to which the applicant and/or the applicant’s institution can contribute to these costs; and
- (5) a brief statement (300-500 words) indicating (a) the applicant’s program of studies and/or research, (b) any background of reading or courses relating to Michael Polanyi’s ideas, (c) the particular interest the applicant has in attending the program of meetings, and (d) the applicant’s present or future career plans.

In addition, the applicant should request someone acquainted with his or her interests and qualifications to provide *directly* to the Fund Coordinator, by e-mail, a brief letter of reference. The writer should indicate that his or her assessment of the applicant has not been shared with the applicant. All materials will be held confidentially by the Polanyi Society Board of Directors.

Applicants are encouraged to submit their requests as early as possible in order to be able to secure the most economical travel and overnight accommodations and to assure the availability of funds. Deadlines for application for the following November annual meeting are: March 1 (results to be announced by April 1) and, given the further availability of funds, August 1 (results to be announced by September 1) and, again, given the availability of funds, October 1 (results to be announced by October 15).

The Board of Directors of the Polanyi Society will collectively decide on the awarding of grants. Some applicants for either the March 1st or the August 1st deadlines may be designated as “stand-bys” for consideration in the following round of evaluations.

The above information, including letter of reference, should be received by e-mail no later than the intended application deadline. All materials (and any questions) should be e-mailed to (Fund Coordinator) Walter B. Mead (wbmead@ilstu.edu).

2006 Polanyi Society Annual Meeting Program

The program for the 2006 annual meeting of the Polanyi Society is printed below; this year's sessions will be in Washington D.C. on November 17 and 18, 2006. As in recent years, papers, listed below, will be posted on the Polanyi Society web page (<http://www.missouriwestern.edu/orgs/polanyi/>) in October (as soon as they become available).

The Polanyi Society annual meeting again this year is an "Additional Meeting" held in conjunction with the annual meetings of the American Academy of Religion and the Society for Biblical Literature. The program below is listed in the AAR/SBL Annual Meeting Program (p. 31 and p. 38). For information about the AAR/SBL meetings, go to the AAR/SBL web site: <http://www.aarweb.org/annualmeet/default.asp>. It is not necessary to register for the AAR/SBL meetings in order to attend the Polanyi Society annual meeting.

Friday, November 17, 2006--9:00 p.m.-11:00 p.m. Washington Convention Center, Room 153

- 9:00 Walter Mead, Illinois State University
"A Polyanian Resolution of the Age-old Conflict between Faith and Reason"
- 10:00 Tony Clark, University of St Andrews
"Torrance, Polanyi, and Imaginative Vision"

Saturday, November 18, 2006--9:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Grand Hyatt Washington, Bullfinch Room

- 9:00 Chair: Jere Moorman, Polanyi Society
- Blythe Clinchy, Wellesley College
"Epistemological Development as the Aim of Education: A Polyanian Perspective"
- Respondents:
Dale Cannon, Western Oregon University
Esther Meek, Geneva College
Zhenhua Yu, East China Normal University
- 11:15 Business Meeting
Walter Gulick, Montana State University-Billings, Presiding



Submissions for Publication

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

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WWW Polanyi Resources

The Polanyi Society has a World Wide Web site at <http://www.missouriwestern.edu/orgs/polanyi/>. In addition to information about Polanyi Society membership and meetings, the site contains the following: (1) the history of Polanyi Society publications, including a listing of issues by date and volume with a table of contents for recent issues of *Tradition and Discovery*; (2) a comprehensive listing of *Tradition and Discovery* authors, reviews and reviewers; (3) digital archives containing many past issues of *Tradition and Discovery*; (4) information on locating early publications not in the archive; (5) information on *Appraisal* and *Polanyiana*, two sister journals with special interest in Polanyi's thought; (6) the "Guide to the Papers of Michael Polanyi", which provides an orientation to archival material housed in the Department of Special Collections of the University of Chicago Library; (7) photographs of Polanyi; (8) links to a number of essays by Polanyi.

Discerning the Spirits of Modernity and Postmodernity

David Nikkel

Abstract Key Words: Absolutism, relativism, controlling assumption/picture, critical, postcritical, acritical, precritical, modernity, postmodernity, deconstruction, postliberalism, theology.

I characterize controlling pictures or assumptions and concomitants of first modernity and then postmodernity. In brief, these assumptions are the possibility of absolute transcendence of one's body, language, and culture versus the inescapability of some immanence in the same, of standing in the world. I trace the historical trajectory of the modern spirit and conclude that the move from modernity to postmodernity has been a long, gradual one that continues today. Modern thought increasingly recognized the historical relativity and conditionedness of everything human, yet held on to at least one version of absolutism. Recognizing that all of even one's own thinking is always incarnate and conditioned is the decisive point for entering postmodernity. The critical and non-critical aspects of the postmodern spirit are described. I next offer an evaluative overview of modern theology, evaluate two movements in modern theology and philosophy—existentialism and process thought—with important postmodern elements, and commend liberation theologies for exposing absolutistic assumptions of modern theology. Finally, with some trepidation I evaluate three types of self-consciously postmodern theology (which can find possible or actual counterparts in all the disciplines of the humanities). Radical or deconstructive postmodernism hypothesizes total immanence in our representations of reality. It alternates between the relativistic standing everywhere of equally endorsing all interpretations and the standing nowhere of nihilism. In its hidden standard of absolute truth and its refusal to (claim a) stand in the world, radical postmodernism reveals itself to be modern rather than postmodern. Conservative postmodernism or postliberalism emphasizes the importance of enculturation in a tradition. Hypothesizing immanence in incommensurate worldviews, its posture is defensive. Protestant postliberalism, including Radical Orthodoxy, postmodernly claims Christianity as a self-authenticating context of meaning, but then incoherently shifts into the posture of modern or pre-modern absolutism and claims it as the one true religion. Only moderate postmodernism can adequately reflect the postmodern spirit. It charts a course between absolutism and relativism. It gives the critical aspect its due, affirming limited human transcendence. It grants that all persons are rooted in the world, that all are embodied and enculturated in some meaning.

I count myself among a large number of scholars of religion (and other disciplines) who believe that we live in the midst of a major shift in Western culture—that we are moving from the modern age into a postmodern age.¹ In the opening sections of this essay I will delineate some distinguishing characteristics of the postmodern versus the modern spirit. I will proceed by describing respective *controlling assumptions* and concomitants of first modernity, then postmodernity. One postmodern assumption is that every individual and culture has basic assumptions, models, images, pictures that control the way one views the world. Such controlling assumptions function like eyeglasses—one *looks with* or *through* them, but does not normally *look at* them. (And indeed some assumptions are so basic or prereflective that, like one's own eye, one cannot look at them at all.)² Next I will discuss historical and logical relationships between the modern and postmodern spirits.

Postmodern sensibility would caution against any absolute postulating of the essence of an era, especially in contrast to another era. So I offer my understanding of the modern versus postmodern spirit not as an absolute or monolithic schema that disallows countervailing tendencies or alternative schemas, but as a general description of some contrasting tendencies involved in this cultural shift. Adding to this general caveat

my judgment that the movement from modernity to postmodernity has been long and gradual, I expect astute readers will have no problem identifying exceptions to my distinctions.

In the final sections of the essay, I will consider the relationship of the postmodern spirit to theology, primarily through the use of selected and hopefully representative movements and figures. In light of the judgment that the move to postmodernity has been a protracted one, I will look at some trends in theology, from Schleiermacher to the contemporary scene, in terms of their affinity with the postmodern spirit. Finally, I will examine three types of self-descriptively postmodern theology and assess them in relation to the spirit or logic of postmodernity as I have construed it. While I intend this construal to be acceptable to all three camps—the radical or deconstructionist/poststructuralist, the conservative or “postliberal,” and the moderate, an important purpose of this essay is to take a stand for moderate postmodernism. So I write as a critical and constructive theologian of the moderate postmodern strand, contending that it alone among the types consistently draws out the implications of the postmodern spirit—while the other two end up being more modern than postmodern in crucial respects. This project thus counters the use of “postmodern” as a synonym for “deconstructionist” or “poststructuralist” by some scholars, both sympathetic and unsympathetic to radical postmodernism. My attempt to define “postmodern” is thus an enactment of the postmodern insight that reality is (in part) defined, enacted by us.

I. The Modern Spirit

An original hallmark of modernity has been its stress on the individual and its great faith in individual critical reason.³ Religiously speaking, Martin Luther’s standing alone before the Diet of Worms dramatically signaled the coming of modernity. While the Protestant Reformation elevated the authority of Scripture, individual critical reason and conscience—hopefully guided by the Holy Spirit—received new freedom to interpret Scripture and make judgments. Correspondingly, this development greatly diminished the collective authority of institutions and tradition.

Certain Renaissance paintings represent the artistic beginnings of modernity as they reveal a controlling assumption or “picture” of modernity (Poteat, 59). In contrast to actual vision, everything in these paintings, including all elements of the foreground and background, appears crystal clear. A basic assumption of modernity is that the individual can leave behind all limitations of one’s body and perceptual equipment, temporality, language, and culture and reach an absolutely privileged position where one can “see” everything (including oneself) with complete clarity. Descartes, controlled by this picture, signaled the beginning of modern philosophy. Finding that all of his knowledge failed according to such a criterion of absolute—and explicitable—certainty, Descartes finally felt he reached the privileged position in his reflexive and self-conscious subjectivity—“I think, therefore I am.” In comparison with the Reformation, the ensuing Enlightenment of course radicalized the role of critical reason with respect to Scripture and tradition.⁴

I will now consider some ramifications of this controlling picture of modernity, mostly confining my remarks to the realm of Western thought⁵:

1) Probably the most significant consequence of modernity’s picture of the absolutely lucid and self-possessed subject was its dualisms between subject and object, mind and matter, including the body. If the individual human subject or mind is the absolutely privileged starting point, it becomes difficult or impossible to reach or have any meaningful connection with the object or the physical (especially by the criterion of absolute

certainty). The question becomes, how can mind impose meaning on inherently meaningless matter? For the flip side of the absolute subject is the absolute object: critical, distancing reason tends to turn what is in its gaze into nothing but an object. If, conversely, the simply material object and sense perception that supposedly mirrors the object serve as the absolutely privileged starting point, then it becomes difficult or impossible to reach or find any meaningful role for the human subject—which tends to be reduced to simply an aggregate of matter and energy. As with Humpty Dumpty, no one could put subject and object back together again, given the controlling assumption of modernity.

In either its idealist or physicalist manifestations, modernity's controlling picture leads to loss of meaning and, in the extreme, to personal and cultural insanity: idealism by sundering us from our bodies and emotions and our embodiment in the world; physicalism by having no place for the sacredness of human and animal life. While physicalism emphasizes the body as physical system, it is as discarnating as idealism, alienating us from our experiential, intentional bodies. Idealism divorces purpose from the world; physicalism divorces the world from any purpose.

2) Having (assumedly) left behind the nitty-gritty of existence in time, modern thinkers have been wont to claim to see *the* essence of being, human nature, history, the Bible, or Christianity. Such claims have often involved the positing of absolute categories, often paralleling the fundamental subject-object and mind-matter dualisms, often hierarchical. Examples include the human world versus nature, inner versus outer, reason versus emotion or sense perception, an enlightened age versus past benighted ages.

3) In principle, everything could come under the gaze of the absolute subject; everything should be assimilable to the individual's critical knowledge. What critical reason's categories and logic could not assimilate tended to be ignored, dismissed, or destroyed. Diverse images that come to mind include Thomas Jefferson's version of the New Testament with all supernaturalistic passages deleted, the humanities attempting to establish their relevancy before the bar of science, and the unparalleled ideological violence (at least in scale) of the modern age.

4) The model of the absolutely privileged and neutral position assumes all objects of knowledge as already fully constituted apart from the individual's coming to know. Truth is simply correspondence to a reality already "out there" (for those on the object side of the dualism) or already "in here" (for those favoring the subject side).⁶

II. The Postmodern Spirit

The contrasting controlling picture of postmodernity is a person standing in the world, with always at least "one foot in" one's body, temporality, society, culture, language, history, tradition, etc. While humans do indeed have reflexive, critical, transcending capabilities (far greater than those of any other animals on earth), such capabilities are not absolute as modernity tended to assume. One's ability to take off the eyeglasses through which one looks at reality and to look at those eyeglasses is limited. One cannot get out of one's own skin! One implication of the postmodern controlling assumption is that a person always stands embodied, enmeshed, enculturated in meaning and value. Normally we do not need critical reason to establish or justify meaning a la Descartes and his successors. Rather, critical reason can come into play when questions arise in our practice or when meanings break down.

Following are ramifications of postmodernity's controlling assumption paralleling and contrasting with those of modernity:

1) Neither subject nor object constitutes the privileged starting point for postmodernity. In terms of individual epistemology—granting an inalienable social component—someone knowing or perceiving something is the only starting point. Any attempt to completely “get behind” the act of knowing, to reach the subject “in itself” (that is, in total distinction from any object known) and likewise to reach the object in itself (that is, in total distinctness from any subject knowing it), is rejected. The postmodern spirit disowns this attempt not just because of its practical impossibility, but as misguided in principle: there is no absolute or pure subject to abstract out of the world and society in which one is embodied. It regards a person as a mindbodily continuum or whole. “Mind,” as our awareness of and our attempt to make sense of things, and “body,” as that with which we relate to a natural and social world, are radically interrelated, and both come into play at some level in all our acts.

2) In similar fashion, postmodernity views related distinctions or polarities—such as inner versus outer, reflective versus prereflective, the human versus the natural world, linguistic versus prelinguistic—as continuous, interrelated, and relative to context (never absolutely distinguishable). Besides eschewing dualisms, the postmodern spirit also runs counter to attempts to find *the* (necessary) essence of being, human nature, history, a religion, or a text. In general, it distrusts any rigid or absolutistic scheme of classification or categorization, on the grounds that such totalizing endeavors miss the richness, complexity, and contextuality of life, especially in its temporal and changing character and its prereflective and tacit dimensions.

3) Compared to modernity's overemphasis on the individual, postmodernity elevates the value of what transcends the individual. Descriptively and prescriptively, the cruciality of the social dimensions of life, including the authority of the group and tradition, are (or should be) recognized.

For the postmodern spirit, what appears different from or other than one's self, beliefs, or values should not ultimately be either assimilated or dismissed or reduced to a mere object. Instead one should encounter—an encounter that partially defines oneself—or engage in dialogue with the other, dialogue that appreciates and respects real differences (without entailing that one must ultimately equally accredit all the differing beliefs and values). In postmodern logic no privileged or neutral position exists to which contrary views must summarily reconcile or else face elimination.

4) The postmodern spirit holds that our perceiving, knowing, and acting play a significant role in creating the world we experience. On a very prereflective level, the truth of this contention becomes evident by imagining how different a lake looks to a bird flying over it or to a fish swimming in it than to a human being. Each creature's perspective brings what is there into definition—there is no *fully* determinate lake in itself nor any perspectiveless perspective on the lake.⁷ (A la Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, our “measuring” or perceiving always has some effect on what we know—our knowing always leaves some trace!) On a more reflective level, the vast array of languages, cultures, worldviews, and religions across the globe and through the ages suggests humanity's vital role in creating the worlds of meaning in which we dwell.

III. Discerning the Spirits

Some have characterized modernity as an era (increasingly) aware of the historical and cultural conditionedness of everything human, an era that diminished or vanquished absolutisms (e.g., Wall, Hopper). Can we square that characterization with my claim that the picture of the absolutely privileged subject controlled modernity? While modernity's critical reason slew the authoritarianisms and absolutisms of the past, it tended to do so with an assumption of its own absolutely privileged position! The ideas and values of a growing number of individuals and cultures were exposed as historically relative, but modern thinkers tended less to sense the conditioned nature of their own critical reflection. Marx and Hegel saw the relativity of all past periods of history, but nonetheless constructed an absolute master plan and final period of history. Freud discovered the falsity of the model of total and explicit human consciousness and self-control, yet he used his general awareness of the subconscious realm to devise absolutistic explanations of such things as women's nature and the origin of religion.

Premodern absolutisms were uncritical and relatively prereflective. The absolute authority and rightness of a tradition or a way of life were (again relatively speaking) simply assumed. They represent a first-order naivete. Modern absolutisms were/are reflective. Supposedly neutral critical reason arrives at them. They represent a second-order naivete. The naivete of critical reason is like a child who learns a new skill, such as riding a bicycle, and is so giddy with the newfound power and possibilities that the limitations of this capability, like all things human, escape notice.

Realizing or assuming the unavoidably incarnate, finite, temporally and culturally conditioned nature of *even one's own thinking and valuing* constitutes the crucial notion for admission into the postmodern age. To say that the postmodern spirit can be "realized" or "assumed" allows its appropriation to be either relatively reflective or relatively prereflective. Thus, the postmodern spirit overcomes or circumvents the second-order naivete of modernity.

Describing the relationships between the modern and postmodern spirits as I have above implies the inappropriateness of selecting one circumscribed period as *the* time Western culture left modernity and entered postmodernity. By the nineteenth century intellectuals arose who were "postmodern" in certain aspects of their thought, including Soren Kierkegaard and William James. As art had "announced" the beginnings of modernity, so also of postmodernity. Impressionist renderings of the same scene at different times of day pointed to the inescapability of temporality and perspectivalism. Cezanne's "out of focus" paintings suggested the necessary human component in bringing our world into definition (Poteat, 59). We have been gradually entering the postmodern age and continue to do so. The combination of the modern spirit slaying many authoritarianisms and a growing postmodern spirit has I judge been influential in an overall (if uneven) trend of the lessening of absolutism and a growing tolerance for diverse viewpoints in Western culture.

Parenthetically, I will mention an ambiguity pertaining to the postmodern truth of the embodied and conditioned nature of everything human. On the one hand, this truth contains a summons to self-criticism—it has a *critical* side. It is sometimes both possible and appropriate to look at our individual and (sub)cultural eyeglasses and consider whether our lenses need a correction. In this enterprise, those wearing different spectacles can help us to see assumptions we ourselves miss. Also, the postmodern spirit calls us to guard against absolutizing our own perspective (or assuming we do not have one, which is tantamount to absolutism). On the other hand, the inescapability of our embodiment and enculturation has an acritical or *precritical* side: it is often inappropriate or impossible to look at our eyeglasses. Michael

Polanyi noted the acritical nature of all tacit acts of knowing (PK, 264). We can only devote a limited portion of time to the reflective enterprise of making explicit the normally tacit or prereflective—the rest of the time we must live. And any such reflective attempts can only partly succeed, for critical reflection entails some temporal and perspectival distancing and separation. Finally, as indicated earlier, some assumptions are so basic that one cannot get behind them—they are more like one’s eye than like eyeglasses.⁸

IV. The Postmodern Spirit and Modern Theologies

If postmodern sensibilities already emerged in the nineteenth century, they manifested themselves more strongly in Protestant theology than in most other areas of Western thought. The modern spirit had unceremoniously dethroned theology as “queen of the sciences.” Theology’s past pronouncements on scientific and other “secular” matters were clearly recognized as historically limited. While theology’s competence or worth was under challenge with respect to more narrowly “religious” spheres, the cultural conditionedness of its religious formulations had not been as clearly established. Friedrich Schleiermacher, anticipating the further reach of critical reason, made a rather remarkable and rather postmodern acknowledgment: *all* of our characterizations of “the Absolute” are linguistically, culturally, and historically conditioned. With some justification this “father of modern theology” might also be called the “father of postmodern theology.”

However, Schleiermacher could not let go of one area of absolute privilege, one absolute human connection with the divine: the allegedly universal human “feeling of absolute dependence.” (Note that the issue here is not the absoluteness of the divine, but the absoluteness of the claimed human connection.) Granted attempts to express this feeling are always conditioned. Granted, too, this feeling manifests itself only in and through the particular contingencies of each moment of experience. Nevertheless, as a necessary component of every human experience rather than just a potentiality that some people realize some of the time, this feeling heralds its unconditioned and absolute character. Moreover, that the particularities of this moment of experience versus that one finally do not make any difference—we have the basic sense of our absolute dependence regardless, in that sense this feeling remains unconditioned and pure in relation to any linguistic and historical particularities.

Most nineteenth and twentieth century theology followed Schleiermacher in clinging to one absolutely privileged divine connection. For Tillich, it was the “mystical a priori”; for Whiteheadian process theology, awareness of the “initial aim” for each occasion; for neo-Thomism, implicit awareness and love for God; for existentialist theology, the courage to live authentically despite existential anxiety. Note the prereflective nature of all these connections. Modern theology had abandoned the attempt at an absolute reflective knowledge of God. But there remained the attempt to get underneath all cultural conditions through the prereflective.

Karl Barth, of course, denied any absolute or other connection coming from the human side. Instead, the absolute connection comes from God’s intentional revelation in Jesus Christ. As with Schleiermacher, human attempts to express this connection are relative (and Barth would add prone to idolatry). But this human connection (albeit provided by God) receives absolute privilege.

I will now give general consideration to some movements in twentieth century thought which, though in some aspects very much imbued with the modern spirit, evidence important postmodern elements and implications. Existentialist philosophy and theology in good postmodern fashion attacked modern and earlier

attempts to abstract out and reify an atemporal human essence. Existentialism also found earlier categorizations of reality too abstract and out of touch with the temporal and historical character of existence. Much of existentialism, though, turned only outward in postmodern critique, not recognizing the historical limitedness and tendencies to absolutism of its own definitions of human nature and categorizations of reality. For example, human beings in many contexts do not feel “thrown” into the world, but rather feel quite at home in it. On a related note, our normal embodiment and enculturation in some meaning belies the notion that one could or should always *explicitly decide* to take on authentic meaning. (My faulting of this aspect of existentialism does not deny the fiduciary and interpretative elements of personal commitment in all knowing and valuing.) In different ways, therefore, existentialism tended to shortchange both the self-critical and the precritical aspects of the postmodern spirit. In one aspect most of existentialism remained under the sway of the modern spirit: its pronounced individualism.

In contrast to existentialism, process philosophy and theology is postmodern in its focus on, and consistently positive evaluation of, the social nature and inter-connectedness of reality. Its emphasis on the temporality of all existence (which it shares with existentialism) and its denial of anything concrete about the self that is unchanging through time also resonate with the postmodern. On the “down side,” its Whiteheadian metaphysical system seems firmly entrenched in the rationalist or idealist branch of modernity, arising out of a desire to please the (absolute) thinking subject with its all-encompassing neatness. Idealism animates its theory that “occasions of experience” comprise all reality, with matter in effect only apparent, as our abstracting from numerous low-grade (subatomic) experiences. Idealism also imbues its theory of causation, in which all causation is a matter of experience, prehension, or sympathetic feeling. To be fair, Whitehead does write of prehension in “the mode of causal efficacy”—we cannot help but to take account of what enters into our experience from the past. Yet the metaphorical reliance on experience and on our taking in or grasping what affects us does not adequately account for materiality and exteriority, that is, causal efficacy that happens quite apart from any type of awareness or desire.⁹

Even as modern theologians subscribed to the notion that their work was relative to their era, they generally did not notice its relativity to their identity as Western European and North American middle and upper class white males—they typically assumed they spoke for the whole of culture of their era. As suggested earlier, postmodernity’s recognition of the difficulty of looking at the embodied, historical, and subcultural perspective with which we view reality entails that often those from another perspective can look at our “eyeglasses” better than we can. Liberation theology has certainly performed this service for mainline theology, showing how it has traditionally ignored or subsumed the otherness of persons of color, women, gays, lesbians, or the underclass and ignored or complied with their oppression. Theology should prioritize the other voices of homosexuals, women, blacks and the Third World to fulfill the postmodern spirit’s call to mutually engage the other.

V. The Postmodern Spirit and Postmodern Theologies

Theologies consciously or self-descriptively postmodern have tended to fall into radical, moderate, and conservative camps over the past generation. I now take up the (perhaps presumptuous) task of evaluating the contributions and prospects of those three types in light of the postmodern spirit as I have construed it—a postmodern scorecard, if you will.¹⁰ The thinkers who inform this typology are mostly North Americans in the Christian tradition (though the radicals would generally characterize themselves as influenced by, rather than part of, that tradition).

A. The Radicals

The postmodern theology that has caused the biggest splash, or the most waves, is the radical branch—deconstruction and other forms of poststructuralism.¹¹ As a tool, it performs a valuable postmodern function in critiquing or “deconstructing”—exposing the assumptions and contradictions attending—the absolute and self-contained subject, absolute text, or absolutely privileged place in or beyond time. As an a/ontology, poststructuralism is more problematic.

This type of theology has been labeled “severe” or “negative” (Beardslee) or “eliminative” postmodernism because it purportedly eliminates concepts of God, self, history, and truth (Griffin). The late Jacques Derrida is the premier philosophical influence behind this branch. Representatives of this type of theology in the Protestant tradition were Mark C. Taylor and the late Charles Winquist; D.G. Leahy and John Caputo offer versions in the Catholic tradition (though in Leahy’s case more rooted in American pragmatism than in French poststructuralism). Though Taylor has since moved beyond his deconstructive phase, I judge that he most consistently developed the implications of Derrida’s philosophy for theology (especially before Derrida himself began to write about religion). Therefore, I will be in conversation with him more than any other poststructuralist theologian.

Poststructuralism arises from a problem or “crisis of representation” growing out of modernity’s controlling picture—which assumed that we could transcend to reality “in itself,” a reality which our perceptions or words merely represent or to which they merely correspond, but in no way constitute. The postmodern spirit, of course, senses that interest, desire, perception, interpretation, commitment, personal and communal history influence every experience. Deconstruction reacts radically against modernity’s picture of transcendence and interprets postmodern insight to entail the total immanence of a person in one’s experiences: We are trapped in our perceptions, our words, our interpretations, our constructions of reality—and there is nothing else (except perhaps the “nothingness” of utterly unrepresentable *differance*). Because of its reliance on linguistic metaphors, some have falsely accused deconstruction of denying non-linguistic elements of experience.¹² What deconstructionists have maintained is the heavy influence of language on most human experience (a position which other postmodernists would accept). The key point here, though, is that no reality exists beyond our constitution of experience through language, perception, etc.

As with the modern and general postmodern spirits, art heralded deconstructive postmodernism, through much so-called “modernist” visual art and literature. While William Beardslee may be correct in his generalization that aesthetic modernism did not, unlike deconstruction, abandon the quest for “a vision of the whole” (64, 149), I believe that the related observations of Stephen Moore and Karl Raschke are more to the point: Modernism did tend to downplay or abandon the attempt at representation or realism.

To be totally immanent in one’s representations is, in Derrida’s words, to plunge into “the horizontality of a pure surface” (1978:298). For deconstructionists everything is surface, appearance, horizontality. Not only do they deny absolute transcendence, but even relative height or depth. This conflicts with Polanyi’s insight that knowing involves levels where tacit components contribute to wider, deeper, or higher focal contexts of meaning. Critical reason or reflective distance takes a penultimate role in deconstructing particular contexts of meaning, but from an ultimate perspective (although deconstruction’s “a/theistic” premises disallow such a perspective) human beings are trapped in the largest context of meaning, a (predetermined?) humanly undecidable, flowing whole.¹³ Everything is as it ought to be, leaving no room for sin or guilt (Taylor, 1984:121, 151-58, 166-69).

In keeping with the postmodern spirit, deconstruction emphasizes the relativity of meaning to context, the connectedness of the elements within a context, and the openness of a context to further and future interconnections. This openness implies the inexhaustibility of reality. Ironically, though, by placing everything on the same level of “appearance,” deconstruction instead offers a one-dimensional, flat, exhausted reality, lacking any sense of mystery. Similarly, deconstruction undermines its valuing of otherness and difference by reducing all alterity to distances between points on the same plane—or as components of an enclosed, fragmented self. This is one of the ironies of radical postmodernism its advocates have overlooked.

In the first place then, deconstruction holds that we are immanent and incarnated, totally inscribed in our bodies, culture, contexts of meaning. Forgoing explanation of how we can transcend our interpretations enough to come to such a second-order conclusion, deconstruction’s next move is this: since only interpretation or appearance exists, and given diverse, competing, and even apparently contradictory interpretations, one cannot seriously commit to any one interpretation. Indeed, the microcosm of the self and its meanings is so fragmented that it mirrors the inconsistencies and incoherencies of the macrocosm. Hence deconstruction’s sharp relativistic turn to irony or playfulness. Herein lies the supreme internal irony of radical postmodernism: the human being is regarded as totally embodied, immanent, committed, interested and at the same time called to be totally discarnate and disinterested. If per impossible, one could fully take to heart deconstruction’s anthropology, schizophrenia would result. Deconstruction’s freedom from commitment to particular values or worldview can never work in practice; deconstructionists like all creatures are standing somewhere. (One commitment driving many radical postmodernists is opposition to totalizing ideologies that pretend to speak for the interests of all.)

In a radical appropriation of the postmodern rejection of modernity’s search for absolute truth, Taylor offers wandering or “erring” as the primary metaphor for the human quest for meaning (esp. 1984:13, 149-58,179). This accords with deconstruction’s belief that we can only reach the “sign” but never the destination. Given the postmodern insight that we humans can never possess absolute presence or truth, deconstruction’s claim that each moment of experience involves the interplay of the presence and absence of meaning is correct. From my Christian and my personal perspective, though, even granting these two equal billing in a polar relationship errs: the presence of meaning is more basic and stronger in normal human and animal experience.¹⁴ However, deconstruction goes further and gives pride of place to the pole of absence. Its vocabulary and metaphors—such as erring, trace, shiftiness, undecidability, appearance(s) (and disappearance), marginality, darkness—suggest the insecure, unsettled, insubstantial, abysmal, and deconstructing nature of all meaning. Given the postmodern recognition of the impossibility of *absolute* self-presence, truth, and value, one might note that the cup of meaning is either relatively empty or relatively full. Why does deconstruction opt for (relative) emptiness? Perhaps pessimistic or skeptical personalities of its proponents play a part in deconstruction’s temperament. Undoubtedly, deconstruction’s emphasis on absence is partly rhetorical, an effort to counter-balance modernity’s (and the Western Greek-rooted philosophical-theological tradition’s) emphasis on absolute self-possession and truth. But the decisive factor, as I have implied, now claim, and later will argue is the hidden yet controlling spirit of modernity and its haunting standard of absolute truth.

With its emphasis on the absence of meaning, deconstruction takes its standing nowhere in ironic relativism to at least the brink of nihilism. Having radically undermined all particular meanings, deconstruction can avoid the standing nowhere of nihilism only by trying to stand everywhere—by unqualifiedly affirming the interconnected totality of all that has or will transpire (Taylor, 1984:151-58, 166-69, 182)—which is tantamount to standing nowhere relative to competing and contrasting possibilities, interpretations, and choices for individuals and societies. Practically speaking, such a universal attachment to every particular is no more possible

than the ironic detachment that constitutes the flip side of the same coin.

Deconstruction's primary images for humanity and divinity cohere: Even as the person is wholly immanent in one's body and experiences, so divinity is wholly immanent with respect to the world. Taylor writes of "the ever-never-changing-same [that] is the eternally recurring play of the divine milieu in which *all things* [emphasis his] arise and pass away." (1984:112-20, 183). Leahy also expresses the radical postmodernist vision: "As never before the divine flows absolutely. In this flow every notion of self is completely dissolved." (1989:786). In this conception of divinity, more radical than most historical forms of pantheism, no place remains for transcendence, personality, or purposive agency ontologically prior to the world (Taylor, 1984:118). Deconstruction takes "the death of God"—meaning the denial of any divine transcendence or selfhood—to be concomitant with the absence of any absolute human meaning. Here deconstruction "errs" in a sense different than Taylor's, in assuming that the contextual relativity of all human existence and meaning contravenes the existence of an Absolute Reality.¹⁵ The absence of any absolute human connection to the Absolute does follow from a consistent upholding of the contextuality of all human meaning; but the acknowledgement of human contextuality does not at all settle whether the Absolute exists and can be known—relatively, of course. Without denying deconstruction's claim that the traditional understanding of God reinforced modernity's picture of the absolute human subject, one can regard God as having a perfect knowledge and self-possession impossible for human beings (without entailing impassibility or immutability).

The great historical irony of deconstruction, which often denigrates "seriousness," is that it has taken modernity's controlling picture far too seriously. Its extreme reaction against that picture of neutral and absolute truth—its affirmation of total immanence with its implications of relativism—forms the mirror image or the underside of the coin of modernity. Radical postmodernism's pessimism regarding meaning is quite appropriate relative to modernity's standard of *absolute* presence and meaning that must be critically established, but quite inappropriate in light of postmodernity's assumption of our inalienable embodiment and enculturation in some meaning. An absolutistic reflective move—the positing of total immanence in divergent meanings—permits the reversal of postmodern optimism about our embodiment in meaning. In spite of this pessimism, Peter Hodgson discerns an irony stemming from the obsession with absolute presence: deconstruction ends with a "total 'having' of divinity, and an undialectical immediacy," with God as "totally incarnate in worldly inscription." (37). While on one level the radicals strenuously denounce modernity's quest for the place of absolute privilege, on a deeper (or perhaps better, more shallow) level—in the human possession of the highest possible meaning of an experience, the "surface" meaning, which is also the possession of totally immanent divinity, and in the unqualified affirmation of the totality of experiences—the absolutistic spirit of modernity reigns.

To be fair to Derrida and his legacy, we must finally consider his later writings that explicitly deal with religion. In particular, some writings develop a concept of messianism—endorsed and expounded upon by John Caputo—but a messianism "without content and without identifiable messiah" (Derrida, 1994:28). While Derrida grants that this messianic concept perforce comes from the particularities of tradition(s), it is intentionally a formal concept, a wholly other that challenges in the name of justice the privileged claims of any historical social structure or meaning. These latter works reveal both the ethical intent of radical postmodernism to undermine absolutistic regimes and its insufficient ontological base on which to do so. Here Derrida comes to sense the absolutistic dangers of immanentism (as Taylor explicitly did [1991]). But in doing so he posits a third companion on the transcendent side of the binary, to go with ironic detachment and unrepresentable *differance*. Just as with the other two, we lack any direction for deciding on the justness of concrete structures and meanings.

Descartes in his exercise in radical doubt at the philosophic beginning of modernity failed to recognize his inevitable standing in the world and in meaning. Even as those controlled by the modern picture believe (falsely) that they stand nowhere in the world, so radical postmodernism, in its refusal to go beyond either a version of transcendental relativism or an unqualified affirmation of the whole, refuses to (claim a) stand in the world. Taylor wrote, “Though always enacted over a bottomless abyss, festive play is never grave” (1984:164). If my preceding analysis is correct, rather than dancing over the abyss of meaning, radical postmodernism is mourning at the coffin of modernity.

B. The Conservatives

Both Protestant and Catholic postliberal theologians emphasize the importance of enculturation in a tradition or worldview. The Protestants regard secularists as ensconced in a competing tradition or worldview, while the Catholics tend to view them as tradition-less, homeless, and needing to return to (the authority of) the Church. Protestant postliberals include George Lindbeck, Stanley Hauerwas, and the late John Howard Yoder, with John Milbank and others adding a “Radical Orthodox” twist. The former Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, former Lutheran Richard John Neuhaus, and George William Rutler advocate Catholic postliberalism. The Protestant postliberals engage in sophisticated postmodern discourse while the Catholics’ postmodernism largely confines itself to critique of modernity for its individualism, materialism, and utilitarianism.

My following remarks on postliberal anthropology apply more directly to the Protestants who have explicitly engaged in this postmodern argumentation. The conservative postmoderns join the radicals in emphasizing human immanence in our experiences and viewpoints (though implicitly or explicitly parting company on whether a reality exists beyond our interpretations, especially in regard to ultimate reality). Noting both the deep rooting of persons in differing cultural-linguistic frameworks and the absence of a privileged position from which to adjudicate such differences, these thinkers have concluded that genuine understanding between basic perspectives is unlikely or impossible. Different worldviews must either contradict each other or—drawing (or misdrawing, I believe) on Wittgenstein’s concept of different “language games” for different contexts—bypass each other. Even apparent similarities and commonalities between Christianity and other cultural-linguistic frameworks allegedly prove discordant when viewed within their differing contexts. In terms of the basic assumption or picture of postmodernity, such thinkers do not see human beings as getting even one foot out of one’s society, culture, history, or tradition. The critical side of the postmodern spirit is downplayed or absent. Such a conclusion also violates the postmodern spirit’s respect for otherness: The other poses either a threat or an irrelevancy.¹⁶

Such tribalistic thinking allows postliberal theologians to believe that the Bible or Christianity is its own world (view) in need of no authentication or corroboration by critical reason or any non-Christian perspective. The posture of this conservative wing of postmodernity is defensive; the concern is to save Christianity from further critical attacks by modernity. Postmodern logic implies that Christianity or any worldview carries (and to some extent creates) its own self-authenticating context of meaning. However, it does *not* imply denying or downplaying the importance of corroboration and questioning by critical reason and by alternative perspectives. As Adam and Eve could not return to the garden of innocence, so as we leave modernity’s second-order naivete about critical reason, we cannot return to the uncritical first order naivete of premodern orthodoxy. We will be the poorer in added misunderstanding and conflict and foregone cooperation if each worldview and religion naively assumes its absoluteness—absolute here in the sense of an entity unto itself, unrelated to others. In addition, this notion of a more or less unbridgeable gap between differing worldviews has very negative implications for a traditional Christian concern—evangelism.

Postliberals do offer a positive contribution to contemporary theology by challenging Christians to be genuinely immanent in their tradition, to recognize and claim what is meaningful in Christianity, and by increasing awareness of how Christians allow other viewpoints to define us. (An irony appears here. The postliberal belief in the incommensurability of worldviews arises in tandem with a fear of Christianity's corruption by secularism, yet postliberals fail to recognize the implausibility or impossibility of such contamination to the extent of the truth of incommensurability.) Though in considerable tension with belief in incommensurability, postliberalism does provide hope for the evangelistic efficacy of a community whose authority lies in the attractiveness of its praxis. (By contrast evangelistic hope for Catholic postliberals rests on the prospect that people in want of a moral and religious authority will return to the Church.)

Having provided Christianity intellectual sanction through the postmodern notion of culture or worldview as self-authenticating context of meaning, conservative postmodern theology then refuses to play by the logic of the notion, by the rules of the postmodern game. Christianity escapes the application of the relativity and contextuality at the heart of this postmodern idea. On what basis? On an absolutistic assumption in the modern or pre-modern spirit: that religious truth entails that God intentionally and infallibly (though acting through cultural-linguistic realities) constitutes a religion as *the* religion. At most one religion correctly claims to know an extra-cultural-linguistic and ultimate reality. Publicly speaking, in the short term we cannot adjudicate these competing claims of religious traditions, in keeping with the postliberal immanentist assumption. In the long term, the one true religion established by God will survive, while other worldviews may not. Postliberals recognize that Christianity appears as relative as any other religion to outsiders. But privately speaking, the Christian can know this God-given absolute connection. Clearly this theology will not settle for Christianity as one context of meaning among many—it must be the absolute religion, the one grand exception. In the tradition of Barth (whether or not Barth is cited), though this theology acknowledges the relativity of everything human on one level, ultimately God overrides human epistemological finitude.

Given the strong Polanyian influence on this project, I will address the thought of Esther Meek, who has authored an excellent book on Polanyi's epistemology. Postliberals and the Radical Orthodox do not assume the violation or superseding of natural processes in the unique authority of the Bible. By contrast Meek in evangelical tradition does hold to supernatural interventionism to guarantee the historicity of the biblical witness. On several interconnected fronts I find Meek's stance on revelation and biblical authority problematic from a Polanyian perspective. Historical biblical criticism constitutes a well-established tradition supported by general evidence that pre-modern people judge truthfulness by mytho-poetic, theological, and existential rather than modern historical standards as well as particular evidence that many biblical narratives are in fact not historical. In the face of such direct challenge one cannot retreat to an uncritical haven. The cruciality of science for Polanyi compounds the difficulties inherent in Meek's position, and not only in the breaking or supersession of scientific laws that grounds her view of religious authority. While an intuitive, unspecifiable, and tacit dimension underlies all science, scientific knowledge often defies common sense or naïve realism. Likewise we need to recognize an unscientific naivete of ancient "common sense" concerning the "historical" (see PK, 267). In the tradition of liberal Protestantism (and Judaism) we need to distinguish between theological/ethical and historical truth, as Polanyi himself suggested by endorsing "modern theology('s)" acceptance of historical biblical criticism "as its guide for reinterpreting and consolidating the Christian faith in a truer form." (PK, 282-83). Only then can we do justice to the "universal intent" of faithful scientific and historical investigation.

While radical postmodernism images humanity and divinity consistently—total immanence

prevails, conservative postmodernism downplays human transcendence and freedom, while stressing them with respect to God. God chooses to reveal God's self within one particular tradition. Personal particularity wins out over a wider, more consistently immanent revelation—a revelation consonant with both human and divine universal intent and with indeterminate future manifestations.¹⁷

C. The Moderates

Not being aware of a representative movement or figure that has spelled out the relevant characteristics of moderate postmodernism, I now presume to write constructively from that perspective. The moderate wing takes to heart the postmodern freedom from the modern burden of explicating and justifying all basic assumptions and all meanings. It enjoys the postmodern assurance that Christianity has meaning for those incarnated and enculturated in it. This assurance frees it to use critical reason appropriately to address problems and opportunities that arise. It alone of the three postmodern camps can be genuinely hopeful. Part of its relative optimism stems from it alone fully disowning absolutism. It avoids the deconstructive emphasis on the extreme tenuousness or absence of meaning relative to a hidden standard of absolute truth. It also averts postliberalism's impossible burden of maintaining or proving to the Christian community its religion's absoluteness.

I have delineated how both the radicals and the conservatives bounce back and forth between immanentist relativism and respective absolutisms. Moderate postmodernism attempts to chart a course between relativism and absolutism. For it, the absence of an absolute beginning and end does not entail deconstruction's "erring" or "aimlessness." Rather, humans and animals in their bodily becoming in the world normally find purpose and direction in a multiplicity of goals and meanings, some more immediate or short-term, some long-term or overarching, some more definite or particular, some more provisional or general. Despite foreclosure from any absolute perspective, creatures normally come to perceptual, kinesthetic, and cognitive closure, contrary to deconstructive "undecidability."

To the extent poststructuralists would acknowledge the above description of normal experience, they might still contend that upon radical reflection (in the modern spirit, I would add) ironic skepticism is a more appropriate attitude. But moderates realize that lack of meaning and skepticism are parasitical upon meaning, upon standing somewhere. In normal experience we realize we are in touch with some truth and value, even though upon reflection or further experience we discover that we erred in some (perhaps crucial) respect or missed the greatest possible value (and, indeed, perhaps caused horrible evil in the process).

Crucially moderates realize and claim that we know reality, a reality partly but not wholly constituted by us. There is always a givenness not constructed by any individual or cultural group. Except in the case of other experients (and unless one accepts a panpsychic viewpoint without remainder, which I earlier rejected as an expression of modern idealism), the given element is not itself already fully constituted or definite, not a "world" apart from our participation, but open to our fuller definition. From a postmodern perspective, it is neither necessary nor plausible to postulate either a concrete, complete physical realm or a reified moral order completely independent of a world evolving and under construction. But neither is the given simply indefinite or amorphous. Certainly no one can directly or concretely describe the given, for any description involves our constituting activity. Here we can helpfully contrast the moderate postmodern vision with other options. While radical postmodernism denies any world beyond our constituting activity and Kantian modernism postulates a fully constituted world independent of, but partially accessible through, our constituting activity, moderate postmodernism sees given elements and our constituting activity as together forming the world.

Because of the uncompromising commitment that we are embodied *in reality*, con both radicals and postliberals, moderates reject any strong doctrine of incommensurability and credit others with some grasp of truth. Even radically divergent perspectives may at some level apprehend the same given element of reality. Moderate postmodernism holds that error is corrigible—not by some absolutely privileged, infallible, inherently different method, but by our normal ways of coming to know in the world; that there are better and worse; that in moving from one perspective to another, we not only achieve something aesthetically novel (as in Lyotard’s “paralogy”), but can stretch to fuller truth. In short, moderate postmodernism places us in the muck and mire of real existence with all its ambiguity, where none of us has any absolute possession of the truth but none of us is totally blind either, where we may be “often perplexed, but not defeated,” where we can and should reach for fuller truth and greater value.

With the radicals, moderates recognize that part of Christianity’s largest context of meaning involves its interconnections with differing worldviews. While maintaining Christianity’s relative identity, it eschews the notion of Christianity’s absolute difference from other religions and worldviews. It willingly and hopefully enters into dialogue with the other. While acknowledging that a Western Christian cannot know Buddhism, for example, precisely as someone enculturated in Buddhism from birth, it believes that mutual translation and understanding are possible. It shares its viewpoints and commitments in the faith that they (and those of the partner in dialogue) can have relevance to more than an isolated context, can have more universal meaning. Change and even conversion are possible outcomes of dialogue. Such faith involves the basic assumption that continuous with our rootedness in a particular culture and tradition is our rootedness in the being/becoming of the world.

The moderate branch recognizes our immanence in contexts of meaning in a way that modernity did not and disavows its assumption or standard of absolute transcendence. But unlike the other two branches, it does allow a significant place for freedom and transcendence, as the preceding analysis suggests. Humans have the potential and sometimes the obligation to critique smaller and larger contexts of meaning and to embrace or reject them, the potential to change our judgments regarding truth and our moral commitments. The middle branch alone consistently gives the critical side of the postmodern spirit its due.

As does radical postmodernism, the moderates image humanity and divinity harmoniously. As some balance of transcendence and immanence pertains to humans, so too to God. A stronger sense of divine immanence prevails than in classical theology, even as greater immanence characterizes its portrait of humanity. To the extent they address directly concepts or metaphors for God, postmodern moderates may favor panentheism, as do Protestants Sally McFague and Peter Hodgson and Catholic David Tracy.

VI. Epilogue

A sense of rootlessness and of the arbitrariness of ways of life has grown in Western civilization over the past century or more. This rootlessness and disembodiment derives in part from the controlling picture of modernity, a picture that denies our roots. Modernity initially hoped that critical reason would banish the arbitrariness of individual and institutional beliefs and practices. As reason failed to establish absolute truth, hopes for overcoming arbitrariness increasingly banked on the prereflective; however, this hope was dashed as well. The past century also saw an increasing awareness of alternative cultures and worldviews.

While preliminarily acknowledging bodily and social rootedness, radical postmodernists, like some existentialist forerunners, applaud rootlessness and arbitrariness-relativism. The desire to feel “at home” in the

world, for things to “hang together,” is finally inappropriate and unhealthy. Postliberals by contrast attempt to purchase at-home-ness by positing an absolute grounding in a tradition. Given an increasing sense of uprootedness in modern and postmodern worlds, it should not surprise us that both radical celebration and postliberal exorcism of rootlessness and arbitrariness have appeal.

Refusing either extreme, moderate postmodernism acknowledges both our rootedness in meaning—through our bodies and traditions I would claim—and the element of arbitrariness in all our ways of viewing and doing. Nothing is absolute or necessary in a logical sense, yet this does not preclude meaning and coherence. Our rootedness in our bodies and world is not one of stasis, but of openness both to new constitutions of the world and to fuller apprehensions of the world’s givenness.

The postmodern insight that everyone must stand somewhere can be startling. Radical and conservative postmodernism see everyone as standing irreconcilably far apart. The radicals, though, attempt to overcome such incommensurability by the standing everywhere-nowhere of endorsing equally every position. Moderate postmodernism recognizes our differences, but affirms that through our embodiment in the world we do not stand irreducibly far apart.

The abandonment of the modern assumption of and search for the privileged position of absolute self-possession, absolute transcendence with respect to time, and absolute clarity and certainty, will sadden some. But perhaps renouncing any absolute human perspective should not be that unsettling. Those who disbelieve in God presumably have no reason to expect any absolute perspective. Those who believe in God might well confess that there is only one absolute perspective, and that it belongs to God.

Endnotes

¹‘Postmodern’ has gained supremacy over the alternative terms ‘postcritical’ and ‘postliberal’. Michael Polanyi’s ‘postcritical’ stands as probably the best single word for conveying the substance of the shift from modernity as I construe it in this essay. The term, as I understand it, does not suggest the impossibility or undesirability of appropriate critical reflection, but rather modernity’s failure to recognize the limits of critical reasoning. ‘Postliberal’ does connect with ‘postcritical’ insofar as one of those limits is the impossibility of (and the wrong-headedness of attempting) totally to transcend tradition. However, one cannot answer the question of how far one can or should transcend tradition in a particular cultural or religious context with generalities. It should not surprise us then that ‘postliberal’ is the term of choice for those with a conservative orientation.

²I am indebted to my mentor in postmodernity, William H. Poteat, for the concept of the controlling “picture,” as well as for the idea, developed later in this essay, that idealism and empiricism represent flip sides of the same dualistic coin. (Poteat in turn was influenced by French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty on this latter idea.)

³In this essay I use the term “critical reason” in a general sense, meaning reason as it questions and/ or attempts to establish or justify or make explicit meaning and value.

⁴Martin Luther, taking a much more critical stance toward Scripture than subsequent Protestant scholastics, foreshadowed critical activities of the Enlightenment by denying the historical accuracy of parts of

the Bible and by judging as theologically invalid certain biblical books (Van A. Harvey).

⁵ Though certainly both positive and negative practical and social consequences have issued as well. For example, on the positive side: 1) many accomplishments of science, medicine, and technology 2) the overthrowing of many superstitions 3) a sense of universal human rights; on the negative side: 1) the exploitation of nature and ecological crisis 2) the common practice by physicians of treating patients as just physical organisms (a practice that many medical schools now discourage in something of a postmodern trend). Given my contention that postmodernity corrects excesses of modernity and is impelled by a more truthful controlling assumption, a reader might get the impression that I regard modernity as “bad” and postmodernity as “good.” As my preceding remarks suggest, such simplism does not represent my overall position.

⁶ While Kant came to deny that we can know any “thing in itself,” as he grappled with the implications of modernity’s subject-object split, what is noteworthy is his very assumption of a fully determinate object in itself, albeit unknowable, behind any perception.

⁷ Note that my wording entails that, in knowing, something is there—something “stands against” us. Postmodernity’s logic does not permit the subjectivistic and solipsistic tendencies of modernity. We, individually or collectively, only partly create the world we know. The correspondence theory of truth is not altogether wrong.

⁸ Polanyi’s term “postcritical,” consonant with what I am calling “the postmodern spirit,” takes in both the critical and the acritical or precritical. Polanyi assented to—critically—“the greatly increased powers of man,” granting us a “capacity for self-transcendence of which we can never again divest ourselves.” (PK, 268).

⁹ It is no coincidence that David Ray Griffin typically identifies modernity and its negativities with its materialistic and sensationalistic side, while largely overlooking its idealist side.

¹⁰ For a related evaluation, see David E. Klemm.

¹¹ Though radical pragmatism-historicism has affinities with poststructuralism, it has not been as influential among theologians.

¹² Though it may well be that deconstruction’s reliance on reflective and linguistic metaphors for reality—such as, “writing,” “text,” “interpretation”—hinders it from acknowledging our (more) prereflective and bodily grounding in meaning.

¹³ By “meaning,” I connote both sense and value.

¹⁴ I believe Sallie McFague granted deconstruction too much in *Models of God*, in writing that “absence is at least more prevalent than presence” (25). This conflicts, or at least is in tension, with her assumption that Christian faith is “most basically a claim that the universe is neither indifferent nor malevolent but that there is a power (and a personal power at that) which is on the side of life and its fulfillment” (x).

¹⁵ By “absolute,” I do not mean to suggest that God is unrelated to or unaffected by creation.

¹⁶Charles W. Allen describes tribalism's threat-irrelevancy polarity in "The Primacy of *Phronesis*."

¹⁷See Dale Cannon, David W. Rutledge, and Esther L. Meek, *Tradition and Discovery* 31/3, for additional discussion of Meek's theology relative to Polanyi's post-critical philosophy

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David Naugle on Worldviews

Dale Cannon

ABSTRACT Key Words: worldview, hermeneutics, philosophical theology, Augustinian epistemology, realism, relativism, David Naugle, Michael Polanyi..

*David Naugle's book, *Worldview: The History of a Concept*, offers a comprehensive, interdisciplinary history and analysis of the concept of worldview from an Evangelical Reformed perspective with the aim of converting it to Christian use—specifically, to disabuse it from association with historicism, relativism, and anti-realism. Despite his theological agenda, his wide ranging discussion provides good food for thought to anyone interested in the nature, history, and development of the concept of worldview and the problems of historicism, relativism, and anti-realism. While his account of Polanyi's understanding of worldview in connection with the natural sciences is sympathetic and sound, he does not draw as fully as he could have on the resources of Polanyi's thought in developing his own more general understanding of worldview.*

David K. Naugle. *Worldview: The History of a Concept*. Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002. Pp. xxii + 384. ISBN: 0-8028-4761-7, \$26.00, paper.

Naugle's book attempts a comprehensive interdisciplinary history and analysis of the concept of worldview from a perspective of the interests and concerns of an Evangelical Reformed Protestant philosopher-theologian. This is deliberate; Naugle has a specific agenda. His aim is not to produce a work of philosophically and theologically neutral scholarship – rigorous scholarship that would satisfy philosophers and theologians of whatever stripe, though at first that is what I had supposed – but to clarify and refine the concept of worldview in a way that will “convert it to Christian use” (259), rendering it “useful for service in the church and acceptable to her Lord” (290) and specifically freeing it from certain problematic features that have brought it under suspicion among some Evangelical Reformed Protestant spokespersons (notably Karl Barth) as to its suitability for general theological use.

Why review a book of this sort in the Polanyi Society journal? Primarily because Naugle's history of how the concept of worldview has been deployed includes an entire chapter on its use in explaining the disciplinary nature and methodology of the natural sciences that draws exclusively upon the work of Michael Polanyi and Thomas Kuhn, who, Naugle notes, was decisively influenced by Polanyi. Naugle expounds in eight pages Polanyi's understanding of the tacit, fiduciary character of all knowing (188-195), embracing it wholeheartedly, as seen in the fact that he expresses no critical reserve about it. To be sure, Naugle is well prepared to be in deep sympathy with this Augustinian model of knowledge as a gift of grace received in faith, as it is a principal strand within the overall position he takes within the book and a view in which he is independently, theologically grounded. He casually but repeatedly alludes to Polanyi's understanding with favor in the remainder of the book. Anyone reasonably well acquainted with Polanyi's thought will find nothing new or problematic in his handling of Polanyi. But it strikes me that there is a good deal more in Polanyi's thought than Naugle brings into discussion that is relevant to sorting out what it is that Naugle is attempting to get at in terms of worldview in this chapter and elsewhere (e.g., Polanyi's entire discussion of “articulate frameworks,” among other things).

That may be due in part to the fact that Naugle seems to be relying primarily on secondary expositions of Polanyi's thought --a practice evident in his coverage of the thought of several other major thinkers that he discusses at length, though not all--and to the fact that, for the most part, Naugle limits his discussion of the thought of any one thinker to what that thinker has directly written about worldviews and/or closely related concepts. What else a thinker may have to say that may significantly bear upon Naugle's central concern but does not explicitly do so is likely to be overlooked. As a result, and given the fact that an understanding of the untreated larger context of a thinker's explicit account of worldview may significantly alter the meaning that account seems to have on its own apart from that context, Naugle risks distortion in his exposition of that thinker's view. For example, I notice his handling of Kierkegaard's thought particularly suffers in this regard: his account is not just distorted but garbled and misses the point of Kierkegaard's critique of thought—including worldview thinking—that is not “doubly reflected” and oriented to “reduplicating” existence in thought and thought in existence. The force of Wittgenstein's critique of conventional philosophy is similarly missed: he takes a strictly relativist reading of Wittgenstein's appeal to language games and forms of life, thereby missing entirely Wittgenstein's point about how conventional philosophizing often loses connection with the shared commonsense grounds for making sense in language. As well, he misses the force of Husserl's critique: Husserl's radical quest to attend so far as possible to the pre-reflective, pre-constituted given of our experience, beyond distorting, constituting presuppositions—such as those pertaining to worldview, and especially to what Husserl called “the natural standpoint”—that we bring to our experience in an effort to determine its meaning, represent it to ourselves, and so reflect on it, gets lost. On the other hand, his handling of the thought of other figures – e.g., Dilthey, Heidegger for the most part, and Gadamer – seems thorough, fair, and well balanced – well grounded in a profound acquaintance with the larger philosophical concerns of the work of those thinkers. Though Naugle doesn't explore the resonances between Polanyi's thought and that of Heidegger and Gadamer regarding hermeneutics, the lucid way he expounds the thinking of the latter two in chapter 11, particularly in connection with conceiving a worldview as a semiotic system, serendipitously opens up a large and fascinating horizon of fruitful philosophical research for students of Polanyi's thought.

Nevertheless and despite these criticisms, Naugle's book is an extraordinary achievement – so much so that one can learn a great deal from it philosophically, even if one has no special interest in Naugle's primary intention identified above or has no special sympathy with his theological perspective. It covers a huge amount of ground and introduced me to aspects of the work of Dilthey, Jaspers, Michael Kearney and Robert Redfield in Anthropology, among others of which I had little or no knowledge. Naugle starts out the book surveying influential efforts to articulate a Christian worldview by several Reformed Protestant theologians in the twentieth century: James Orr, Gordon H. Clark, Carl F. H. Henry, Abraham Kuyper, Herman Dooyeweerd, and Francis Schaeffer. In an effort to “balance” things theologically, he devotes a chapter to surveying parallel, complementary efforts among a sampling of Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox theologians. From these surveys he then turns to philology in tracing the etymology of “*Weltanschauung*”/“worldview” (and closely related words) in European languages back to its origin in Kant, its expanded use in Fichte, and Schelling, its rapid appropriation among Romantic thinkers, to its widespread use in virtually every intellectual field by the beginning of the twentieth century. He next undertakes an exercise in philosophical history (more so a chronological sampler of major philosophical treatments), tracing the filiation of ‘worldview’ as a philosophical concept (not just a word) from Hegel to Heidegger and to Donald Davidson. From thence, he ventures a “disciplinary history” of the concept within the natural sciences and the social sciences.

Naugle's concern in this ‘historical’ section of the book is not to tease out variations on the denotative

meaning of the concept, which have been fairly limited in scope and non-controversial – “Roughly speaking, it [‘worldview’] refers to a person’s interpretation of reality and a basic view of life” (260). Rather his chief concern is with principal developments in what he calls the connotative meaning of the concept (i.e., philosophical elaborations of what it involves and implies by successive thinkers), for with the latter has arisen the problematic legacy that has heightened suspicion of the suitability of the concept for Reformed theological use – namely, its intimate association with historicism, relativism, and anti-realism.

Chapters 9 and 10, “Theological Reflections” and “Philosophical Reflections” on worldview, where his project is to liberate the concept of worldview from these problematic associations, are the most interesting, as far as I am concerned, and the most full of insight and creative promise. Here Naugle makes some genuine creative advance in thinking through for himself the idea of worldview vis-à-vis the current options of waning modernism and postmodernism, rather than simply critically presenting the thinking of others on the subject. In chapter 10, he sets out to establish that any theory or definition of ‘worldview’ is itself a function of the worldview of the theorist or the definer; i.e., meta-worldview accounts are never worldview neutral or free of prejudicial preconception – the Enlightenment presumptive prejudice against prejudice (i.e., the presumed possibility of escaping prejudice – and thus all faith commitments) notwithstanding. For example, the presumption to conduct a metaphysically neutral account of worldviews and form a correlative conception of worldview itself prejudicially favors an anti-realist result. Given this general thesis, Naugle proposes, first, that *a Christian perspective* on worldviews (not just a Christian worldview) will imply [presuppose?] the *knowable* objective reality not just of the universe but also of the Trinitarian God who establishes its moral order and governs its every aspect, in light of which worldviews that do not acknowledge it will be found wanting. So also, second, *a Christian perspective* on worldviews implies an orientation of human subjectivity rooted in the heart that will decisively shape a vision of life and human fulfillment as well as one’s knowledge and understanding of all other things – what has typically been ascribed to the concept of *Weltanschauung*. That is., “the heart and its content as the center of human consciousness [particularly highlighted in the Augustinian spirituality of knowing] creates and constitutes what we commonly refer to as a *Weltanschauung*” (270). It is “a vision of the heart,” “defining the person” and supplying “the fundamental assumptions upon which a life is based” (291): “The human heart is its home, and it provides a home for the human heart” (330). It follows for Naugle, third, that *a Christian perspective* will interpret worldviews and relations between them in light of the Fall as fraught with idolatry and as the locus of “cosmic spiritual warfare in which the truth about reality and the meaning of life is at stake” (274). Fourth and finally, *a Christian perspective* will understand the formation of a Christian worldview amidst other worldviews as a primary function of grace and redemption in Christ: salvation has fundamentally to do with a transformation and rectification of one’s worldview.

Chapter 11 advances new philosophical ground in explaining what kind of thing a worldview is, bringing into play elements not considered earlier in the book. He proposes that a worldview is “a semiotic system of world-interpreting stories” – narrative signs and symbols for interpreting the world – that provides “a foundation or governing platform upon or by which people think, interpret, and know” (291). Drawing on Collingwood and MacIntyre (but not Polanyi, though he certainly could), Naugle contends that rationality is itself worldview dependent: “not a formal, atemporal process, but a way of thinking that is grounded in a commitment to a system of narrative signs associated with an historical tradition” (310). Enlightenment rationality is so as well, he claims, though it denies its contextual dependence. He then tackles the problem of the hermeneutical circle, starting with a discussion of the Meno paradox (again, with no reference to Polanyi): insofar as all interpretation is governed by preunderstandings and governing commitments, how can one hope to transcend subjectivity? Drawing on Heidegger and Gadamer (but not Polanyi, though here too he is relevant), Naugle critiques the prevalent modern

understanding of the interpretive process--i.e., its prejudice against prejudice and its radically individualistic interpretive model--and fundamentally opts for a dynamic, communitarian, dialectical understanding of interpretation where both the meaning of a text and the preunderstandings brought to it are continuously questioned within one's own community and, if I understand Naugle correctly, between communities: "a healthy mixture of a hermeneutics of trust with an adequate amount of doubt or suspicion in relation to the tradition in which one stands" (320). Naugle ends the chapter with a fine clarification of the difference in reference to worldviews between (a) naïve, direct, or commonsense realism, (b) creative antirealism, and (c) critical realism. In regard to explaining critical realism with which he identifies, he draws upon Mikhail Bakhtin's notions of "the dialogical imagination" and "creative understanding" among all parties of an ongoing critical conversation among persons of differing frames of reference, different worldviews, where each recognizes the possibility that others may be able to see things that are incapable of being seen from one's own framework. This seems to me to be an important concession that leaves me unclear as to how it can be reconciled with the absolutist perspective that otherwise Naugle seems to favor (e.g., p. 266). He ends the chapter with a case for the relevance to assessing worldviews by the three familiar criteria of rational coherence, empirical correspondence (broadly understood), and existential pragmatism.

Naugle's concluding reflections in chapter 11 give an overview of what he takes to be the philosophical, theological, and spiritual dangers and benefits of utilizing the concept of worldview. In two appendices Naugle gives synopses of Evangelical worldview articulations additional to those covered in his book and a bibliography of books on the Christian worldview he does not address.

I have two additional comments. First, in reading through the book, I was puzzled by what seemed to me a recurrent shift in meaning in Naugle's concept of worldview that never quite gets resolved, though he comes close to doing so in the last three chapters. Is a worldview something reflectively constituted (a determinate representation of the world) or is it something pre-reflective and therefore less determinate? Is it a representation of the world (an account of how a certain person or persons understands the world) or is it the world as they experience it? Indeed, to what extent for Naugle is the world as pre-reflectively experienced *something more* (as in Polanyi's notion of reality as inexhaustible in its intimations of future manifestations), *less*, or *other than* the account one succeeds in articulating of the world; or can we ever safely presume that these are simply the same? All this relates, as I see it, to the philosophical question whether human knowledge is primarily a matter of progressively refined explicit representation – the conventional philosophical understanding – or a matter of ongoing tacit relational acquaintance that permits and calls forth an indeterminate range of always partial representations – Polanyi's understanding. Sometimes a given author that Naugle discusses leans toward one or the other of these alternatives. But Naugle doesn't attempt to sort it out along the way and only begins to do so in the last two chapters, alluding to it in what he identifies as the philosophical danger of objectification in the final chapter. It seems to me that he wants to have it both ways with a single worldview somehow being both at once – both reflective representation (as refined by philosopher-theologians) and pre-reflective relational acquaintance – yet the authors he has covered (especially the phenomenological authors) pointedly challenge that possibility in ways I am not convinced he realizes. My point is that each articulate representative rendering of the world (and of ourselves placed within that world) makes a difference, changing it and us in significant and indeterminately predictable ways, as Polanyi and others have claimed. The world is not the same pre-reflectively experienced as it is articulately rendered, at least for us for whom it is so rendered. Because of that, none of our articulate representations of the world can ever be decisively and finally determinate – despite the hope and supposition of dogmatists (of whatever stripe, even Evangelical Reformed Protestant). There will always be the possibility of challenge, change, and new insight unassimilable to any former rendering because of our deepening

tacit relational acquaintance with things that forever is capable of outrunning our explicit representational reach. Is this understanding of worldview itself a worldview? Yes and no. It is a worldview that recognizes its own finitude, partiality, openness to change, and *sitz-in-leben* qua worldview in the face of a reality that in important respects inexhaustible and that recognizes the existence, place, and value of other worldviews that it can never hope to completely incorporate within itself. Totalization that closes off this unpredictable uncertainty is impossible and the quest for totalization is morally problematic. At times Naugle seems to agree, particularly in chapter 10. But what then of Naugle's hankering for "an absolutist perspective on life" (266) that he claims is required of a truly biblical and Christian worldview? What, in this connection, would such a perspective amount to? Need "absolutist" require "reflectively determinate"?

Second, I wonder about the place and role of the person in Naugle's resulting conception of worldview. For Polanyi, a word means nothing apart from some person (or, strictly speaking, persons) taking it up and integrating it subsidiarily to its meaning. The same is true for a symbol, a sentence, an essay, a theory, or an entire articulate system (which opens up not a specific meaning but a whole horizon of meanings). The same is also true for a worldview – so far as it is at all something articulable, distinguishable from the person who holds it, sharable, transferable, etc. A person is more than a worldview, and a worldview is meaningless and lifeless apart from a person at least temporarily in an act of imaginative empathy trying it on for size. A worldview can be taken up in a great variety of different, sometimes significantly consequential ways by any one person. My point is that this essential role of the person in relation to any worldview is pretty much left out of account in Naugle's book (as it is left out in most of the accounts of worldview he covers) – at least until chapters 10 and 11, where he only begins to take it into account. In any case, *the world we actually live in* – and within which we hold this or that worldview (this or that view of the world we live in) – is not the same as, nor is it reducible to, the view we have of it (i.e., the world is not reducible to our worldview), however much we might wish or pretend it was. Ideally, our worldview should take account of that transcendence of ourselves and of the world to the view we have of it; but even when it does, that doesn't make it the world we actually and literally live in. However good a map happens to be, it still is never territory.

Notes on Contributors

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A Response to Cannon's Comments on My Book

David Naugle

ABSTRACT Key Words: worldview, *Weltanschauung*, objectivity, church, embodied, heart, vision, person, reflective, pre-reflective, plausibility structure, Kierkegaard, Michael Polanyi, Wittgenstein, Husserl.

In this essay, I respond Dale Cannon's critique of my book, Worldview: The History of a Concept. I am surprised that Professor Cannon, as a presumed devotee of Michael Polanyi, expected me to offer a scholarly objective discussion of the history of the concept of worldview. That I did attempt to do in part, but I also had the goal of rehabilitating the notion of worldview for use in a Christian context. I also respond to his criticism that I need to offer a more precise description of the concept of worldview itself as either pre-reflective or reflective in nature, and whether or not a worldview is epistemically representational or more Polanyian in character. I see it in both/and terms rather than the either/or ways Cannon has offered to me as options. I address his criticism that I neglect the place and role of the person in my resulting conception of worldview. While I could have spent more time on this issue, I point out that I ground the notion of worldview in the biblical teaching about the human "heart" as the seat and source of thought, affection, will and spirituality.

I am grateful to Professor Dale Cannon for his thoughtful review of my book, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Eerdmans 2002). Cogent critiques of one's work are an honor because somebody has taken your work seriously, are humbling because they point out weaknesses in your scholarship, and they are also helpful because they sharpen our thinking about the topic under consideration. So it is with gratitude, humility, and appreciation that I make my response to this response to my book.

First of all, I was a bit surprised that Professor Cannon was surprised because he was expecting my book to be a "work of philosophically and theologically neutral scholarship...that would satisfy philosophers and theologians of whatever stripe..." That he was flummoxed that I had an apologetic purpose in mind seems counter to the central Polanyian notion, assuming Professor Cannon accepts it, that knowledge is tacit and fiduciary in character, "rooted," as he points out in the second paragraph, "in the ancient Augustinian model where faith establishes the basis for knowledge as a gift of grace." I am, indeed, Polanyian rather than modernist in my epistemic outlook. This accounts for my perspective on the notion of worldview as a whole, and for my critical defense of the ecclesiastical value of the notion in chapters nine through eleven (even though Karl Barth's criticisms of "worldview" were low on the totem pole of my concern, despite Professor Cannon's assertion to the contrary).

At the same time, in chapters three through eight, preceding my arguments on behalf of the use of the worldview concept in the church, I was attempting, however imperfectly, to offer a somewhat "objective" presentation of the history of the concept in philosophy and among the natural and social sciences. This was a central purpose of the book. The entire volume, therefore, was not intended to be apologetic in purpose, but to offer a history of the concept, as the actual title of the book suggests.

I am pleased (and relieved) that Professor Cannon regarded my treatment of Polanyi's thought and its bearing on worldview as acceptable. Undoubtedly, there is much more in Polanyi's thought to unearth in thinking about worldview than I have been able to mine, and this dearth is to my own and my readers' detriment. Esther L. Meek, for example, pointed out in a portion of a paper she presented at a mid-west regional meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in 2004 "What David Naugle Can Learn From Michael Polanyi." Her insights, especially regarding the embodied character of knowledge, have been very helpful, and have caused me to revise my own definition of worldview from a "vision of the heart" to a "vision of the 'embodied' heart."

Furthermore, as Professor Cannon points out, I did rely on secondary literature in my exposition of several key thinkers in the history portion of the book. But why not consult good works on a particular thinker whose thought lies beyond one's field of one's expertise? Also, in his estimation, I missed the interpretive boat in my exposition of several of them because of my neglect of the larger context of their thought, Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein, and Husserl in particular. That I depended upon secondary resources here and there was necessary in a book that treated upwards of thirty-five key thinkers on the worldview concept, and that I may have erred hermeneutically in my treatment of some of them is quite likely as well, assuming Professor Cannon himself knows better than I what these thinkers were all about (and he probably does!).

Despite these well-received criticisms, I am grateful that Professor Cannon finds my book overall to be an "extraordinary achievement" which is pleasing to hear. His general survey of the contents of my book is on target and seems to get what I was trying to convey and accomplish overall.

Professor Cannon makes two final comments at the end of his review that are very important and worthy of further comment. The first concerns the need for me to offer a more precise description of the concept of worldview itself. Is a worldview pre-reflective or reflective in character, and is it epistemically representational or more Polanyian in nature as "a matter of ongoing tacit relational acquaintance that permits and calls forth an indeterminate range of always partial representations"? And if the latter, how would "worldview" defined in Polanyian terms fit in with a commitment to absolute truth, especially of the Christian kind, after which Professor Cannon believes I am "hankering" ?

These are excellent questions (or points), and they help clarify my own thinking about these issues. He's right that I do address these matters helter skelter in the ninth and tenth chapters of the book. Perhaps here I can crystallize my thinking. I suppose I want to have my cake and eat it too, but I grant to the word "worldview" a certain lexical flexibility, just as we do with the word "love." If "love" can be used to convey a preference for chocolate ice cream as well as to express an unconditional commitment to one's spouse (and we understand what we mean when we use it both ways), so I think it is possible to use the word "worldview" to stand for both a pre-reflective and reflective grasp of the cosmos (and both uses make good sense).

On the one hand, I find myself and others using "worldview" to refer to the unexamined, inarticulate intuitions or presuppositions we hold to unconsciously about life and reality. Here a worldview is like an umpire at a baseball game. An umpire at a baseball game controls all the action out on the diamond, even though very few fans pay any real direct attention to him. In this light, a worldview has a certain kind of "taken-for-grantedness" about it. It constitutes the unexamined "plausibility structure" that enables most people to make sense of the world and their place in it, even without their open knowledge or awareness. Why can't this way of knowing and being in the world legitimately be labeled a "worldview"?

On the other hand, and more Socratically, I find myself and others also using the concept to stand for a reasonably well examined and articulated philosophy of life. A worldview in this case is identified with or the intellectual outcome of considerable philosophic and religious reflection. Here a worldview as “umpire” is intentionally observed and known. Such purposeful observation and knowledge about life and reality are central to a good education as well as a thoughtful and, hopefully, a well-lived life. These two ways of knowing and being in the world — both assumptive and conceptual — can be called “worldviews” as far as I am concerned.

Furthermore, I am epistemically elastic when it comes to the nature of worldview knowledge, or knowledge about the world and about what transcends it. Surely we know some things for sure (that is, propositions that represent reality): God exists and is light, love, and justice; the earth is elliptical in shape and rotates around the sun; cold-blooded, murder with malice is wrong; $2 + 2 = 4$, and so on. On the basis of these examples, I suppose I am a card-carrying member of “the conventional philosophic understanding of refined explicit representationalism.” We do have some concrete knowledge of theology, astronomy, morality and mathematics that is trustworthy and true.

This, however, does not mean that I understand any of these propositions absolutely, perfectly, or non-rationally. There is always something personal, something more, something less, or something other than what I know about these and other things, whether pre-reflectively or reflectively. God, the cosmos, ethics, and numbers are mysterious, inexhaustible realities, and beyond the reach of the human mind to understand and represent fully. My, or our, knowledge of them, can always be improved upon and deepened, especially through critical and fruitful conversation (thus my appeal to Bakhtin’s notion of the “dialogical imagination”). For these reasons, I subscribed in my book to the school of “critical realism,” and can say on this score that I am also a card-carrying member of the Polanyian school of thought that regards knowledge as “a matter of ongoing tacit relational acquaintance that permits and calls forth an indeterminate range of always partial representations.”

My epistemology, including my religious outlook, therefore, is both confident and humble. As St. Paul put it in 1 Corinthians 13: 12, we do, in fact, see and understand. But our knowledge of things at this point is always partial and improvable. One day, by the grace of God, we will truly and fully understand, at least as far as finite human creatures can!

For now we are looking in a mirror that gives only a dim blurred reflection of reality as in a riddle or enigma, but then when perfection comes we shall see in reality and face to face! Now I know in part imperfectly, but then I shall know and understand fully and clearly, even in the same manner as I have been fully and clearly known and understood by God (Amplified Version).

The second point Professor Cannon mentions, as he concludes his review, is the place and role of the person in my resulting conception of worldview. He believes that I need to articulate more fully the relationship of any lexical, textual or symbolic entity and the person who holds or uses it, and that I only begin to address this issue in chapters 10 and 11. He also believes I should differentiate more sharply between the world itself, a view of it, and the person who holds to it, and, indeed, these are important distinctions that I should have addressed more thoroughly.

Nevertheless, I do speak to the issue of the relationship between the human person and worldview in chapter nine through a biblical anthropology that focuses on the notion of the “heart” (Hebrew: *leb* and *lebab*; Greek: *kardia*). As the seat and source of thought, affection, volition and spirituality, the heart, as the word literally

suggests, is the center and core of every human being. For this reason Proverbs 4: 23 states, “Watch over your heart with all diligence/For from it flow the springs of life.” Jesus himself affirms that “where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6: 21). In other words, as the heart is inclined, so also is the person. The human heart is where we are what we are (Augustine). For these reasons, then, I asserted that life proceeds “kardiopically” out of a vision of the “embodied” heart (acknowledging once again Esther Meek’s reminder of the physical dimension of the knowing process). While it would be too much to identify a person with his or her embodied perception of life rooted in the heart, nonetheless, there is a very close connection. To be sure, this link between our embodied views of life, who we are, and how we live is significant, and needs to be examined further.

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REVIEWS

J. Wentzel Van Huyssteen, *Alone in the World? Human Uniqueness in Science and Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006. Pp. 347 + xviii. \$49.95 hb. ISBN0-8028-32466.

Consider this quotation: “The development of a postfoundationalist notion of rationality helped me move beyond any position that would want to regard either science or theology as a superior form of rational thinking” (xiv). Or this: “On this postfoundationalist view embodied persons, and not abstract beliefs, should be seen as the locus of rationality. We, as rational agents, are thus always socially and contextually embedded. Moreover, it is as embodied rational agents that we perform rationally by making informed and responsible judgments in very specific personal, communal, but also disciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts” (10). These thoughtful presuppositions Wentzel Van Huyssteen brings to these Gifford Lectures of 2004 would be highly sympathetic to any follower of Michael Polanyi’s philosophical perspective. Van Huyssteen makes clear his indebtedness to Polanyi, among others, for his role in articulating a postfoundationalist epistemology. “On an epistemological level this modernist mode of inquiry was definitively dealt with first by Michael Polanyi, then by Thomas Kuhn, and post-Kuhn by various strands of postmodern science. What this move has made increasingly clear is that all our inquiry, whether scientific or theological, is highly contextual and already presupposes a particular theoretical, doctrinal, or personal stance and commitment” (5-6).

Given this beginning point congenial to Polanyians, where does Van Huyssteen take his inquiry? What is his goal, and does he accomplish his aim successfully? The author’s aim is to carry out an interdisciplinary inquiry into the nature of human uniqueness, an inquiry in which evolutionary epistemology,

paleoanthropology, and the Christian notion of humans as the bearers of the *imago dei* are brought into productive interchange. The book features glorious illustrations of Paleolithic cave paintings from such sites as Lascaux, Gargas, and Cougnac. Van Huyssteen includes ideas from an impressively wide range of thinkers. This is an erudite work that is carried out with a high degree of self-conscious construction.

Unfortunately, some of the book’s strengths just alluded to turn out also to be weaknesses. Too often the various writers’ views are strung together without being integrated in any consistent way into Van Huyssteen’s own explicit perspective. This is understandable when one considers that party to the conversation are people as diverse as Karl Barth, Pascal Boyer, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jurgen Moltmann, Karl Popper, Alasdair MacIntyre, Abraham Heschel, Charles Darwin, Gerhard van Rad, Thomas Huxley, Augustine, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. But something other than wide diversity of views is at work here. Van Huyssteen borrows from Calvin Schrag the metaphor of transversality, by which he means “a performative praxis where our multiple beliefs and practices, our habits of thought and attitudes, our prejudices and assessments, converge” (21). I’d be hard pressed to explain how the language of “transversal” represents an improvement over “comparative.” However, Schrag helpfully infuses his notion of transversality with an embodied, tacit dimension so that “existential dwellings rather than dead frames of reference” (22) are brought into juxtaposition. Van Huyssteen holds out the hope for cross-disciplinary integration as a product of transversal dialogue, but he also states, “This postfoundationalist approach to interdisciplinarity also revealed interdisciplinary reflection as nonhierarchical because no one disciplinary voice, and no one set of judgments, practices, or principles, will be able to claim absolute priority over, or be foundational for, any other” (41). In truly open interdisciplinary dialogue,

should one not be open to discovery of priorities if not foundations? In practice, Van Huyssteen's theological commitments never really seem open to question, and the various disciplines and voices brought into conversation never quite gel into any more inclusive vision.

The extreme self consciousness Van Huyssteen brings to the work means that he tends to tell you what he is going to do several times, tells you that he is doing it, and then tells you what he has done a number of times. In short, the writing is highly repetitive. No doubt the redundancy is partially a reflection of the need of a speaker to remind his audience, some of whom will have attended only one lecture, what he is up to. But a book is a different creature than a series of lectures, and this book would benefit from some serious editing.

Apart from such stylistic complaints, what does the book accomplish substantively? I am grateful for having been introduced to a number of thinkers I had not encountered before. I found the thesis developed by David Lewis-Williams that some of the cave drawings are best explained in terms of shamanistic ritual and out of body experiences intriguing if not fully convincing.

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Malcolm Gladwell, *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*. New York and Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2005. Pp. 277. ISBN 0-316-17232-4. \$25.95.

In *Blink*, Malcolm Gladwell, the author of *Tipping Point* and a staff writer for the *New Yorker*, argues that our tacit powers of knowing (a) work fast, (b) can be more reliable than explicit analysis, but (c) can seriously mislead us. Gladwell never refers to Polanyi, nor does he explicitly write of "tacit knowledge." This review, however, is an explicitly Polyanian reading of *Blink*.

He begins with reflections on "the statue that didn't look right." In September of 1983, the people who ran the J. Paul Getty Museum in California were trying to decide whether or not to buy an almost perfectly preserved statue of a young nude male. It was presented to them as an example of the type of statue known as a *kouros*, dating from about the sixth century BCE. Scientific analyses of the statue satisfied the museum officials that the stature was genuine, but they hesitated because many of the art historians and collectors, upon seeing the statue, had immediate negative reactions. They could not specify their reasons, other than to say that somehow, it just "didn't look right." It turned out that these "gut reactions" were right on the money. "In the first two seconds of looking – in a single glance – they were able to understand more about the essence of the statue than the team at the Getty was able to understand after fourteen months" (8).

In Polyanian terms, this is an example of "connoisseurship," which is a kind of skill, acquired only by long experience, usually under the guidance of one who has already mastered the skill.

Connoisseurship, like skill, can be communicated only by example, not by precept. To become an expert wine-taster, to acquire a knowledge of innumerable different blends of tea or be trained as a medical diagnostician, you must go through a long course of experience under the guidance of a master (*PK* 54).

The reason the art historians were unable to say why the *kouros* didn't look right was, in Polanyi's language, that they had only subsidiary awareness of the particular details which came together to produce their strongly negative reactions. They knew more than they could say.

Blink is full of examples of tacit knowing, with an emphasis upon the speed with which it takes place. Polanyi drew upon the psychological research of his

day, particularly in Gestalt psychology. Gladwell draws upon more recent findings in cognitive psychology. He refers to studies of “fast and frugal” knowing, and of the “adaptive unconscious” (256). And, like Polanyi, Gladwell emphasizes the vital importance of relying upon these powers of knowing, even though we cannot specify just how they lead us to our snap judgments and decisions. And, also like Polanyi, Gladwell recognizes that these tacit powers of knowing sometimes lead us astray. We have to trust knowledge that might be mistaken.

Gladwell discusses mistaken fast and frugal knowing in his third chapter, entitled “The Warren Harding Error: Why We Fall For Tall, Dark, and Handsome Men.” His topic in this chapter is unconscious bias. Unconscious biases work in favor of men, like Harding, who looked presidential in spite of their lack of talent for the job. They work against African Americans, who suffer from unconscious discrimination even on the part of people who are deeply committed to equality and racial justice. “Taking rapid cognition seriously – acknowledging the incredible power, for good and ill, that first impressions play in our lives – requires that we take active steps to manage and control those impressions” (97-98).

In the next three chapters, Gladwell gives a number of examples of how people in different areas of life have taken active steps, not just to “manage and control” fast and frugal knowing, but to facilitate it. A successful battlefield commander tries to be “in command” by establishing battlefield strategy but “out of control” of the soldiers being supervised – they need to improvise on the scene without waiting for orders from above (118). An improvisational comedy group creates a script and a plot on stage by accepting everything each actor does. A manager of an emergency room improves diagnoses of heart attacks by cutting down on the amount of information ER doctors have to take into account. Women break into symphony orchestras in significant numbers only after auditions begin to take place behind screens. The screens prevent those who are selecting candidates from “listening with their eyes.”

Gladwell argues that explicit knowledge is valuable. He relies heavily upon explicitly stated theories and hypotheses in cognitive psychology. These become most valuable, however, when they are allowed to become the background for insights that come in the blink of an eye. Moreover, when the results of these insights can be stated, they can, in turn, become part of the theoretical background for new insights. Without ever referring to Polanyi, Gladwell both confirms basic principles of Polanyi’s theory of knowing, and points to ways in which that theory can be developed in the light of recent findings in cognitive psychology.

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