

## REVIEWS

Allen, Richard, ed., *Michael Polanyi (Vor-) Denker des Liberalismus in 20. Jahrhundert*. Gummersbach, Germany: Theodor-Heuss-Akademie of the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung für die Freiheit, 2012. Pp. 132. No ISBN number or price but direct inquiries about this publication to corinna.schulz-roggenkamp@freiheit.org.

This short anthology is aptly identified by its German title which, when translated into English, reads as follows: *Michael Polanyi: Precursor of Liberalism in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. It is a collection of eleven papers of varying lengths which were originally presented as talks at a Polanyi seminar which took place at the Theodor-Heuss-Akademie of the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung für die Freiheit in Gummersbach, Germany, from July 28-31, 2011. As the editor notes, and as is attested to in the various papers, the objective of the various authors was twofold: one, to introduce Polanyi's thinking to people who might be new to the field of Polanyi studies, and, two, to give these new readers of Polanyi a sense of the breadth of Polanyi's thought, particularly as it relates to political, social and economic matters, which, until recently, were a dimension of Polanyi's thinking that was somewhat neglected in favour of focusing on Polanyi's epistemological and psychological interests. This anthology begins to meet both of these objectives. Of course, from a reviewer's perspective, reviewing anthologies always poses a potential problem inasmuch as the reviewer is obliged at times to bring unity to a collection of disparate pieces where sometimes little or no real unity exists. Fortunately, this little work sins only venially in this regard.

The first paper is by the editor and well known British Polanyi scholar, Richard T. Allen, and is a combination schematic biography and abbreviated intellectual biography which has as its primary function to give the new reader of Polanyi a sense of who Polanyi was and what sort of challenges he faced as a member of an upper middle class, secularised Jewish family from Budapest, educated in the natural sciences in Germany after WWI who eventually found himself in the U.K. in the early

1930s. While this paper is by no means highly detailed, it is definitely a piece that should give the fledgling Polanyi scholar a taste of what awaits him or her should he or she decide to press on in the field of Polanyi studies.

The next two papers serve somewhat as introductions to Polanyi's political and economic thought proper. The first of these is by Endre Nagy, and it deals with Polanyi's early writings on liberty, while the second is by Phil Mullins, and it focuses on the "planned science" movement in the U.K. in the mid-1930s. This movement was headed by a small group of British Marxists (i.e., J. D. Bernal, *The Social Function of Science*, Lancelot Hogben, *Science for the Citizen*, et al.) who, mimicking the Soviet Union's focus on pursuing only "socially useful knowledge" and not "knowledge for its own sake," aimed to have the British government of the day do likewise—i.e., support only research designed to produce immediately useful results, and thus advance the well-being of the working classes—rather than the more abstract goal of advancing knowledge in general. Of course, Polanyi opposed this movement, and Mullins explains why.

The fourth paper is by Simon Smith. Speaking as a political philosopher, I have to say that I found this little piece most interesting. The author divides authority into two categories, *specific* and *general*. By *specific authority*, Smith has in mind the sort of authority that is explicitly in the possession of the state and its attendant institutions, while by *general authority*, he means the kind of norms that are laid down by the continuing and evolving conversations that take place amongst the residents of a given state in an effort to define themselves in time, and the author does a very nice job of analysing these two forms of authority. There is only one small but important point that is lacking in this piece. In the course of describing these two types of authority, the author maybe ought to have reminded his readers of the growing tendency amongst the holders of specific authority to want to manage the evolution of general authority in ways that breakdown the necessary barrier separating the two forms of authority. This

development will lead inevitably to the complete collapse of general authority, which is, of course, not unrelated to the efforts that are currently being made by the holders of specific authorities to control the content and development of civic culture so as better to manipulate those who inhabit the political community. See James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), a very Polanyian work, although Polanyi's name is mentioned but once in this piece.

The fifth and sixth papers, by Viktor Genk and Tihamér Margitay respectively, deal with the subject of *moral inversion*, a subject that was dear to Polanyi. Genk speaks of the psychological and political aspects of moral inversion, while Margitay writes on consumer societies and moral inversion. Moral inversion can be described best as being a pseudo-moral stance emanating from a tendency amongst ideological thinkers to be so committed to their plans to transform society in a wholesale fashion that they see no problem at all with turning traditional morality—bourgeois morality, the Marxists would say—on its head in their quest to bring about what they view as being *the absolute moral good*. Murdering millions in an effort to bring about a Utopian solution to man's condition—which, of course, cannot be achieved (1) because ours is a condition to be lived and not a problem to be solved, and (2) because we live in an imperfect and changing world—is viewed as perfectly acceptable. In fact, it is designated as the ultimately virtuous act. And there be madness of the very highest order.

The seventh and ninth papers are by Richard M. Moodey, and Moodey seems to throw a breaking-ball at us. The seventh ostensibly deals with the *from-to* structure of economic thinking, and the ninth with the sociology of economic life. In the seventh paper, it seems to me that Moodey presents us with a picture of a Polanyi who is more focused on what is explicit than tacit, and I repeatedly find myself wanting to ask Moodey if centering our attention on “models” is appropriate when it comes to describing Polanyi's thinking at this stage in his career. Of course, it may very well be appropriate, but if it is, then it must be that Polanyi had yet to reach his final destination which has everything to do with tacit knowing and the

realm of the subsidiary in the development of explicit knowledge, and very little to do with models and model building. Moodey's second paper (or ninth in the collection) on the sociology of economic life may be the confirmation of my suspicions. These are both very interesting papers and they cause one to reflect on the fundamentals of Polanyi's thesis as he feels his way towards his final goal.

The eighth paper, entitled “A Polanyian Account of the Relationship between Politics and Economics,” is by Richard Allen, the editor of this anthology. In this paper, Allen presents us with a well-crafted statement dealing with Polanyi's concept of *dual control*. The expression “dual control,” Allen informs us, refers to the way in which the rules that govern a lower level of being in the world are left open at the top for further specification, such that an entity is, in the words of Allen, “controlled on two levels: that of its particulars, e.g. the molecules...; and that of the more comprehensive entity...” In practice, what this can mean is that the laws of molecular biology, for instance, control the functioning of man's body, while social conventions and various social practices control our interactions with one another, which may or may not frustrate the way in which our molecules function at the lower level. As an example, some forms of social strain, for instance, are known to cause physical disease, while other forms are known to be not only beneficial but also essential to our realisation of ourselves as human beings. Of course, this puts the lie to the modern tendency to reduce everything to material or lower level causes. Parenthetically, although Allen does not mention this in his paper, E. F. Schumacher raises this very same theme in his less-well-known work, *A Guide for the Perplexed* (1977), Chapter 2, entitled “Levels of Being.” Allen may want to explore what Schumacher had to say on the subject.

The tenth paper is by Klaus-Ulrich Newmann, and it deals with science in “Polanyi's day and now.” The theme of this paper is that things have not changed since the 1930s, '40s and '50s. While engineering projects can be scheduled and planned down to the smallest detail, science cannot be planned because a discovery cannot be scheduled to happen on command. A discovery is not something that a scientist can have take place whenever he or she wishes it to happen, but an engineer can plan

the realization of a project at a given time, barring unpredictable problems usually having to do with the supply of raw materials. The point here is that discoveries are not inventions. They are the products of unforeseen and unforeseeable breakthroughs in our knowledge, and since prior to making the breakthrough, we cannot know what we come to know only as a result of making the breakthrough, then discoveries cannot be predicted. Now, it appears to me that it would have been appropriate here if the author had drawn attention to Aristotle's threefold division of knowing into theoretical (*theoria*), practical (*phronesis*) and productive (*techné*) knowing (see Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*), and then noted that science seeks an insight into what is eternal about reality (*theoria*) whereas engineering is a form of *techné* or art, and hence it is not concerned with coming to know and eventually knowing a given reality, but is concerned primarily with constructing artificial realities. So, not only have things not changed since the first half of the twentieth century, they have not changed for more than two thousand years.

The anthology concludes with an enigmatic paper by Klaus Allerbeck, in which the author seeks to show that Polanyi was "almost a sociologist" because of his judicious insights into the problems of the era in which he functioned as a scholar and the complex relations he entertained with other well-known academics of the day. I wish that the author of this paper had been somewhat less parsimonious with his analysis, for he appears to know a great deal more about his subject than he is prepared to reveal in this too-brief piece.

The work formally concludes with a short bibliography which focuses on new, reissued, and translated works about and by Polanyi by scholars writing in English, German, Italian and Portuguese.

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Jeremy S. Begbie, *Voicing Creation's Praise: Towards a Theology of the Arts*. Foreword by Colin Gunton. New York and London: T & T Clark, 1991. Pp. xix + 291. ISBN 13: 978-0567291882. \$55.00 pb.

In this work, Begbie attempts to show what light can be shed on artistic activity in Christian theology—especially in the Protestant tradition. The book is written in three parts: Part I: Paul Tillich—Art and Ultimate Reality; Part II: The Dutch Neo-Calvinists—Art, Creation and Beauty; and Part III: Towards a Theology of the Arts. In this short review of a book published over twenty years ago (but still in print), it is to the third section that I direct the most attention, especially to the author's chapter, "Art and Metaphor," and to his understanding and use of the thought of Michael Polanyi as a resource towards a third alternative to Tillich and the Dutch Neo-Calvinists.

Regarding Tillich (Part I), the author finds Tillich's philosophy of art to be a rich resource, yet the author claims that, in Tillich's scheme, "Christology tends to be swallowed up in an idealist ontology; the penetrating sounds of the Gospel muffled by his 'system'" (74). Begbie then leaves Tillich for a look at the Dutch Neo-Calvinists, which includes such theologians as Kuyper, Bavinck, Dooyeweerd, Rookmaaker, and Seerveld. Regarding these thinkers, Begbie advises the reader to heed an observation by Alasdair Heron: "It is the almost inevitable fate of those who work 'on the boundary' to find that they do not satisfy those on *either* side" (74). In his explorations, Begbie notes that historically the Protestant church has hesitated in making theological use of the arts. He hopes to provide a basis for correcting this neglect.

In the third section enter Polanyi. Begbie is interested in what he calls the elusive reality of redemption and how to go about seeking it. He believes that it can be sought "with the help of metaphor [which is] the key to the nature of art." He especially relies upon the thought of Michael Polanyi on the topic of metaphor, upon which I will focus for the remainder of this review. Begbie uses an example from "Romeo and Juliet" to illustrate metaphor. In the metaphor "Juliet is the sun," Juliet is the "tenor" and the sun is the vehicle. This example is not a descriptive simile in which it is

said “Juliet is ‘like’ the sun.” When we say “Juliet ‘is’ the sun” we enjoy the fusion of unlike elements and are carried away by the metaphor into our own diffuse subsidiary experiences. We are embodied in the metaphor and surrender ourselves to it. Here Polanyi’s thought is comparable to Tillich’s early philosophy in which a concern to find meaning in existence is central. Begbie notes that “for Polanyi it is clear that metaphors are quite capable of being vehicles of cognitive content by which we gain epistemic access to the world” (238). Since Begbie believes that all the arts can be seen as human artifacts that function metaphorically, he is making the case that Christian theology ignores a valuable entry to reality if it does not take the arts seriously. This raises a further question: to what extent might theology be seen as a work of art?

Rather than “Juliet is the sun,” I would like to take an example from *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* to explicate metaphor and its transforming power. It seems as if the men in the Therapeutic Community were seen by the story’s protagonist McMurphy, and the other group members themselves, as “rabbits.” “I am a rabbit” seems to be similar to “Juliet is the sun.” The metaphor reveals much about their understanding of themselves. McMurphy (played by Jack Nicholson in the movie) wanted to show the men that they should not understand themselves to be rabbits. He realizes that this is not to be done by lecture. Rather he involves them in a new metaphor: “I am a gambler.” McMurphy, for his efforts, is given shock treatments. But in the end, the Indian Chief, one of the group members, makes his escape from Nurse Ratched and embodies the antithesis of the “I am a rabbit” metaphor. Indeed he becomes a gambler, big time. A similar transition can be seen in the Client-Centered Therapy of Carl Rogers, where the change is often from the metaphor “the therapist is the answer” to “I am the answer.” The change is evoked by the non-directive climate evoked by the client-centered therapist. The arts and theology, too, are evocative vehicles for transformation.

Begbie’s primary purpose has been to open up paths along which other might usefully travel; he hopes that a way might be paved for a reintegration of dimensions of our lives which have been disastrously torn apart in modern times. Metaphors are crucial

to his effort: they are interactive in their conveying of meaning; are intrinsically irreducible; work in the cognitive domain of knowing; and are major vehicles for manifesting the “more than we can say” of the tacit. There is a lot of the “more than we can say” in this book: it is long, expensive, scholarly, and hard to review. It is also edifying and makes extensive use of Polanyi’s thought.

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Creighton Rosental, *Lessons from Aquinas: A Resolution of the Problem of Faith and Reason*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2011. Pp. xv + 252. ISBN 978-0-881462531. \$45.00 hb.

Rosental’s purpose in this book is “to provide a detailed account of precisely how Aquinas reconciles faith with Aristotelian reason” by providing a detailed exegesis of Aquinas’s own texts (240). Every quotation from Aquinas is given in both English and Latin, making this a valuable resource for those who are interested in grappling with the original text.

The author uses Alvin Plantinga’s work on “epistemic responsibility” as a guide to define the terms of the problem of faith and reason (15), but takes a different tack in his final analysis of how Aquinas’s resolution of the problem is to be understood (230-231). The epistemology of “Classic Foundationalism” makes it seem as though faith is an unreasonable or irrational act because, by definition, faith deals with “the evidence of things unseen” (Heb 11:1). Classic Foundationalism holds that belief in a proposition “is epistemically responsible if and only if there is sufficient evidence” for the proposition (16). There is sufficient evidence if the proposition is “properly basic (... self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses)” or else if the proposition “is believed on the evidential basis of other beliefs that are epistemically responsible and that support [the proposition] deductively, inductively or abductively” (16).

Rosental shows that Aquinas is consistent with Classic Foundationalism in his treatment of “perfect *scientia*,” which implies “cognition of a necessary

truth” as well as “cognition that the proposition is necessary and why it is true” (68). Affirming such knowledge is clearly an epistemically responsible act. By contrast, there is an imperfect kind of knowledge based on reasoning from effects to causes, “*scientia quia*,” knowledge that there is a cause that is not directly observable which can account for an effect which is observable (158). This is the kind of knowledge we have of gravity or of electro-magnetic radiation—or of the existence of God as disclosed by the Five Ways (172).

The knowledge gained by reasoning from effect-to-cause is real and valuable—the effects of gravity and electro-magnetic radiation can be calculated precisely—but we do not understand the essence of gravity or of the quantum-electrodynamics behind electro-magnetic fields in such a way that we not only know how to calculate their effects but also see that the effects could not have been other than what they are and know why this is so. Knowledge that there is an unmoved mover behind all motion, an uncaused cause behind all efficient causality, a necessary being behind all contingent being, an infinitely perfect being behind all that is good, noble, and true in the universe, and an intelligence behind all order in the universe provides a good reason for being open to revelation, but does not directly disclose the articles of faith—“that God is triune or that He is incarnate” (93), that the world had a beginning in time (149-172), and other propositions of “sacred doctrine” (183).

Rosental’s thesis is that “Aquinas held that faith did not involve proof, nor require evidence in support of it” (xiv). The Five Ways do not take the place of God’s self-revelation in the Word made flesh. The knowledge that “comes by hearing” (Rom 10:17) has “certitude while lacking vision” (91). While this places the act of faith beyond the scope of Classic Foundationalism, Rosental argues that the quality of certitude in the act and habit of faith qualifies it for a place in a revised understanding of what qualifies as a rational act. Besides perfect *scientia*, “perfect seeing by the light of natural reason,” and *scientia quia*, knowing that there is a relationship between cause and effect, Rosental and Aquinas recognize the value of “seeing by the light of faith” that “makes one see the things that are believed”

(ST II-II.1.4 ad 3; 113-114). Such a form of seeing—very different from the force of logic or direct observation—justifies assent. Rosental calls this “Faith-Inclusive Foundationalism” (206). It adds a new criterion to those of Classic Foundationalism: assent is epistemically responsible when a person sees by the light of faith that something is to be believed, and consequently assents to the proposition on this basis (207). Such an act of faith “has certitude because the source of the light of faith and the grace that helps guide the will both come from God, the most reliable source of truth there is” (198).

I am not entirely comfortable with this resolution of the problem of faith and reason. It seems to succeed only by changing the meaning of “reason” in the course of the argument. Rosental seems to be aware of this weakness in his argument:

If we count [Faith-Inclusive Foundationalism] rather than [Classical Foundationalism] as the correct version of foundationalism, then we can count faith as rationally justified. Those who are inclined to cringe when justification is separated from evidence will recoil from describing Aquinas’s faith as rationally justified. So be it ... Because faith does not violate the epistemic norms of reason under Aristotle, Aquinas seems to have achieved an epistemic compatibilism between faith and reason (208).

Those who prefer the more narrow definition of reason in Classical Foundationalism almost certainly would have no difficulty in dismissing the assurance felt by believers that God is a reliable source of truth. Whether God exists and whether God has revealed Himself to us are precisely the kind of questions that the Classic Foundationalists intended to separate from the field of rational activity: “William Clifford made the rather strong assertion that ‘it is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence’” (15). I doubt very much that such foundationalists would admit personal conviction of God’s graceful activity in the believer as the kind of evidence that is needed for a responsible epistemic act.

Rosental seems to be ambivalent about this result. Given his stated purpose of describing what Aquinas understood in his own day by reading

Aquinas's own texts, he may simply have discovered that Aquinas had a different understanding of reason from that affirmed in Classical Foundationalism. My impression is that Rosental does not want to leave it at that, but believes that Faith-Informed Foundationalism offers a better account of reason and should be used as a resource in contemporary conversations about faith and reason.

Rosental does not advert to Polanyi in this book, but if he does intend to advocate Faith-Informed Foundationalism, then Polanyi's fiduciary program (*PK*, 299) might help him make the case. In exploring the fiduciary foundations of reason, Polanyi uses the model of Pauline conversion—grace from above coming to us in our weakness—to illuminate his experience of assenting to what he could not prove (*PK*, 285). Rosental restricts his consideration of “faith” almost entirely to the realm of “Christian faith,” and so inadvertently isolates himself from the apologetic resource offered by Polanyi's understanding that scientific reasoning requires acts of assent that have the same structure as the act of faith in Christian revelation. Polanyi knew that his fiduciary epistemology of science could inspire a religious renaissance:

Men need a purpose which bears on eternity. Truth does that; our ideals do it; and this might be enough, if we could ever be satisfied with our manifest moral shortcomings and with a society which has such shortcomings fatally involved in its workings. Perhaps this problem cannot be resolved on secular grounds alone. But its religious solution should become more feasible once religious faith is released from pressure by an absurd vision of the universe, and so there will open up instead a meaningful world which could resound to religion (*TD*, 92).

At best, Rosental only reaches the point at which he sees that Aquinas uses a broader definition of reason than the Classical Foundationalists. Polanyi goes a step further in showing that a broader understanding of reason is essential for an adequate account of reason's great accomplishments in the scientific arena.

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