
Reviews

Barbara Dee Bennett Baumgarten, *Visual Art as Theology*. New Studies in Aesthetics, vol. 21. New York: Peter Lang, 1994. Pp. xx + 272. ISBN: 0-8204-2462-5. \$52.

Baumgarten draws from her experience as an artist and her studies in theology at the Graduate Theological Union to explore the relationship between art, religion and theology. Using Michael Polanyi's work as a base-point, she proceeds in two steps. In the first, she offers a Polyanian perspective on artistic experience. In the second, Baumgarten criticizes and extends Paul Tillich's theological reflections on art in light of the Polyanian views set out in part one. The book thus aspires to refine and extend the state of theological reflections on art. Throughout, the book is richly illustrated, as one should expect in a book about art, both by the author's own work and pieces discussed in the text.

In her most creative move, Baumgarten argues that Polanyi's epistemology, though originally conceived in the context of the work of the sciences, offers an illuminating account of the visual arts (2-3). She thus draws widely from Polanyi's works, not simply from his "brief but dense" reflections on art. In part one, Baumgarten essentially takes a list of key insights from Polanyi and applies them to art. She thus examines the work of artist, art critic and art connoisseur in light of Polanyi's discussions of tacit knowing, personal knowledge, the triadic nature of knowing, commitment, indwelling, skills, connoisseurship, intellectual passions, factors which define scientific value, and the ways in which different levels of existence relate to one another. This section concludes with an examination of the relationship between religion, art and liturgy. As Baumgarten sees it, religious and artistic experiences are analogous (e.g., 111-112) and connected, but not interchangeable with one another. Instead, art, liturgy and religion represent as

ending levels of organization in which the higher integrates the lower into more complex and comprehensive phenomena, but is not fully explainable or even limited by the lower (126).

In part two, Baumgarten moves to a Polyanian critique of Tillich. In so doing, she rehearses Tillich's views on art, style and their relationship to religious content and theology. She also examines some of Tillich's critics before offering her own appreciative criticism of Tillich. Her central criticisms are that Tillich remains trapped in the kind of dualistic thinking which Polanyi overcomes (223-224) and that he fails to acknowledge that all knowing is meaningful and conditioned by perspective (227 ff.). Thus Tillich's own prejudices toward naturalistic styles of art represents a kind of elitism and failure to indwell another perspective. At the same time, Baumgarten affirms Tillich's discussion of art's ability to express, transform and anticipate the future, as well as his description of the role of an art theologian—all of which, she suggests, can be placed on more solid footing by attending to Polanyi's thought. For example, Polanyi can help us better understand how symbols work and thus how art might or might not become a symbol for the supra-natural (235-236).

The book moves at a brisk pace and offers wonderfully concise and lucid summaries of both Polanyi's epistemology and Tillich's views on art. Baumgarten thus provides a useful and accessible secondary account of their work. Putting their work into conversation with the experience of artists nicely concretizes some of the discussion, as well. The pace of the book, however, takes its toll in several ways. Stylistically, the book is a bit choppy and the treatments of the authors are sometimes a bit wooden. The pace also prevents Baumgarten from going into great depth on many of the points she tries to make. Thus her

arguments consist more of creative and suggestive assertions than detailed arguments. At points, one wishes that she would spell out the connections between artistic practice/experience and theory in more detail. More detail would also help clarify the accuracy of extrapolations from Polanyi's thought. For example, her application of Polanyi's account of tacit knowing seems to slip a bit when applied to artistic work (6-12).

Overall, the book represents a creative appropriation and extension of Polanyi's epistemology and will be of interest to anyone whose passions lie with any combination of Polanyi, epistemology, art and religion. The book also points beyond itself to another task. Baumgarten remains largely uncritical of Polanyi and does not bring artistic experience to bear in a critique of his views. In other words, the conversation only moves in one direction. This work thus points to the need for a critical analysis of both Polanyi and Tillich in light of the actual experiences and practices of various kinds of artists. Baumgarten has highlighted the affinities, but what of the pressure points? Baumgarten's work provides a solid basis from which to proceed.

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Philip A. Rolnick. *Analogical Possibilities: How Words Refer to God*; Number 81 in the American Academy of Religion Academy Series, ed. Susan Thistlethwaite. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993. 316 pages, selected bibliography, index of names and index of subjects. Cloth \$29.95, paper \$19.95.

Rolnick's book is not Polanyian in the sense of addressing directly Michael Polanyi's view of "how theological language . . . can adequately express something about the infinite God" (256); there are only five explicit references to Polanyi in the book, none of which go into his own view of analogy. The book is very Polanyian, however, in the sense that it is informed in every part by Rolnick's understanding of tacit knowledge, discovery, personal judgment, commitment, universal intent, and

other key features of post-critical philosophy. Rolnick's defense of "a moderate epistemology of the real and a moderated speech about divine perfections encountered through creation" (93) is very much in keeping with Polanyi's affirmation in *Personal Knowledge* that the universe seems to point beyond itself to a God, although Rolnick seems to go far beyond Polanyi's position that "the Christian enquiry is worship" which "can say nothing that is true or false" (*PK*, 281).

Analogical Possibilities is addressed to readers who are ready to enter into a very technically demanding debate about the metaphysical underpinnings of theistic discourse. Particularly in the first third of the book, Rolnick relies on Aristotelian categories as refined over seven hundred years of debate within Thomism. Even though I took two courses in metaphysics from the Jesuit treated in this section, as well as many other courses from similarly inspired Thomists, I still found it hard at times to keep up with Rolnick's use of scholastic distinctions. I suspect those unfamiliar with this tradition would have great difficulty following the argument.

The book engages in dialogue with representatives from three different traditions about analogy: W. Norris Clarke, S.J., is a "moderate realist" from the neo-Thomist tradition (61, 67, 85). David Burrell, C.S.C., operates from a linguistic perspective, drawing on both Wittgenstein and Aquinas (187). Eberhard Jüngel follows Barth in rejecting philosophical theology on evangelical and theological grounds. "Jüngel, Clarke and Burrell all want to show how God may be distinct from the world and yet related to it" (213).

Although Rolnick carefully considers the strengths and weaknesses of all three positions, he sides most often with Clarke's reading of Aquinas. Starting with the principle that "an effect receives something of the essence of its cause" (47), Rolnick makes the case that by looking at the created world, we can gain some real, if incomplete, sense of the character of the Creator. This is the fundamental insight of Clarke's participation metaphysics: "the finite points beyond itself to what must be

an Infinite Source possessing the perfection in unlimited degree” (72). Drawing a sense of God’s character from the “friendly and good creation” (73) is the foundation of the “analogy of attribution” (203). Such insights, hunches, guesses, or clues, which cannot be made fully explicit, ground revelatory analogies:

A stretch-term is known “by running up and down the scale of its known examples and seeing the point, catching the point,” of the similarity which it alone can express. The elasticity of the term permits us to express commonalities which we see up and down the scale of being. But just because an analogous term cannot be rigorously defined, it does not follow that it is empty of meaning. Analogous terms are useful, even indispensable, precisely due to their flexibility; for they are markers of one of the most important exercises of our humanity: acts of judgment. The elasticity of the term must be combined with the commitment of the one who uses the term. (76)

It is clear that we create, use, and interpret these flexible terms through acts of tacit knowledge.

In dialogue with Burrell, Rolnick portrays analogy as “a mode of predication which can go beyond logic without destroying logic” (131). To do so requires “the judgment of the person” using analogy. Rolnick criticizes Burrell for conflating analogy and metaphor (171-76) and for failing to recognize that “even a form of life must be grounded in the metaphysics of action” (185—Clarke’s criticism of Wittgenstein). Nevertheless, Rolnick sees Burrell as extending the analysis of analogy in a fruitful fashion:

Most importantly, he has shown how the “systematically vague” nature of analogous terms is appropriately fitting to the anthropological condition. Capitalizing on the ambiguity in Aquinas’ metaphysics of *esse*, he has linked the “middle ground” of analogical use to judgment. . . . Applying methodological insights learned from

Wittgenstein, Burrell’s extended treatment of judgment, commitment, and the self-involving nature of inquiry clarifies much of what takes place as analogy is actually used. (186)

In Polanyian terms, one might say that using analogies is a skill which is developed by performing to self-set standards.

Jüngel, following Barth, rejects the idea that from the attributes of created reality, one can grasp aspects of God’s own reality (223, 233). For this tradition, the sole source of knowledge of God is Jesus Christ (226): “Humanity is established in a christological light, the world is illuminated in an eschatological light, and through suffering the death on the cross, the alleged imperishability of God is refuted” (239). Rolnick criticizes Jüngel for not recognizing the difference between the “confident, theistic rationalism of the Thirteenth Century” (245), in which declarations about the limits of language were made in the context of “theological commitments to the Trinity” (250), and the “skeptical rationalism” of Kant and the Enlightenment (245). More importantly, there is no good reason to imagine that what is learned about God from creation is inconsistent with what is learned from revelation. In his final resolution of the issues, Rolnick defends Thomistic metaphysics against Jüngel’s *sola fide* approach:

God’s freedom to reveal the divine self in Christ should not cause us to devalue what God has revealed in creation. And this, I take it, is the point of Neo-Thomist analogy—to express what has been discovered in the gifts of nature as compatible with what has been revealed in the gifts of grace. . . . The broader framework of action describes the constancy, continuity, and overall unity of a universe of self-communication. (293)

Although this language is drawn primarily from Rolnick’s study of Clarke, it resonates with Polanyi’s ruminations on knowing and being in Part Four of *Personal Knowledge*.

Rolnick emphasizes the fact that this is a moderate version of realism. The results of a metaphysical exploration of the universe are not on par with theological investigations of revelation, but they are not meaningless, either. Rolnick seeks to hold a “middle ground” between saying too much and saying too little (5-6, 256, 286). This is where limited human knowledge finds its true home:

Yet part of the strange comfort of being a creature, a participant in created reality, is knowing certainty in the presence of uncertainty. That is, it is comforting to know that whatever gains we may achieve, there will be more to discover about the created patterns and the personal relations of God. Once again, saying that we have “some knowledge” is a middle path, a path which supports faith without overwhelming it with either rational or dogmatic certainty. (296)

People who take the middle may perhaps expose themselves to attack from all sides, yet this is where the truth about the limits of human understanding calls us to do battle.

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Philip A. Rolnick. *Analogical Possibilities: How Words Refer to God*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993.

One of the remarkable achievements of Philip Rolnick’s *Analogical Possibilities* is its integrative power. It attempts to explore the possible bases for discourse about God from three distinct vantage points. The first comprises the traditional Thomist approach to analogical predication as revitalized by twentieth century Neo-Thomist scholarship and synthesized in the work of Norris Clarke. The second consists in a variant of this approach to analogy which is informed by a Wittgensteinian reading of Aquinas’ practice in using language about God explored in the work of David Burrell. The third perspective

is that of a Barthian rejection of the possibility of philosophical analogy in favor of the analogy of faith effected by the revelation of God in Jesus Christ defended by Eberhard Jüngel. Entering into the theoretical framework of any one of these perspectives is a daunting exercise of scholarship; exploring how they might mutually enrich our understanding of discourse about God is the work of creative imagination.

While containing only a few explicit references to Polanyi, Rolnick’s exposition of and concluding “conversations” between these proponents exhibit the masterful way in which he has digested Polanyi’s theory of knowing and unobtrusively used it to guide his own integrative proposal. My intention here is to point to a few instances where I believe the Polyanian perspective enabled Rolnick to appreciate nuances or deficiencies in the contrasting positions on analogy while additionally leading him to explore how bringing these approaches to bear on each other may suggest ways for integrating our understanding of discourse about God. If this reading is valid, it will illustrate for us the kind of reflection inspired by Polanyi that goes beyond a mere interpretation of Polanyi to the creative extension of his thought.

Each of these perspectives on analogy, Rolnick emphasizes, has stressed the need for personal acts of judgment for understanding the appropriate use of analogous terms. Norris Clarke, who defends a “metaphysical” perspective on analogy, insists that such terms are “activity terms” whose meanings are “elastic” and require the informed activity of the judgment of the person using the terms (75-78). He stresses the “objectivity” of their use by comparing it to the way in which we discover something and subsequently name it. Rolnick points out how Polanyi’s analysis of the heuristic process of discovery, wherein we rely tacitly on clues which we begin to integrate into a focal whole allow us to cross a “logical gap” once the coherence has emerged in our thought. This sustains both elements of Clarke’s intent here, the need for personal judgment and the objective features of what is being discerned. The Polyanian perspective permits an elucidation of Clarke’s insistence of the “action” of the

object known on the knower (33-34). His intention, of course, is to respond to Kant's restriction of knowledge to the phenomenal world by insisting that the object's activity on the knower (which Kant grants) must in some way be informative if it is to be known at all. Acknowledging the tacit grounding of our use of analogous concepts while recognizing these as culturally given forms of indwelling provides a perspective which sustains the metaphysical basis of our use of analogous terms while retaining the modern insight into their perspectival character. Presupposed throughout Clarke's position is that there is a correlative aptitude of mind and being (22-23). Again, Polanyi's understanding of the isomorphism of the mind with the object known can offer additional clarity on this fundamental issue. In particular this could support the claim that to affirm a knowledge of some (e.g., empirical) aspects of reality without more comprehensive (e.g., moral and ontological) levels leads to the lived contradiction of moral inversion. Finally, Clarke maintains that analogy allows us to recognize that being in act is the good (38-39), and when most profoundly understood that this is the outpouring of infinite love (87f). Even though Clarke argues that we are able to recognize this through metaphysics or "naturally," Rolnick is able to point out that here is a place where natural reason joins hands with Christian revelation. Evidently he is making such a judgment from the Polyanian perspective where our antecedent beliefs sustained by our form of indwelling allow us to perceive these "natural" features of reality.

In a similar manner, Rolnick's exposition of Burrell's work on analogy can be illumined by appraising it in light of Polanyi. Burrell attempts to limit his discussion of analogy to the "grammatical" features of such usage. Still the fact that using language this way is a skill that requires the personal participation of the knower in community of inquirers in order for the usage to be valid (112, 125) indicates how Polanyi's thought can be useful for a corrective. That Burrell intends such grammatical usage of analogous terms to be valid in some sense without being reducible of some sort of explicit logic requires an accounting.

Rolnick's suggestion that such usage presumes universal intent is instructive (125). For Polanyi, this would presume the ontological grounding of our knowing through the tacit awareness of the real, here under its guise as the good, drawing us on as inquirers (136-138). In this way Rolnick can praise the development in Burrell's thought insofar as he surpasses an exclusively grammatical interpretation of analogous language and begins to move toward an acknowledgement of the experience of dimensions of reality opened by dwelling in specific communities of discourse (155, 186).

Appreciating this Polyanian background of Rolnick's argument is most helpful, I believe, in understanding his treatment of Jüngel's rejection of a metaphysical use of analogy in favor of an understanding of the analogy of faith as a "language event." Jüngel's rejection of analogical language is based on an interpretation of modern philosophy to be upholding a rationalist foundationalism that attempts to establish a "theism" which inevitably must fail (191-192). In such a context, analogy must harbor a hidden agnosticism about transcendent reality. This is reminiscent of Polanyi's critique of critical reason, particularly in its positivist form, where an a-historical subject, doubting everything, comes to know precious little, particularly regarding any possible transcendent reality. What Polanyi insisted upon in the face of such a debilitation of reason is the acknowledgement of our antecedent commitments which sustain our particular forms of indwelling and through which we affirm substantive claims about the real. Jüngel's insistence that any valid knowledge of God be derived from the "language event" (212) wherein the person is addressed by God sets up the challenge to modernity's conception of knowledge "from above," as it were. That is, Jüngel's insistence on a form of analogy that is faithful to the gospel expresses, from the vantage point of the Christian tradition, the requirement of the personal engagement of the inquirer in the act of coming to have a valid understanding of God through the language event paradigmatically offered in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. One way that Rolnick is able to integrate this view with that of the Neo-Thomist and grammatical accounts is by pointing to the personal

engagement of the knower, presuming the tacit grounding of the use of language in the real (286). Similarly his claim that the philosophical interpretation of being in act is comparable to the disclosure in a language event (289) can be sustained through Polanyi's depiction of the objectivity of the gradient of discovery.

The argument of *Analogical Possibilities* is subtle and following it requires entering into the technical language of recent approaches to the doctrine of analogical language about God. My intention here has been to offer an interpretation of its guiding vision so that those who have a theological interest in the development of Polanyi's thought will be enticed to make the effort to explore its paths. In doing so, they will be richly rewarded.

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Response to Martin X. Moleski and John V. Apczynski

F. D. Maurice once wrote to a colleague:

Criticism... will always be negative, cruel... unless it becomes an interchange of thoughts between men who care much for each other and more for Truth.

In the highest sense of Maurice's point, I am indebted to both Martin Moleski and John Apczynski for their critiques of *Analogical Possibilities: How Words Refer to God*.

In writing their reviews for this journal, each reviewer independently pointed out various ways that this essay in philosophical theology had been influenced by Polanyi, whether overtly or tacitly. Frankly, I had forgotten how much Polanyi had influenced the writing of *Analogical Possibilities*. I now remember that, before I wrote the book, Charles McCoy had advised me to let Polyanian principles guide my inquiry without letting the book become a work about Polanyi.

Since both Moleski and Apczynski were so positive in their general comments, and since they correctly perceived not only my use of Polanyi, but also the general scope of what I was doing, I have only a few material points in response.

First let me respond to Apczynski's understanding of Jüngel. While Apczynski understands that Jüngel does advocate a form of analogy, Apczynski also writes of "Jüngel's rejection of analogical language." However, Jüngel not only advocates a form of analogy; he insists that analogy is the *only* way to speak about God responsibly:

there can be no responsible talk about God without analogy. Every spoken announcement which corresponds to God is made within the context of what analogy makes possible (as cited in *Analogical Possibilities*, 200).

Hence the debate is sharpened. The focus now is what kind of analogical language, not whether or not there will be analogical language.

Furthermore, my own view is that Jüngel contributes something very powerful in his development of the "language event." *Analogical Possibilities* tries to show that Jüngel's critique of Aquinas fails, but this failure does not significantly detract from Jüngel's own project. On the contrary, even Jüngel's failure is instructive, because many Aquinas commentators, both past and present, try to read Aquinas in the way Jüngel targets. Jüngel's critique of Aquinas should warn against strongly apophatic readings of Aquinas. Hence, the extended argument of Part One of *Analogical Possibilities* details how participation metaphysics and the closely associated analogy of causal participation is the mature Aquinas' best presentation for a positive predication about divinity. Nonetheless, Apczynski and I have no real argument here, since he generously writes of the "integrative power" of my work. My point is simply that there is some helpful integration which is possible with Jüngel and analogy based on participation metaphysics.

Notes on Contributors

In response to Moleski, I would again stress the centrality of *participation*, and not his citation of the “analogy of attribution.” Participation, having a share of, is really what all the technical bother is about. The creature has a share in the creation, and appropriate sense of belonging, and a language which potentially portrays such participation.

The resemblance between Polanyi’s thematic use of personal participation (which is developed primarily through epistemology) and the personal participation upon which Aquinas’ analogy theory rests (which is developed in an overt metaphysics) is a clue to some fascinating compatibilities which could be explored in another context.

With Moleski, I would agree that, “using analogies is a skill which is developed by performing to self-set standards”—as long as these self-set standards are themselves moving towards a transcendent standard; for such a movement makes meaningful the distinctions among our relativities.

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Charles S. McCoy recently retired from Pacific School of Religion/Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley where he was teaching when he set up the conversation between Michael Polanyi and Paul Tillich in 1963. McCoy has been interested in Polanyi’s postcritical thought since the mid fifties and has encouraged several generations of graduate students in Berkeley to become familiar with Polanyi’s writing in many articles and several books on Christian theology and ethics, including **When Gods Change** (1980), McCoy makes creative use of Polanyian themes.

Richard Gelwick, currently a medical humanist at the School of Osteopathic Medicine at the University of New England, was a graduate student working with Polanyi and writing the first theological dissertation on Polanyi’s postcritical thought at the time he helped engineer the conversation between Polanyi and Tillich in 1963. Gelwick is General Coordinator of the Polanyi Society and has been the backbone of the Society since its founding. In addition to many articles treating Polanyi’s thought, he is the author of **The Way of Discovery: An Introduction to the Thought of Michael Polanyi** (1977).

Donald W. Musser is Professor of Religious Studies at Stetson University and has been a member of the Polanyi Society since 1977. He wrote a dissertation at the University of Chicago on Polanyi and religious language. Another early scholarly interest—which led eventually to the included article—was the relationship between Polanyi and Tillich’s ideas about history. Musser was co-author and co-editor (with Joseph L. Price) of **The Whirlwind in Culture** (1987) and **A New Handbook of Christian Theology** (1992); forthcoming is **A Handbook of Contemporary Christian Theologians** (co-edited with Joseph L. Price) as well as **An Introduction to Religion**.

Electronic Discussion Group

The Polanyi Society supports an electronic discussion group exploring implications of the thought of Michael Polanyi. For those with access to the INTERNET, send a message to "owner-polanyi@sbu.edu" to join the list or to request further information. Communications about the electronic discussion group may also be directed to John V. Apczynski, Department of Theology, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, NY 14778-0012 PHONE: (716) 375-2298 FAX: (716) 375-2389.

Polanyi Society Membership

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

The regular annual membership rate for the Polanyi Society is \$20; the student rate is \$12. The membership cycle follows the academic year; subscriptions are due September 1 to Phil Mullins, Humanities, Missouri Western State College, St. Joseph, MO 64507,. Please make checks payable to the Polanyi Society. Dues can be paid by credit card by providing the following information: subscriber's name as it appears on the card, the card name, and the card number and expiration date. Changes of address and inquiries should be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to Mullins (e-mail: mullins@griffon.mwsc.edu ; fax: USA 816-271-4574).

New members must provide the following subscription information: complete mailing address, telephone (work and home), institutional relationship, and e-mail address and/or fax number (if available). Institutional members should identify a department to contact for billing.

The Polanyi Society attempts to maintain a data base identifying persons interested in or working with Polanyi's philosophical writing. New members can contribute to this effort by writing a short description of their particular interests in Polanyi's work and any publications and /or theses/dissertations related to Polanyi's thought. Please provide complete bibliographic information. Those renewing membership are invited to include information on recent work.

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 doublespaced type with notes at the end; writers are encouraged to employ simple citations within the text when possible. Use MLA or APA style. 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.

Manuscripts should include the author's name on a separate page since submissions normally will be sent out for blind review. In addition to the typescript of a manuscript to be reviewed, authors are expected to provide an electronic copy (on either a 5.25" or 3.5" disk) of accepted articles; it is helpful if original submissions are accompanied by a disk. ASCII text as well as most popular IBM word processors are acceptable; MAC text can usually be translated to ASCII. Be sure that disks include all relevant information which may help converting files to Word Perfect or ASCII. Persons with questions or problems associated with producing an electronic copy of manuscripts should phone or write Phil Mullins (816-271-4386). Insofar as possible, *TAD* is willing to work with authors who have special problems producing electronic materials.

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