THE PERSONAL AS POSTCRITICAL AND THEOPOETIC: EXPLORING RELIGION AND POETRY IN POLANYI'S TACIT DIMENSION

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ABSTRACT

Exploring Polanyi on religion in Personal Knowledge *and* Meaning *as mystical, metaphoric, and mythic as well as ritual and belief, I seek to clarify the meaning of the personal through a lens combining postcritical and theopoetic perspectives. Stanley Hopper's theopoetic similarly criticizes, and seeks unconscious depths beneath, modern dualism, deepening Polanyi's discussion of the religious efficacy of figural language. The personal for Polanyi embraces tacit commitment, from-to emergence, communal connectedness, creativity shaping our world, integrating self and world through figural language, process of discovery, and affirmation of God as presence and integrative agency in our existence and understanding. Poteat deepens the personal with effects of first-person-singular grammar. While affirming via negativa, letting go of frameworks, Polanyi insists traditional frameworks are essential to religion. He criticizes modern poetry for shattering Christian frameworks. Not recognizing religion in its fragments, he misses an unrealized potential for understanding religion as the depths of the tacit dimension. Letting go all frameworks, thoughts, rules, and goals in the via negativa, we dwell in mystery within which God presences through evocation of poetic images, and we experience our personhood as elusive selves enveloped in and impelled by divine Mystery.*

Distinctive if not unique among philosophers, Michael Polanyi describes the religious experience of mystical contemplation and explores the nature of religion as a metaphoric and mythic creation. In *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*, amid developing his paradigm-shifting philosophy of knowing, especially scientific knowing, he presents a profound description of religion viewed through a postcritical lens. In his final book, *Meaning*, he explores religion as a metaphoric and mythic framework through his postcritical lens and through what I call—drawing on Stanley Hopper—a theopoetic lens.

In the 1970s, Stanley Romaine Hopper introduced *theopoiesis* into theological discourse to shift theology (in Polanyi's language) from a critical to a postcritical understanding: from an intellectual pursuit of an objectivistic logos to a personal participation in *poiesis*, the dimension of our unconscious creating. Through use of the imaginative grasping, shaping, and evocative power of the poetic, poetic moments can make present the divine, enabling theology to go beyond the confines of critical dualism that separates God, world, and humanity. The theopoetical

> *doing* of theology implies *not* one more sortie into the bushes of some manorial *Dogmatik* accompanied by the hounds of the Reformation and the still resonant horns of the medieval *Summas*; the *doing* of theology has to do with evoking the *logos*, with bringing the god to presence (Hopper 1992, 208).

Polanyi has enriched his understanding of religion by exploring metaphor and myth. Connecting Hopper's theopoiesis with Polanyi's postcritical understanding further illumines the use of metaphor in religious thinking and deepens understanding of the agency of religion in the tacit dimension. Using both lenses elaborates the meaning of the word *personal* employed by Polanyi and developed further in a linguistic perspective by William Poteat. Through such a personal lens, I see in Polanyi's life-enhancing presentation of the tacit dimension a religious depth that is a potential not yet articulated in his brief explorations of religion.

Mystical Contemplation

In *Personal Knowledge*, Polanyi describes religion as mystical contemplation. With a poetic intensity amid his predominantly conceptual style of discourse, he speaks ecstatically of such a contemplative act. Ordinarily, we observe and manipulate our experience through a "conceptual framework" that is a "screen between ourselves and these things…which keeps us aloof from them." But, he writes,

> Contemplation dissolves the screen, stops our movement through experience and pours us straight into experience; we cease to handle things and become immersed in them. Contemplation has no ulterior intention or ulterior meaning; in it we cease to deal with things and become absorbed in the inherent quality of our experience, for its own sake. And as we lose ourselves in contemplation, we take on an impersonal life in the objects of our contemplation; while these objects themselves are suffused by a visionary gleam which lends them a new vivid and yet dreamlike reality. It is dreamlike, for it is timeless and without definite spatial location (*PK*, 197).

Contemplation carries us into the dimension of our tacit experience. In all our tacit indwelling, we are *immersed* in the things of reality on the basis of which we perceive, think, and act. Contemplation is a conscious entry into our tacit immersion, letting go of the mind's control: the "mystic seeks to relax the intellectual control" over his perceptual field, which "scans each object…to identify [its] particulars" (*PK*, 197). In our normal conscious lives, the *movement* [is] *through experience* to *handle things*—with words, ideas, and our hands. This is the way we live much of life—moving through, from the past through the present, towards the future focused on particulars. In the act of contemplation, however, we become immersed in the present of our tacit dimension.

We experience our tacit dimension not subsidiarily, depending on it as the means to explicitness, but in itself. What rises into consciousness from our tacit depths is the realm of our indwelling unity with things. We experience ourselves in intimacy with things as we are *in the objects of contemplation*. We take on an *impersonal life* because we are aware of ourselves no longer as separate individuals but as one with these objects. The impersonality is "complete participation," which is "self-abandonment" and not "complete detachment"—both a "visionary act" and a "submergence of his person" (*PK*, 197).

The act of contemplation is *timeless* as we become immersed in the present. As we let go of the whole framework of intelligent understanding, we have a sense, *a visionary gleam*, a *dreamlike* vividness, of us and all things as *divine miracle*, as part of a divine whole, as expressions, *features of God*.

> The whole framework of intelligent understanding, by which he normally appraises his impressions, sinks into abeyance and uncovers a world experienced uncomprehendingly as a divine miracle…. [T]hrough a succession of detachments…[we] seek in absolute igno-rance union with Him who is beyond all being and all knowledge. We see things then not focally, but as part of a cosmos, as features of God (*PK*, 197–198).

By letting go of the intelligent framework by which we ordinarily distinguish things, in contemplation we become non-focally aware of our interrelatedness with all the world and of God as a Whole who can be seen in all its parts. "God," Polanyi says, "cannot be observed, any more than truth or beauty can be observed. He exists in the sense that He is to be worshipped and obeyed, but not otherwise; not as a fact—any more than truth, beauty or justice exist as facts. All these, like God, are things which can be appre-hended only in serving them" (*PK*, 279).

"[R]elax[ing] the intellectual control" and entering into such mystical moments, we "concentrat[e] on the presence of God, who is beyond all physical appearances." Polanyi calls this "sink[ing] into abeyance" a "breaking out" because "contemplative communion" requires "an elaborate effort of thought, supported by ritual" (*PK*, 197). What the Christian mystic "seeks…is surrender to the love of God, in the hope of gaining His forgiveness and admission to His presence" (*PK*, 198). Divine presence is not observable but "overwhelms and pervades…[and] transforms the worshipper." "[C]loser to sensual abandon than to exact observation…, [m]ystics speak of religious ecstasy in erotic terms…. But religious ecstasy is an articulate passion and resembles sensual abandon only in the surrender achieved by it" (*PK*, 198).

What an amazing religious affirmation of the *via negativa*, an experience beyond words that suspends all words and ideas as we participate in the divine mystery of being. As Polanyi says, this is a "process…known in Christian mysticism as the *via negativa* and the tradition which prescribes it as the only perfect path to God stems from the *Mystic Theology* of the Pseudo-Dionysius" (*PK*, 197). Unfortunately, Polanyi does not explore this gem of a religious statement in its relation to the tacit dimension.

Religion as Ritual in *Personal Knowledge*

The mystic's "contemplative communion" is "supported by ritual" (*PK*, 197). Ritual is a framework that "comprises a sequence of things to be said and gestures to be made" (*PK*, 198), which involve "surrender [that] corresponds" to the mystical letting go of intellectual control. It is "the highest degree of indwelling that is conceivable." "Anyone sincerely saying and doing these things in a place of worship could not fail

to be completely absorbed in them," for they "involve the whole body and alert our whole existence" (*PK*, 198).

Polanyi insists the framework of ritual has clues within it that, rising from the tacit dimension, can inspire faith and the search for God: "I have described Christian religious service as a framework of clues which are apt to induce a passionate search for God. I have spoken of the tacit act of comprehension which originates faith from such clues. The capacity for such skilful religious knowing seems universal, at least in children" (*PK*, 282). By indwelling ritual, "the worshipper accepts the obligation" to strive for God's presence, which is beyond his "unaided powers," in the "hope of a merciful visitation from above" (*PK*, 198).

Indwelling the Christian framework, however, is not enjoyable as are other frameworks because there is an inherent tension in it: "The confession of guilt, the surrender to God's mercy, the prayer for grace, the praise of God, bring about mounting tension." Perfection and satisfaction are not attainable, as the "ritual of worship is expressly designed to induce and sustain this state of anguish, surrender and hope" (*PK*, 198). It is like "the heuristic upsurge which strives to break through the accepted frameworks of thought, guided by intimations of discoveries still beyond our horizon" (*PK*, 199). While this *breaking out* seeks a "casting off the condition of man" (*PK*, 198), that condition is inescapable, "like an obsession with a problem known to be insoluble, which yet follows, against reason, unswervingly, the heuristic command: 'Look at the unknown!'" The Christian framework "permanently satisfies…man's craving for mental dissatisfaction by offering him the comfort of a crucified God" (*PK*, 199).

Having explored religion as the *via negativa* of mystical contemplation and ritual that supports it, Polanyi adds to what he has said of God as presence and the idea of God as a cosmic heuristic field: "We may envisage then a cosmic field which called forth all these centres by offering them a short-lived, limited, hazardous opportunity for making some progress of their own towards an unthinkable consummation. And that is also, I believe, how a Christian is placed when worshipping God" (*PK*, 405). While not a fact or observable entity, God is nevertheless a tacit principle of physical creation, a teleological cause that draws forth all creatures in the evolutionary process. Such causal language for God is a far cry from the language of mystical communion with God, of which Polanyi gives no acknowledgement.

Polanyi's presentation of religion in a postcritical perspective in *Personal Knowledge* explores religion, therefore, in several ways: as mystical contemplation; as ritual supporting mystical contemplation and "partaking devoutly in the religious life" (*PK*, 198); as theological ideas of guilt, forgiveness, and mercy in contemplation and ritual; and as different views of God as the whole in which we participate in contemplation, the presence we strive to experience and obey in ritual, and the teleological principle of creation.

Metaphor and Myth in *Meaning*

While not dealing with religion as such in *The Tacit Dimension*, Polanyi develops further the structure and process of the tacit dimension and thus elaborates on his postcritical perspective in *Meaning*. Our bodily commitments to what is beneath notice, to our tacit awareness, emerge into explicit awareness: attending *from* the tacit *to* the explicit. Our tacit commitments are connections with many things. What is explicit—a perception, a word, an idea, an image—is the result of an emergent process that integrates some elements to which we are tacitly committed, issuing as a *gestalt*, a figure or pattern.

In writing *Meaning* at the end of his life, Polanyi uses this *from/to* structure and process to investigate religion and the imaging of God through the figural language of myth and metaphor. Combining a theopoetic perspective with the postcritical, he shows how metaphor and myth create and grasp meaning.

They move us in our depths to surrender to being moved. They are whole-making by integrating disparate elements in our lives. They show our lives and the whole world to be meaningful, held within a framework of religion. Apart from a framework, however, as with modern poetry that has discarded all frameworks, there is only meaninglessness.

The from/to action of tacit knowing is an integrative activity. All our conscious knowing depends on a tacit organizing of disparate elements into patterns that emerge into consciousness as what is known, whether a thing perceived, a theory thought, a discovery revealed, a machine constructed, or a poem created. Metaphor, Polanyi explains, is an imaginative "integration of incompatible clues into a focal whole" (*M*, 76; see 149, 157). The two parts of a metaphor—I would suggest "wine" and "sea" in Homer's metaphor of the "wine dark sea"—interact (i.e., modify each other) on the tacit level as they are attended subsidiarily *from to* the explicit whole, which is the metaphor itself. Polanyi speaks of this "interaction" (*M*, 75) as both a "bearing upon" and an "embodying": the sea bears upon the wine and is embodied in it (*M*, 151, 78). Using I. A. Richards's explanation of metaphor, Polanyi distinguishes the "tenor" (the subject, the sea) from the "vehicle" (what modifies the subject, the wine): "The tenor bears on the vehicle, but…the vehicle (the focal object) returns back to the tenor (the subsidiary element) and enhances its meaning, so that the tenor [i.e., sea], in addition to bearing on, also becomes embodied in the vehicle [i.e., wine]"[1] (*M*, 78).

Metaphors have "emotionally charged meaning" (*M*, 151) because we ourselves are caught up in them:

> the subsidiary clues—consisting of all those inchoate experiences in our own lives that are related to the two parts of a metaphor—are integrated into the meaning of a tenor and a vehicle as they are related to each other in a focal object (a metaphor). The result is that a metaphor…carries us away, embodies us in itself, and moves us deeply as we surrender ourselves to it (*M*, 79).

A metaphor is therefore an integration of subsidiary parts into an explicit whole but is as well an integration of self, both into that literary whole and within oneself, within one's emotional experience. Metaphors, to one degree or another, integrate the self. Metaphor is then a means to express the self's "basic imaginative capacity for integrating two or more disparate matters into a single novel meaning" (*M*, 79) and a means to "'carry us away.' In surrendering ourselves, we, as selves, are picked up into the meaning of the symbol" and "become *embodied in it*" (*M*, 73; his italics).

In a poem the *from/to* structure is more complex. Not only is it functioning in each metaphor, but the entire complex of meaning, which is the poem, involves a tacit integration of many factors: "the rhythm, rhyme, sound, grammar, and all the other more subtle formal aspects of a poem, along with the several allusions of its parts, all jointly bear on the meaning of the poem" (*M*, 80). And it integrates us:

> [poetic meaning] is not merely established by an integration of subsidiary clues directed *from* the self to a focal object; it is also established by surrendering the diffuse memories and experiences of the self *into* this object, thus giving them a visible embodiment. This visible embodiment serves as a focal point for the integration of these diffuse aspects of the self into a felt unity, a tacit grasp of ourselves as a whole person, in spite of the manifold incompatibilities existing in our lives as lived (*M*, 75).

God of *Personal Knowledge* Revised in *Meaning*

The word "God," viewed now in *Meaning* as metaphoric, functions in the same integrative way as metaphor and poem: "Through our integrative, imaginative efforts we see…[God] as the focal point that fuses into meaning all the incompatibles involved in the practice of religion. But, as in art—only in a more whole and complete way—God also becomes the integration of all the incompatibles in our own lives." The integrative function is now, however, comprehensive. God integrates not only the various elements of religious practice but the entirety of our lives. In defining God as a focal point of integration, Polanyi avoids a "critical" definition of God; "God is thus not a being whose existence can be established in some logical, scientific, or rational way before we engage in our worship of him" (*M*, 156).

This new theopoetic imaging of God as the focal point and integrative energies of the incompatibles of our lives is different from Polanyi's talk of God in *Personal Knowledge* as a cosmic heuristic field drawing forth a gradient of meaning, and as the one whom we strive to obey. While Polanyi continues to speak of a "gradient of meaning" that "is operative in evolution in addition to purely accidental mutation and plain natural selection…[that] somehow evokes ever more meaningful organizations (i.e., boundary conditions) of matter" (*M*, 173), he no longer identifies this as God. He uses it rather to show that "[t]here is no scientific reason why we cannot believe," even for modern sceptics, the "religious hypothesis…that the world is meaningful rather than absurd" (*M*, 179). This opens up the possibility to engage in a kind of religious belief that the world is meaningful.

He does continue in *Meaning* to speak of the *via negativa* as the mystic's contemplative search for the *presence of God*. Detachment from all particulars (presumably cognitive as well as perceptual) *grants union* with God. Through *love of God* the whole world is seen as *miracle*:

> the Christian mystic…seeks a visionary sight lying beyond the intelligent analysis of his surroundings, but by this *via negativa* he seeks the presence of God. Through a series of detachments, he strives for the absolute ignorance of particulars which grants union with him who is beyond all being and all knowledge. In a perfect love of God the world is revealed as a divine miracle (*M*, 128).

He then goes on to connect the divine presence, united within contemplation, with the metaphoric function of fusing disparate elements:

> In the West…the union of incompatibles was first elevated to a general theological principle by Nicholas of Cusa under the influence of the *via negativa* of Pseudo-Dionysius. He called it the *coincidentia oppositorum* and argued that such a *coincidentia oppositorum* was the least imperfect definition of God (*M*, 129).

Religion as Mythic in *Meaning*

Religion is mythic as well as metaphoric. Like "God," myth has the integrative function of fusing incompatibles, opposites, into a whole. The whole, however, is not merely a metaphor or a poem but encompasses the whole of the total cosmos. Myth, like art, is the result of the integrative activity of the imagination. In myth, however, the world as a whole is grasped by selves as they evolve from their subhuman origins. Following Mircea Eliade's discussion of myth, Polanyi sees myth as definitively cosmogonic,

which in its "conception of creation encompasses the *whole* world" (*M*, 124; his italics). What myth presents to its archaic adherents is a meaningful world: "For Eliade the prime value of archaic myth lies in showing the world to be full of great meaning" (*M*, 127–128). In myth an individual experiences "the wonder of our being" but "does not feel shut up in his own mode of existence" (*M*, 128). Rather "the myth of creation makes us aware of a deeper reality" (M, 146); the self experiences its own underlying connectedness with the "cosmic totality" (*M*, 128; Hasumi, x)—with its human community present and past, its culture of thoughts that transcend the individual, and its natural environment. In the midst of all this, the self experiences through myth the mystery of its origins and the potential greatness of its destiny and comes to "feel at home" in the universe (*M*, 147).

The world we come to feel at home in is a sacred world. Following Eliade, Polanyi says the religious occurs in sacred time and sacred space, which are set apart from ordinary profane existence (cf. *M*, 81, 85, 87, 124–130, 147–150, 179–180). Picking up the point from I. A. Richards's talking about the way an artwork is separated from the ordinary by a frame, Polanyi insists that religious meaning requires "detachment" from the ordinary ruck of our existence, which is what he takes Eliade to mean in separating sacred and profane. While focusing on the framework of ceremonial occurrences evocative of the sacred among archaic people in Eliade, Polanyi does not explore Eliade's talk of hierophanies, individual experiences of the sacred. While Polanyi could explore mystical moments as hierophanies, he only explores the metaphoric function of integrating incompatible elements in the framework of mythic ritual.

Separating sacred and profane, as Eliade does and Polanyi accepts, is an unfortunate assertion of a dualism—not that there isn't a distinction, but the sacred is present in profane life. Ordinary life is called profane when its sacrality is not acknowledged; when recognized, it is called sacred. In not mentioning individual hierophanies and in accepting Eliade's dualism, Polanyi is focused rather on the indispensability of ritual frameworks to experience the sacred.

Nevertheless, Polanyi's use of his postcritical lens to show the tacit-explicit emergent integrative process in the poetic realm of metaphor and myth contributes significantly to understanding the religious importance of the tacit dimension as it reveals a *deeper reality* amid our interconnectedness with all of being in which we come to *feel at home* in the universe.

Polanyi and Hopper

Polanyi's engagement with the poetic forms of myth and metaphor exhibits Hopper's three steps in *theopoiesis*: the step back, the step down, and the step through. The first step, *back*, recognizes the problem with objectivism and allows the dualistic system of modernity to crumble. The second step, *down*, is the dissolution of the rigid ego boundaries of the Western self. The third step, *through*, is experiencing God "coming to presence" (Hopper 1992, 297) through the power of the poetic word. Polanyi similarly attacks modern dualism and, with the subsidiary self, dissolves the modern self as rigid ego. Polanyi exhibits the third step with his "contact with reality" (*PK*, 5–6) as "ecstatic vision" and "contemplative communion" through which we let go of all intellectual control to "live in" and "become immersed in" the divine presence.

In this third step, however, Hopper is awaiting divine presence without framework, since none from the modern West works any longer. Not only has the objectivistic system shattered, but the meaning he seeks does not lie in frameworks:

What we are confronted with today is the problematic of the radical revisioning of our way of seeing and thinking. The traditional symbol systems have been sprung: the classical metaphysical model for talking about "God" and the manifold of our experience is no longer our "house of being." We are shorn and bereft of these plain and comfortable perquisites. It is not even a question as to whether we can come up with a theology "in a new key"; it is a question rather as to whether theology, insofar as it retains methodological fealty to traditional modes, is any longer viable at all (Hopper 1992, 207).

Similarly immersed in divine presence, while for Polanyi forms and traditional frameworks are of compelling interest, Hopper sees them as having become the objects of commitment rather than putting us in touch with the realities they purport to express. The experience of the divine as Presence, Logos, Being in its sustaining and integrating mystery, not the frameworks that have shattered, is the center of religion and the basis of our religious sense that self and world are ultimately meaningful. Using Polanyi's words, we lose our tacit grasp on the reality the form is intended to manifest; we no longer attend from our contact with divine reality through the framework but rather focus explicitly on the framework. Letting go of all frames—as in the *via negativa*—Hopper descends into the depths to contact afresh the reality of divine mystery. These experiences as episodic revelations are precipitated through metaphor. They open out to the world as they inhere in a community of lived coherence and presuppose a linguistic community, a poetic culture, and a network of commitments to teachers, words, interpretation, and reality.

Necessity of Religious Framework for Polanyi in *Meaning*

Using a postcritical lens, Polanyi explores religion in *Personal Knowledge* as depth experience of mystical contemplation, ritual practice, conceptual belief, and ethical action. In *Meaning*, combining with the postcritical a theopoetic lens, he looks at religion as a tacit emergent phenomenon of imaginative meaning fusing incompatibles. Religion is located in the figurative, integrative, emergent language of metaphor and myth, and in God it is redefined as a focus of metaphoric fusion and presence. In his longer exploration of religion in *Meaning*, he continues to speak of the mystical *via negativa* in the same words and elaborates on ritual using Mircea Eliade. He makes clearer his insistence on the necessity of a framework as essential to religious meaning, obviously thinking of the scientific framework as essential to scientific discovery. He insists that religion is a coherent framework, that our life to be meaningful requires just such an articulate framework, and that this framework must be, moreover, a traditional one: "Subjects that lie deepest in our existence are most fitly recalled in traditionally recurrent forms, since an 'established' way of doing so expresses our affiliation to a comprehensive and lasting framework much better than a form we simply improvise for the occasion" (*M*, 118). He then goes on to say not only that traditional frameworks best express the deepest in our existence but also that only through them are our life and death given meaning:

> The destruction of formal occasion in the name of authenticity has the effect of diffusing our existence into scattered details, deprived of memorable meaning. Only through our surrender to such occasions do we find ourselves affiliated to a comprehensive, lasting framework which gives meaning to our life and death and to the myriads of separable events in between (*M*, 119).

There is an inherent political conservatism in this insistence on traditional frameworks, which he admits: "no matter how liberal a free society may be, it is also profoundly conservative" (*PK*, 244). He acknowledges that the coercive power of the state is used both to support "universities, churches, academies, law courts, newspapers, political parties" and to "guard the wealth of the landowners and capitalists" (*PK*, 245). He opposes "radical action towards the establishment of justice and brotherhood." While recognizing injustice, he insists that "[u]njust privileges prevailing in a free society can be reduced only by carefully graded stages; those who would demolish them overnight would erect greater injustices in their place" (*PK*, 245). He is obviously writing from his experience of the disastrous Russian Revolution and its spread into Hungary.

"Radical action" for him means violent overthrow of liberal government. But what of nonviolent radical action within liberal society that seeks to eliminate the oppressive frameworks of sexism, white supremacy, militarism? These are frameworks within our so-called free society. While the democratic institutions of free society should be activated rather than demolished, these oppressive systems need to be demolished. All too often, "carefully graded stages" in traditional frameworks has meant *do nothing, or not enough*.

Finding the source of meaning and creativity deeper than frameworks, however, can issue in radical nonviolent social transformations. If Polanyi had located the religious in the tacit dimension and integrative powers of *poiesis*, not constrained by an articulate framework, he could have affirmed the possibility of the transformation of society by new explicit constellations of social life emerging from *improvise*[d] *occasion*[s] integrating disparate elements in people's lives—like a discovery or a poem rising to consciousness. *Theopoiesis*, through its metaphoric power of fusing disparate elements and evoking divine mystery in the depths of our tacit lived existence, from which we live and create, can reorient our world by helping us let go of traditional oppressive frameworks and allow new patterns of fitting relations with selves and the natural world to emerge from the tacit dimension. Religion grounded in the tacit dimension can become a means for political and cultural transformation.

Modern Poetry as a *Meaningless Heap* in *Meaning*

Polanyi's examination of modern poetry, however unwittingly, exhibits the limits of how far he has developed his combined lens towards, and where he stops short of, the fullness of the personal. He insists on defining religion in terms of explicit traditional frameworks, in terms of myth and ritual, as indispensable to religious thought and practice. While obviously one of the ordinary and important ways of defining religion, upheld through personal commitment and personally meaningful to him and many others, there are clues in his extraordinary transformative conception of the tacit dimension that he has not plumbed: religion as the mysterious depths of the tacit dimension that are experienced in the *via negativa* and underlie all religious thought and action (actually all thought and action).

While he sees the traditional religious framework of Christianity as forever shattered in visionary art, Polanyi is able to affirm in it, however, a universal meaning on the feeling level:

> Visionary art has shown us that it is…possible for our imagination to integrate these incompatible elements into a meaning—a meaning that cannot be expressed in any set of coherent, explicit statements, a meaning that is born and remains at the level of feeling but which is nonetheless a genuinely universal personal meaning and not merely a subjectively personal meaning (*M*, 159).

Nevertheless, he concludes that the *universal personal meaning…remains at the level of feeling*, lacking a narrative framework, and therefore presents the world as meaningless: "unlike the contents of a work of visionary art, the contents of a religion will have as their import the story of a fundamentally *meaningful* world, whereas the import of a work of visionary art is rather that the world is a meaningless heap of inchoate things" (*M*, 159). He elaborates further on the feeling-impact but meaninglessness of visionary art, such as modern poetry:

> Because painters and poets condemned the world as absurd, they represented it as a heap of fragments. But because they were artists, their vision brought this supposedly dead pile to life in their works of art! These artists thus preserved the honor of their nihilistic protest by cutting the world to pieces; but they inadvertently triumphed over this destruction of meaning in our social life by evoking in this rubbish meaningful images never witnessed before. This triumph at once crowned the artists as creators of meaningful visions and succeeded in allowing them, in their own minds, to leave the "pile" there as an expression of protest against the chaotic conditions of the age (*M*, 115–116).

We hear in these passages the voice of the scientist committed to meaning as conceptual framework, indispensable to the work and sustained, as he insists, by the tacit dimension. We hear as well a scientist's persistent corrective of modernity's dualistic understanding of the world, as he affirms the world's meaningfulness. And we hear a scientist affirming the truth of various mythic stories in biblical accounts, even when their "representational content" is not factually true, because they present our lives and world as meaningful. For those for whom the lack of factual truth is "one of the serious stumbling blocks to the acceptance of religion in our day,"

> we see in the creation stories, the miraculous-birth stories, the Crucifixion and Resurrection stories a meaning expressing the whole significance of life and the universe in genuine and universal feeling terms. Then we can say: It does not matter. If not this story exactly, then *something like this* is somehow true—in fact, is somehow the highest truth about all things (*M*, 159; his italics).

By embracing religion as mythic, he does not require religion to have the conceptual veracity of a scientific system but more loosely only the "plausibility" of "import":

> if we can regard religious myth as plausible, the sort of world that religious myth represents—a meaningful world—must be thought by us to be plausible. We must be able to say: If not this story exactly, then *something like this* story is how all things are put together. In other words, it must be plausible to us to suppose that the universe is, in the end, meaningful (*M*, 159–160; his italics).

The world is meaningful. The Bible affirms this. The miracles and myths are true, even when not factually true, because the import of the biblical narrative framework is that the world is meaningful.

Meaningfulness in Modern Poetry's Fragments

In science, the meaning of the world is held within frameworks of understanding and practice. Polanyi applies this same pattern to religion: frameworks are essential, sustained by the tacit dimension. Yet I would say, using Polanyi's own crucial insights, that religious efforts at comprehending the meaningfulness of the world rest on the ultimate meaning we *know* through our indwelling and experiencing the mystery of being but cannot *tell*—as in the *via negativa*—not in the frameworks we can *tell*. By looking through combined postcritical and theopoetic lenses at the tacit dimension, rather than at tacitly sustained religious frameworks, we can make religious sense of the fragments in modern poetry and in our everyday existence. Locating religion fundamentally in the mysterious depths of the tacit dimension of our being in the world, which stories can present and poetry can evoke, we have a deepening of the meaning of the personal upholding the frameworks and the forms in our lives.

Modern poets are attacking the same thing Polanyi is: the objectivistic framework of Western thought. For them the traditional framework of modernity includes Christian thought and practice, which they see as forever shattered. Amid the shards of Christianity seen by them as a Cartesian-infused and mythic system, they look for meaning in the everydayness of our bodily being in the world. The everyday does not lack all coherence, but it has a *lived* rather than an intellectually comprehensive coherence. While Polanyi insists that the world is meaningful, this conclusion leaves unanswered the deeper question of the personal—whether my life in this world is meaningful. In our daily living, whether in perception of ordinary things emerging from tacit awareness or in a moment of mystical contemplation, we can find a fullness of meaning through the tacit metaphoric integrations of a multitude of incompatible ingredients incarnate with divine mystery—if we are open to the depths of our own tacit dimension.

Consider Polanyi's example of modern poems as *a meaningless heap of inchoate things*: Ezra Pound's famous poem "In a Station of the Metro":

> The apparition of these faces in the crowd,
> Petals on a wet, black bough.

Polanyi calls this an "expression of fragmentation, which refuses to accord any meaning to our modern world" (*M*, 77; Pound 1928, 89).

While Polanyi affirms the meaningfulness of *the level of feeling* that is a *genuinely universal personal meaning*, he stops short of embracing this as definitive in itself of religion because religion must have an explicit structure of myth and ritual, a *story of a fundamentally meaningful world*. While mystical contemplation, obvious in how he describes it, has this level of feelingful universal personal meaning he sees in visionary art, he will not accord fragmented modern poems with the religious meaning he experiences in contemplation. While the framework is let go in contemplation, rather than being shattered as it is for these poets, he is unable to see the sacredness of this heap of things as features of God.

While this Pound poem makes no reference to God, has no hint of traditional religious matter, and has no framework holding together the images in the two lines, it sees faces in a crowd and petals in their *thereness*, their *suchness*. It performs the metaphoric integrative process Polanyi has just talked about—seeing faces as petals. One of the great religious questions in my experience, I found in Tillich, is: Why is there something rather than nothing? Here are two things, faces and petals. To see beyond their facticity to wonder that they are is to experience the mystery of being. To yoke together faces as petals, and petals as

faces—integrating incompatibles arising from the tacit dimension—can draw forth wonder at our being. Naming and conjoining faces and petals, ordinary things rather than objects of contemplation, take on the aura of *beingness*—and affirmation of growth and beauty. "Petals" are flowers in a stage of growth which bring aesthetic pleasure. Faces as petals suggest the appearance of humans as beautiful and in a transient moment of growth.

The poem does not suggest there is something sacred about them, but they are seen without any framework as *suffused by a visionary gleam which lends them a new vivid…reality* in the simplicity of their sheer being and beauty and in their connectedness with each other grasped through the metaphoric process. I would not call them "dreamlike," as in contemplation, but Pound is presenting them in their vividness.

In modern poets—T. S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, H.D., William Carlos Williams—we see that the traditional frameworks of modernity and Christianity have been shattered. For some the traditional Christian symbols, though broken, as Tillich would say, are recovered. But for all, whether using traditional symbols or not, they are seeking beneath all systematic thought the evocation of mystery in the particulars of our personal lives through metaphoric fusions that manifest mystery and create a felt wholeness of self dwelling in a meaningful world of lived coherences without dedication to a conceptual framework. While Polanyi is explicitly wed to the important view of religion as explicit framework sustained by the tacit dimension within which mystical contemplation can occur, there is a fruitfulness in his postcritical perspective that he himself did not discern and that can deepen his presentation of the personal—which, of course, fits his understanding of the nature of creative discoveries: that their significance extends beyond what their discoverers recognize. What matters ultimately in a religious sense is the mattering of mystery, the coming to the presence of the divine: in a person, a thing, a word, an event, *or* (but not only) a framework.

While they always have a penchant for becoming idolatrous objects, losing religious depth in calling attention to themselves, they can be filled with presence, again and again. God can come consciously to presence not only within poetic metaphor, as Hopper has so richly shown, but also within ritualized memory and reenactment of a revelatory event in an explicit comprehensive framework, as Polanyi has shown. And as modern poets show, divine presencing can occur as well within any artifact, any place or time, the texture of interwoven lives, and a sensing of the wholeness of being.

Religious Potential in the Tacit Dimension: Trust and Mystery

While religion can inhere in frameworks and in moments of experience, the tacit dimension is inherently religious, even though Polanyi does not explore it as such. All our knowing and our very being are dependent on tacit indwelling, which involves commitment. Insofar as our being depends ultimately on such commitment, such faith, it is religious. Such commitment is not conscious decision but is the exercise of our tacit agency given in our very being. Nor is it directed toward a god or a dogmatic belief or a written text but embraces that which is unknowable. Tacit commitment is a matter of existential trust beneath all knowing, without which we could not know or be. While we can specify various things we trust—the earth we walk on, the language we speak, our bodies' skills, what our teachers have taught us, our intellectual abilities, the clues we followed in making a discovery, the general reliability of other people—there is beneath these in every tacit commitment a trust in ineffable being, ours and the world's. We live and know by faith.

The tacit dimension is inherently religious, not only because it is a realm of faith (as trust) but also because, as the basis beyond all explicit knowing and control of our existing, knowing, and doing, it is a realm of mystery. The religious is the ultimate depth of mystery in our tacit dimension. We have to trust

this tacit mystery in order to be. It underlies our lives as selves in our fundamental identity, connectedness, origins and endings, openings to ultimate understanding, and transformation and integration of new life. Even if we spend much of our lives trying to ignore or control it, it is forever beyond our knowing and controlling.

As tacit, the religious is the mysterious background of my personal being in the world, which I "know" primordially by being in it, committed to it, depending on it, and subsidiarily attending from it. Reality has many aspects, each articulated on the basis of tacit indwelling, whether political, scientific, or cultural. The deeper potential of the religious in postcritical perspective is, therefore, those aspects of faith and mystery in the tacit dimension. As faith, the religious is present in every tacit activity as existential trust. As mystery, the religious is known on different levels in a diversity of ways: tacitly—as the dimension of depth in the mystery of being selves in the world; and explicitly—as a pervasive sense of being (a sense of presence, full-ness, wholeness, wonder, or dread), the felt texture of communal connectedness (the sacrality and love in interpersonal being), distinguishable moments of experience (a hierophany), and a figural aspect of some-thing (the symbolic reality of sculpture, cathedral, poem, dance, artifact).

This mystery of being lies deeper than the experience of a meaningful world seen as a whole and as features of God, and deeper than the integrative work of myth and metaphor, because it underlies conscious recognition of communion with the world and union with God, and all our linguistic activity. The *via nega-tiva*, which Polanyi embraces, is a letting go of all frameworks—perceptual, intellectual, ritual, ethical—as descent into, surrender to, Mystery. Ritual can elicit such immersion, but immersion can also happen in one's individual ordinary life and in individual meditation. In his profound discussion of mystical contem-plation, Polanyi will not rest in unknowable, uncontrollable, ineffable Mystery, which the *via negativa* does, say, in the writings of Meister Eckhart. It rises for Polanyi, however, immediately—wonderfully so—to a conscious pattern of us as part of the whole of being and of it as divine, features of God. It is this presence of Mystery in the depths of our tacit dimension, beneath all the forms of thought and ritual, that I am seeing as the potential for naming something still deeper in the tacit dimension as religious.

For this underlying primordial reality, I would use the name "God" for that which I trust, knowingly or not, in order to be; that which I am committed to and rely on as background of all my interconnected-ness with being; and that which I sense as Presence. While Polanyi, aligning himself with Tillich, does speak sparingly of God in terms of mystery and depth, and of divine presence, he could develop these clues into a more cohesive postcritical way of understanding and speaking of God and religion.[2]

Inherent Tension in the Christian Framework

Polanyi makes clear that there is an *inherent tension* in the Christian framework (*PK*, 198–199). Yet no such tension exists in the *via negativa*. It is his traditional understanding of the Christian framework as *teleological* and *deontological* that causes the tension (to use Niebuhr's words for the major traditions in Christianity of striving for a goal or obeying a rule; see Niebuhr 1963, 132-136). When he speaks of *striv-ing* towards God and *obeying* God, forgiveness and mercy, engaging in communal ritual, Polanyi is using explicit principles and practices that have emerged from and are sustained by the integrative power of the tacit dimension. However real in his and most (but not all) Christians' experience, they are part of the framework, arisen to be sure from the tacit dimension but not inherent in the divine mystery in the tacit dimension.

The *via negativa* in Polanyi's profound affirmation lies deeper than thinking and willing. These are suspended, as he says, when *sink[ing] into abeyance*. Yet he speaks in a deontological and teleological manner of an *obligation* to strive, "to seek in absolute ignorance union with Him" (*PK*, 198). He aims at a goal, "gaining his forgiveness and admission to His presence" (*PK*, 198), a monarchic metaphor of dualistic separation in traditional Christianity. He even seeks the impossibility of "casting off the condition of man" (*PK*, 198), inscribing a dualism of self and God.

He contradicts his *sink[ing] into abeyance* when he says an act of contemplation involves *an elaborate effort of thought*. It is a *breaking out* that focuses on God rather than on things. While it may in fact take a struggle to enter the contemplative mystic dark, it is done, rather, by letting go of one's grip on ideas, obligations, and goals—yes, a *sinking*—not by thinking and willing. We cannot let go of thinking by thinking. We cannot let go of willing by willing. Unintentionally, it would seem, Polanyi is expressing a *critical* dualism of God and world. The tacit dimension is a depth metaphor, yet he speaks of encountering God as a "visitation from above" (*PK*, 198). If in mystic contemplation, all things can be seen as features of God, then we do not shift our focus from the world to God but attend to God in the world. That is what modern poets are doing as they find Reality in the particulars of the world, whether using transformed Christian symbols or not.

The contemplative vision of oneness involves apprehension, yet he speaks of it as obedience, which lies on the level of framework. God, Polanyi says—like truth, beauty, and justice—is *apprehended only in serving them*. While serving can be obeying—or simply flowing from love—apprehension is awareness not obedience. How am I obeying when experiencing all things miraculously as features of God? What then is obedience? If it is adhering to God's commands in scripture, to the discipline of ritual practice, or to divine directives experienced in a contemplative moment (as in the experiences of Moses, Elijah, Jesus, and Paul), that would be following explicit written words, patterns of actions, or emergent insights. In any of these cases, obedience may be flowing from a contemplative moment, but they are not moments of *detachment* in *absolute ignorance*.

With Polanyi's enthusiastic description of the contemplative moment and commitment to serving and worshipping God, I believe we have a profound affirmation of his own experience at the different levels of the tacit dimension in the *via negativa* and the teleological and ontological frameworks of ritual practice, ethical principles, and doctrinal beliefs. What I am suggesting, however, is that the combined postcritical and theopoetic lenses take us into the depths of the tacit dimension, revealing the presence of *the personal* dwelling in the divine presence.

On the *Personal*: Polanyi and Poteat

Polanyi has gone far towards imagining a fully personal perspective on religion by combining a theopoetic perspective in his last book with his already redolent postcritical perspective. The meaning of personal in *Personal Knowledge* and *The Tacit Dimension* is elaborated in the tacit dimension and commitments, from/to emergence, communal connectedness, creativity shaping the world we live in, integrating self and world through figural language, discovery of the new, affirmation of God as presence, and integrative agency in our existence and understanding.

Embracing mystical contemplation of the *via negativa* takes us into a level of feeling in our personal depths. Insisting on the framework of ritual, and its verbal theological ingredients, as enabling and extending mystical experiences presents ritual as the habitation, sustenance, and provocation of personal agency. In *Meaning*, Polanyi enriches understanding of the personal in religion by exploring the further reaches of

personal creativity as we shape meaning of our being in the world through metaphor and myth. Imaging God becomes more personal as Polanyi lets go of God as teleological cause. He combines his thoughts of mystical experience with the integrative activity of persons in myth and metaphor, enacted from one's own individual and social perspectives.

All of what he says about religion as mystical, metaphoric, and mythic is his philosophical attempt to fulfill his commitment to express his own beliefs underlying his thoughts, as he says in *Personal Knowledge:*

> I believe that the function of philosophic reflection consists in bringing to light and affirming as my own, the beliefs implied in such of my thoughts and practices as I believe to be valid; that I must aim at discovering what I truly believe in and at formulating the convictions which I find myself holding; that I must conquer my self-doubt, so as to retain a firm hold on this programme of self-identification (*PK*, 267).

While his description of mystical contemplation is obviously from his own experience, he does not speak personally of it, in the first-person singular—of what *I truly believe*—but mostly in the third person with a few uses of the first-person plural. The *via negativa*, for example, is what it is for people in the tradition of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite. As William Poteat has argued, however, something more of the personal—our personal backing—shows itself when we speak in the first-person singular. When I speak in the first-person singular, I show my relation to myself, the way the self that I am is present in my speaking, and the way I am relating to the subject matter of my speech:

> "I" always functions reflexively. It not only calls the attention of the hearers to a particular about which something is being said, it refers reflexively for the speaker to his own activity of speaking, and this is not logically on all fours with *what* is being said (Poteat 1969, 133; his italics).

The reflexive self in its *own activity of speaking* stands *behind* what it says and stands *in* how it uses words in multiple ways:

> Our personal backing is behind our acts and our uttered words in many different ways. Sometimes we mean what we do and say, and saying is what we have done; sometimes we mean them, but not quite; sometimes we believe we mean them and are taken to mean them, but if we are asked, we are not sure; sometimes we don't mean them at all—and say so, with our eyes; sometimes we don't mean and don't by any means say. And it is difficult, now that you think about it, to say what exactly it is to say (Poteat 1968, 211).

This first-person action is essential, as well, to myth as imaging creation and eschaton. I "*indwell, give my personal backing* to the radical beginnings and endings" that myth provides beyond my own life story I can tell (Poteat 1968, 229; his italics). So in ordinary talk and mythic speech, we give our backing (intend some meaning, whether conscious or not), in some way or another, to what is said.

At the end of his essay on "Myth," Poteat quotes a passage from Sören Kierkegaard that expresses this reflexiveness in the self that I have always loved since encountering it in college: "'By relating itself to its own self and by willing to be itself, the self is grounded transparently in the Power which constituted it.' And this formula again, as has often been noted, is the definition of faith" (Poteat 1968, 230, n. 21;

Kierkegaard 1941, 216). This self-reflexiveness is manifest, though not said, in first-person-singular speech. It lies beneath all frameworks, all words, all ideas. I am *grounded transparently* in the divine creative *Power*. This is the ground from which I enact my personal backing of my words, acts, beliefs. While *transparent*, it is mysterious, beneath seeing and saying. It is the realm of the elusive self inhabiting the mystery of being. Poteat speaks of the uncatchable elusiveness of the self:

> "I" is a logically extended concept since what it names over and above what may be stated in and hence known by means of reports upon behavior or dispositions to behavior systematically eludes, at any given level of reporting, incorporation into the reports of that level…. [This is] systematically elusive, but elusive of this kind of public discourse only, not completely elusive of my awareness (Poteat 1969, 130–131).

Kierkegaard does not include our interrelatedness with other persons and with the natural world in our self-relatedness to self and God, while Polanyi and Poteat do—Polanyi in his tacit bodily indwelling of the world and visionary gleam of the whole as features of God, and Poteat as speaking always in a dialogical relationship of my "I" to another "I," which is always in a concrete *place*, not abstract *space* (see Poteat 1993, 23–42). This interrelatedness dynamic is in the depths of the tacit dimension beyond knowing, in the Mystery of being. I find in this interrelatedness in Mystery, the habitation of my elusive self, the locus of religion in its deepest sense, potential but not elaborated by either Polanyi or Poteat. Beneath all frames and forms, all words and ideas, all myths, metaphors, rituals, and the linguistic level of first-person reflexivity, I am participating in the present moment in this mysterious dynamic of being, whether present to it and aware of it or not. Here is where I find potential for a deeper way of thinking of God, doing theology, how to enter mystical moments, and the way of a spiritually open life in the world.

What is very hard for us, born in the Enlightenment—as Poteat was wont to remark—is to speak of what we experience in this realm in the first-person singular. This is what Polanyi meant by discovering and saying what beliefs underlie his thinking, while *conquer*[ing] *my self-doubt*. This is what Poteat's talk of speaking in the first person is pointing to. Yet our critical mind rebels, while our postcritical mindbody beckons.

Polanyi has not owned the mystical vision as his own. Poteat has not shared publicly what he discerns in his first-person reflexivity of his experience of the Power. It is obvious that the way Polanyi speaks of mystical contemplation is his own experience. Early in his career, Poteat does speak personally of Christ incarnate in his own experience: "Christ is known only in my own existence—in my enactment of myself…the real thing, the *Incarnation itself*, just right here within the very act of existing which is myself!" (Poteat 1993, 107–1083; his italics).[3] While this is a powerful and moving affirmation, he could have shared with us more personally, in the first person, what this experience was for him of Christ within himself beyond his ecstatic declaration that his mindbody is incarnate with Christ.

In his last book, *Recovering the Ground: Critical Exercises in Recollection*, Poteat moves away from affirming the intimacy of *indwelling* to affirm that God and self exist in a less intimate way of *relationship*. He speaks repeatedly St. Paul's words of that "in which I live and move and have my being" (Poteat 1994, 23, and fourteen other places) but has moved away from talk of divine indwelling, such as Christ in me. For Paul it is God as that in which we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28); for Poteat it is the world. While he says "the ground of our mindbodies [is] in the good creation," God is not the ground of self and world but is rather the Reality we are "in a covenant with" that has "made us into transcendent spirits…in

speech exchanged": "the God in speaking with whom our transcendence…[of] our unique acts of speech… was accomplished" (Poteat 1994, 123). We stand *before* God not *in* God, nor God *in* us. Speaking of one of his mentors, he says, "Niebuhr and I have shifted away from the ground upon which dualism arose and has thriven by taking our stand upon the self before God" (Poteat 1994, 123; cf. 121–128).[4] While our mindbodies are grounded *in the good* creation, they are the ground of all meaning: "Our sentient, motile and oriented mindbodies in the world…are the ground of all meaning and meaning discernment, whence all reflection derives" (Poteat 1994, xiii; emphasis added).

What however is the ground of the mindbody? Polanyi speaks of mystical uniting with divine Presence through the integrative creativity of the tacit dimension. Poteat repeatedly refers to St. Paul's "I live and move and have my being," but it is in the world, not in God. I am suggesting that my mindbody, your mindbody, and the worldbody we grasp and shape through the emergent tacit integrative creativity are grounded in the Mystery we inhabit. Through this personal lens, combining postcritical and theopoetic, we become aware of the dynamic inter-responsiveness of my self relating with myself, relating with other persons, relating with all of being, and relating with the Power that is constituting me.

The personal is the deepest reaches of the self within my self, within the net of being, and within the Mystery (I call divine, and even God)—while as I am within it, it is within me. Using metaphor and metaphoric creations (myth, story, anecdote, witness, pillow colloquies) in the first-person singular, I manifest the Mystery in the depths of my tacit dimension as I take it up and dwell within it as this person I am. Religious thinking, acting, and being are reflecting such indwelling as they bend back upon Mystery in my mindbody in the world. Uniting the postcritical and theopoetic, sustained and enacted by the tacit dimension in the first-person singular, I intend (speaking personally, beginning to do what I am advocating) to think, write, and be—and show forth myself as—a person, aware of, attending to, being directed by, embracing ("willing to be itself" in Kierkegaard's words), and expressing the mindbodily elusive self I am as *grounded transparently in the Power*.

ENDNOTES

[1]In explaining how metaphors "can *move* us so greatly—can carry us away" (*M*, 76; his italics), Polanyi uses I. A. Richards's distinction between tenor and vehicle. I have always found Richards's use of these particular words confusing for distinguishing subject (tenor) from its modifier (vehicle). Polanyi affirms an "'interaction' view" (*M*, 75) and shows how the two terms in tension (in my example "sea" and "wine") that make up the metaphor are the result of the integrative work of disparate elements in the tacit dimension. The focal object is the metaphor in which tenor and vehicle are related: "a tenor and a vehicle are…related to each other in a focal object (a metaphor)" (*M*, 79). We are *carried away* because "all those inchoate experiences in our own lives that are related to the two parts of a metaphor—are integrated into the meaning of a tenor and a vehicle" (*M*, 79).

It gets confusing when he speaks of the focal object not only as the metaphor but also as the vehicle—"the vehicle (the focal object)"—and the tenor as "the subsidiary element" (*M*, 78). This would mean that the vehicle is explicit and the tenor is tacit. But he presents both vehicle and tenor as the two explicit parts of the focal metaphor into which all our inchoate experiences are tacitly integrated. So what is interactionist in Polanyi's understanding of metaphor? The interaction Polanyi has in mind may be the two explicit parts, tenor and vehicle, conjoined in the metaphor. It may be the tacit and explicit interacting, as when he speaks of subsidiary tenor and focal vehicle. It may be all the inchoate elements interacting as they are being integrated into the two parts. Most likely, it is all of these—certainly the interaction on the tacit level and their appearing integrated on the explicit level. He does affirm that the tenor both bears upon and is embodied in the vehicle. Does the vehicle reciprocally bear upon and embody the tenor? Are these bearing and embodying tacit or explicit, or both? Are tenor and vehicle interacting with each other, or is it a one-way street of the tenor relating to the vehicle?

I find a clearer postcritical viewing of metaphor in Charles Feidelson's *Symbolism and American Literature*. Feidelson knows nothing of Polanyi. Correcting the imbalance in Richards, which Polanyi is following, Feidelson shows how each term in a

metaphor modifies the other. His example is Andrew Marvel's "the iron gates of life" in which the two terms "iron gates" and "life" generate the power of the metaphor by interacting with each other. In Richards's language, but making it mutually interactive, Feidelson says that both terms in their interactive togetherness become both tenor and vehicle. This interactionist view

> establishes the idea of life *under the aspect of* iron gates, and of iron gates under the aspect of life…. From this standpoint, both the similarities and the differences between tenor and vehicle become irrelevant. If the two terms are seen under the aspect of each other, the *real* tenor is a meaning produced by the interaction of the two terms, which together form the vehicle (Feidelson, 60).

Feidelson is criticizing Aristotle's classical definition of metaphor. Aristotle thinks in terms of class logic: a metaphor combines terms from two classes. They are "atomistic words" that resemble one another when seen as subclasses of a larger class: "The terms retain their logical discreteness, and the metaphor is only a conventional device for summarizing a logical relationship, founded ultimately on resemblance between things" (Feidelson, 59). Feidelson is more postcritical than Polanyi on the nature of metaphor in his clearer presentation of the interaction of the two terms: they are seen as mutually illuming the other, each experienced under the aspect of the other. While Feidelson does not have the concept of the tacit dimension, this interaction is clearly occurring through integrative activity beneath explicit consciousness as created by a poet and received by a reader.

[2]See *PK*, 283, n. 1, also 6, 199, 202, and Eliade in *M*, 126, 128, 146–147, 155–156.

[3]See R. Melvin Keiser, "Toward a Post-Critical Theology"; Cannon and Hall, *Recovering the Personal*, 137–138.

[4]While Niebuhr may somewhere use this neo-orthodox phrase, "before God," his theoethics of responsibility is centered in responsiveness to God acting on him within his inward relatedness with the world in every moment, and is therefore the ground of his personal being (see Niebuhr 1963, 122–126).

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