HANS URS VON BALTHASAR: JESUS CHRIST
THE CONCRETE FOUNDATION
OF FAITH

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ABSTRACT

HANS URS VON BALTHASAR: JESUS CHRIST THE CONCRETE FOUNDATION OF FAITH
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This thesis examines Hans Urs von Balthasar's theology of the act of divine faith in Jesus Christ, and God in Christ. The central question for fundamental theology as posed by Balthasar is "How does God's revelation in Christ confront man in history? How is it perceived?" Can one have actual knowledge of Jesus Christ, and God in Christ, in the act of divine faith? Chapter I examines the history of the epistemology and theology of the act of faith during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Chapter II analyzes Balthasar's writings concerning the manner in which God in Christ is perceived in the act of faith. Chapter III, considers the question of nature and grace as found in Balthasar's writings, particularly his use of "analogy of being." Chapter IV is a critical analysis and conclusions about foundations for the act of faith and theology.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## ABSTRACT

ABSTRACT ........................................................................ iii

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .............................................. iv

## ABBREVIATIONS

ABBREVIATIONS .................................................. vii

## INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION .................................................. 1

### CHAPTER

1. **THE HISTORICAL THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT** .......................................................... 10
   The Immediate Historical Context ........................................................................... 10
   General Theological Background- 19th Century ..................................................... 11
   General Theological Background- 20th Century ..................................................... 24
   The New Theology ............................................................................................... 34
   Conclusions .......................................................................................................... 43

II. **HOW CAN WE KNOW GOD IN CHRIST?** ............................................................ 45
   Balthasar's Epistemology ....................................................................................... 45
      Balthasar's Starting Point .................................................................................. 45
      The Transcendental Thomist Approach .................................................................. 47
      Meta-Anthropology: The Interpersonal Revelation of Being .................................. 51
      "I" and "Thou" ..................................................................................................... 51
   How Can We Know Christ Today? ........................................................................... 56
      Jesus: The Figure of Faith .................................................................................... 56
      Scripture and Christology .................................................................................... 57
      Christocentric Theology ..................................................................................... 59
      Christ's Figure as Legible "Form" ........................................................................ 60
   "The Nature of the Act of Faith: Seeing the Form" .................................................. 65
      What is the Nature of the Act of Faith? ................................................................. 65
      Does the Act of Faith Include Knowledge of God? .............................................. 66
      Faith Gnosis of God's Glory in Christ .................................................................. 68
      The Relation Between God and Being in the Act of Faith ................................... 69
      The "Form" of Gnosis in the Act of Faith ............................................................... 70
      The Objective Nature of Christ's "Form" ............................................................... 73
      Beauty and "Form" in the Act of Faith .................................................................. 76
      Beauty and the Light of Faith ............................................................................... 78
      Unity of Content and "Form" in the Act of Faith .................................................. 81
      Unity of Content and "Form" in Theology ............................................................. 84
      Two Essential Dimensions of a Theological Aesthetics ........................................ 85
      The Place of Theological Aesthetics in Theology ............................................... 88
   Revelation and Experience: The Experience of Faith .............................................. 93
   Experience Must Be Part of the Experience of Faith .............................................. 93
### III. THEO-DRAMATICS: LIFE IN CHRIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Unity of Reality</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Nature of the Problem</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balthasar's Approach: Existence as Receptivity</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theological or Philosophical Anthropology</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infinite and finite freedom</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Problem of &quot;Nature&quot;</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analogy of Being: Nature and Supernature</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union of Nature and Supernature in Christ</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation in Christ</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ the Concrete &quot;Analogia Entis&quot;</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diastasis in the Trinity: Basis for Analogy of Being</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation in Christ</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analogy of Being and Barth's Analogy of Faith</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analogy of Being and &quot;Pure Nature&quot;</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extricinism or Immanenst? The Third Way of Love</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being as co-extensive with love</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Openness&quot; of human nature as the human basis for grace</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love and beauty</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potentia obedientalis</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desiderium naturale visionis; &quot;freedom in quest of Freedom&quot;</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potentia obedientalis and &quot;supernatural existential&quot;</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ the concrete measure of anthropology: reversal of perspective</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Balthasar's Nature and Grace Methodology</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### IV. CRITICAL ANALYSIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Search for Foundations for Faith</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Epistemology of Faith Knowing</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith Knowing, and Faith Concepts and Language</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith Knowing by Encounter</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certitude in Knowing Christ</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certitude by Faith or by Reason</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form and Content, and Analogy of Being</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of God in Christ Through Analogy</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analogy in St. Thomas Aquinas</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analogy and Knowledge of God in the Franciscan School</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ the Concrete Analogy</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective and Objective Knowledge in the Act of Faith</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ in Context</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

vi
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Glory I</strong></td>
<td>The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TD I</strong></td>
<td>Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory I: Prologomena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TD II</strong></td>
<td>Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory II: Dramatis Personae: Man in God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TD III</strong></td>
<td>Theodrama, Theological Dramatic Theory, Volume III: The Dramatis Personae: The Person in Christ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Christian faith presupposes that we can "know" Christ, in some sense. If theology is "faith seeking understanding," then Christology is faith-knowing of Christ seeking understanding. Christology then must suppose that we can come to some knowledge of Christ which is relevant to our lives as we live them in this century. Our initial faith-knowing of Christ is already an understanding. So we need to define exactly what we mean by "faith-knowing" and "understanding." What kind of faith-knowledge of Christ do we think we have (and can we have) and what kind of deeper understanding are we seeking? How can we come to this knowledge?

These questions can only be asked and answered in terms of our own cultural and historical context. Jaroslav Pelikan, quoting Albert Schweitzer, says of the contextualization of christology:

"Each successive epoch," Schweitzer said, "found its own thoughts in Jesus, which was indeed, the only way in which it could make him live"; for, typically, one, "created him in accordance with one's own character."^1

Each age seems to get the image of Jesus it wants and needs. But the image that simple believers live by, may or may not correspond

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to that which theologians develop. Given the contextualization of
christology, how is historical continuity and identity with Christ
to be maintained?

Hebrew 13: 8-9 tells us that "Jesus Christ is the same
yesterday and today and forever. Do not be led away by diverse and
strange teachings." While this can be given a metaphysical and
theological sense, in what sense is this true in human history? The
context to which this verse speaks is that of fidelity to correct
teaching about Christ's identity and significance. Revelation in
Christ occurred in a Jewish context of meaning to which Jesus of
Nazareth addressed himself and in which he was received. The
context of meaning had developed over centuries as revealed in the
Old Testament. Assuming the truth of the revelation which took
place in Christ in that meaning context, how can that truth be
passed on in new historical and cultural contexts? Can historicism
and relativism be avoided? The fact of continuity and discontinuity
in Christian tradition and in history and culture generally is
evident. Historical and cultural contexts are not self-enclosed
systems or intergenerational and intercultural exchange would not
be possible. But, particularly with respect to the Christian
tradition of Christ, what are the criteria by which identity and
continuity are to be maintained? What can be the basis for

1See Gerard S. Sloyan, The Jesus Tradition: Images of Jesus in
the West. Mystic, Conn.: 1986. Sloyan traces the images which have
been vital in the lives of great spiritual teachers and believing
people.

1I am assuming that real truth can be communicated through a
contingent historical context of meaning.
certitude in answering these questions? How can we understand Christ's universal significance throughout history and for all peoples? How can there be different images of Christ in different times and cultures while, in the historical sense, He remains the same from age to age? What is there about Christ that can be and is universally true for all humanity in every age?

These questions necessarily assume that there is something about humanity which is universally true in every time and place. It assumes a Christian anthropology based on Christ's humanity. It assumes that there are some fundamental, existential and universal human conditions, and questions about human existence and destiny which transcend historical and cultural contexts, to which Christ is the answer. He is the answer both in the sense that he has humanly lived through those fundamental conditions and questions and revealed the truth about human reality in every age, and in the sense that he has lived and revealed the truth about humanity's transcendental questions - the truth about ultimate destiny, and the relationship between life now and life eternal.

1"The Gospel, and therefore evangelization, are certainly not identical with culture, and they are independent in regard to all cultures. Nevertheless, the Kingdom which the Gospel proclaims is lived by men who are profoundly linked to a culture, and the building up of the Kingdom cannot avoid borrowing the elements of human culture or cultures. Though independent of cultures the Gospel and evangelization are not necessarily incompatible with them; rather they are capable of permeating them all without becoming subject to any one of them." Pope Paul VI, On Evangelization in the Modern World: Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1976, par.20, pp. 16-17.
But, he has done all that in a particular meaning context. God has truly become flesh in the context of Judaism, and by doing so he has permanently become part of human history in a human way, and the revelation in Christ is now passed on in a human historical way, subject to its finite and contingent nature, albeit with the aid of the Holy Spirit. Does human historical reality, in its metaphysical, ontological and epistemological dimensions, permit the continuity and identity of truth in any objective and universal sense? Put another way, is there an epistemology of human religious knowledge and an ontology of human language which can provide the philosophical grounding for such continuity and identity? How can Revelation which took place nearly two-thousand years ago speak to the present? How can Jesus of Nazareth, Risen Lord and Christ, be known through faith in a way that is relevant to today?

In the dialectic between past and present, text (and tradition) and present faith experience, the historical Jesus and the Jesus of faith, is the only arbiter of truth the Archimedean lever of human subjective experience, and therefore the authority of the human subject? Are the structures of human subjectivity the basis for certitude in matters of Revelation? Or, if faith is based on God's authority, is certitude a particular dimension of the act of faith itself, which certitude comes from Christ, the immediate object of faith? If so, how do we encounter and receive certitude from Christ, the immediate object of faith? How can we have certitude with respect to a contingent historical event that we know only second-hand?
These are some of the central questions of our age which underlie development of doctrine and inculturation issues. How one resolves these questions of continuity, identity, and certitude with respect to Christ, the object of faith, will determine one's theology of revelation and of the act of faith, or vice versa. A theology of revelation and of the act of faith are correlative. What one believes to be the elements of a theology of revelation will determine what one believes to be the elements of the act of faith. Further, one's theology of development of doctrine directly depends on one's theology of revelation. For example, if one holds to a propositional conception of revelation and faith, one's theory of doctrinal development will be logical, rather than transformistic or theological. Finally, one's theory of cultural correlation will depend in part on how one resolves these prior issues, as doctrinal development is one essential dimension of cultural correlation.

In this thesis my overall objective is to show how Hans Urs von Balthasar's method, and his theology of revelation and faith which is the basis for his christology, provides a way to respond to the question of how we can know Christ in this age. The objective can be summed up with the question: How does Hans Urs von Balthasar propose we can know Christ in our age?

For each age, the life and teachings of Jesus represented an answer (or, more often, the answer) to the most fundamental

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questions of human existence and of human destiny, and it was to the figure of Jesus as set forth in the Gospels that those questions were addressed. 4

Behind the intellectual positions taken by the scholars of each epoch are some fundamental assumptions.

There will be some fundamental assumptions which adherents of the variant systems within the epoch unconsciously presuppose. Such assumptions appear so obvious that people do not know what they are assuming because no other way of putting things has ever occurred to them. With these assumptions a certain limited number of types of philosophic systems are possible. 5

Correlatively, "the way any particular age has depicted Jesus is often a key to the genius of that age."

How should we in our age proceed to know and understand Christ? What do we mean by faith-knowledge of Christ? Immediately we are faced with the question of methodology. Where do we start and how do we proceed? What questions must our method address to achieve our goal of knowing and understanding Christ in a way that is relevant to our contemporary setting? Christ challenged the assumptions of his age. Or, would it be more accurate to say that he challenged some fundamental human assumptions which simply take different cultural-historical forms in different times and places?

How does our method allow Christ to challenge us and our questions and assumptions? How can we ask the questions to which Christ is the answer? We have to keep in mind that Israel's rejection of Jesus is paradigmatic of humanity's rejection of Jesus and the revelation which he is of human and transcendental reality. Is our

4 Pelikan, p. 2.

epoch open to Christ? Does our method put us in a fundamental posture of being taught and receiving from Christ, or does it put us in the fundamental posture of determining and authenticating Christ? Is our method or our form of christology determined by the content of the gospel, or does it shape and determine the gospel's contents?¹ If Christ is the Revelation of God who is universally significant in all times and places, what kind of method is necessary to assure that Christ's universal significance is appropriately proclaimed in our age in continuity with the past? Who or what is the source of our certitude about Christ?

We are not the first generation of Christians to be faced with these questions. As previously indicated, different periods of Christian history have raised different questions with respect to what is known and understood, and what the particular historical period wants and needs to know about Christ. But, such a search in each period must have proceeded according to some method, uncon-

¹For the argument that content does indeed determine form and therefore method see Colin E. Gunton, Yesterday & Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1983. "The content of Christian belief, at least until the time of the Enlightenment, was expressed in words that were for the most part common to all times—except the very earliest—and parts of the christian world. The form of talk about Christ was that of the language of Nicaea and Chalcedon, which formed a centre for the Christology of most major christian theologians, certainly in the West. From the time of Schleiermacher there has been a division between those who would express the content in a different form and those who believe the old forms to be indispensable in certain respects if the content is to be retained. The argument of this book is to be that certain changes of form entail also a change in content: and that it is very difficult to maintain a real continuity with earlier ages unless we can at least in some ways affirm their words as our words, even though necessarily we shall not use and understand those words precisely as they did. Ibid., p. 5.
scious and implicit though that method might be. Fundamental assumptions determine method.

In the first chapter, I plan to explore the historical context which gave rise to the theological questions which Balthasar and other theologians, particularly the Transcendental Thomists, were trying to solve. Then, in Chapter II, I will present Balthasar's approach to the initial act of faith in Christ. This will involve his epistemology, and by way of comparison that of the Transcendental Thomists. This chapter will then move on to examine his theology of the act of faith-knowing as a perception of the "legible form" of Christ, or what he calls his "theological aesthetics." As we examine the fundamental assumptions in the theology of Balthasar, we will also be looking indirectly and secondarily at the assumptions of the theology of our age, particularly those of Transcendental Thomism. In Chapter III, I will address the question how it is possible for us to participate in God's life of knowing and loving Himself, which was assumed in Chapter II. This is the problem of nature and grace. Here, I will examine Balthasar's use of "analogy of being" to understand the problem of nature and grace. Chapter IV will contain a critical analysis and conclusions to be drawn about how Christ can be known by faith today according to von Balthasar.

My own approach to Balthasar's thought is systematic in method, whereas Balthasar's approach to theology is more synthetic than systematic. In fact, I agree with Balthasar that a completely systematic approach to theology is impossible because God is the
object of Revelation. A diversity of theologies, as evidenced by the Gospels, is necessitated by the nature of the object of Revelation. But the question is whether all theologies are equally true in method and content. Or, do they all equally understand the reality contained in Revelation? That reality, God, is one. Somehow all that is diverse and true of God in Revelation must have a unity. Consequently, the question becomes one of method. What fundamental aspects of Revelation determine proper theological approaches to God, the object of Revelation? If there are such fundamental aspects which determine a proper approach to Revelation, how can and do they lead to diverse theologies? While I cannot do so in this thesis, one might ask what, if any, are the similarities in method of the Gospel writers in their approach to understanding and knowing Christ? It is my belief, that Balthasar has identified and conceptualized the methodology of the Gospel writers. However, I will not be able to document that belief in this thesis.

I will be drawing from only a few of Balthasar's works and secondary sources. Consequently, my arguments and conclusions must be tenative, though I believe the works and sources chosen fairly represent his thought.
CHAPTER I

THE HISTORICAL THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The Immediate Historical Context

Theologians in each age develop their particular theological approaches in response to theological questions to which their age gives birth. Usually those questions have a history that can be traced to the questions and answers of prior ages. One needs to ask from a historical perspective what fundamental problem is Balthasar and other theologians of his period trying to solve? The immediate context of Balthasar's Christology is that of the 1940's and what was called "the new theology" (nouvelle théologie).

The Church in Europe, in the years 1930 to 1950, in the midst of a time of crisis and change affecting every aspect of European society, witnessed an enormous intellectual and theological revival, a return to the sources of Christian Revelation. This upsurge was really a wave that started at the turn of the century and was now cresting and about to crash onto the contemporary scene. "No small part of this world-wide revival and upheaval in theology has been centered in France; in fact, since the turn of

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the century the French have spearheaded this theological move-
ment." It was this revival which gave rise to the "new theology." The fundamental desire that seems to drive the "new theology" is to rediscover the authentic Christ, to know him with the certitude of faith, and to bring him to the modern world. But we really need to go back to the nineteenth century context to see how the problems of the 1940's arose.

General Theological Background- 19th Century

During the nineteenth century Catholic theologians as a whole had been in reaction to the rationalism of the eighteenth century. They were united in the common aim of trying to show the errors of those types of rationalism which either rejected religious belief or reduced it to rational, natural belief. They were bitterly divided on the philosophical and theological method to be used. The battle was between the post-Kantians and the Neo-Thomist scholastics. They were divided on the most fundamental issues of the relationship between nature and grace, faith and reason, natural versus supernatural knowledge of God, innate awareness of God, and revelation and philosophy. In essence the issues being raised were about the metaphysical nature of finite and transcendent reality, the natural and the supernatural, and correspondingly, the epistemological question of human knowledge of transcendent reality. To put it more concretely, how did human created reality permit God's transcendent reality to be revealed in Christ, in a

contingent historical/cultural context? Secondly, how could that revelation in Christ be known now with certitude\textsuperscript{11} and in a new historical/cultural context, in a way that had continuity and identity with the authentic revelation in Christ? These issues were critical to a unified approach to the act of faith, the nature of theology, theological method, development of doctrine and apologetics.\textsuperscript{11} As we will see, these fundamental questions converged and became focused on the question of the nature of the act of faith in Christ, and God's revelation of himself in Christ. Prior to the second half of the nineteenth century, Thomism was basically dormant. It had declined along with scholasticism due to its corruption by Cartesian rationalism during the eighteenth century. When neo-Thomism develops in the second half of the nineteenth century, what distinguishes it from scholasticism is precisely Neo-Thomism's commitment to Thomism.\textsuperscript{13}

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, since Catholic theologians were basically out of touch with their scholastic heritage, in reaction to post-Cartesian rationalism, Kantian rationalism, and Hegelian pantheism, they "attempted to restore Catholic theology by using new theological methods modeled on the

\textsuperscript{11}Historically the quest seems to have been for objective scientific certitude, rather than the certitude of faith. This involves the issue of whether God's revelation of Himself can be known other than with the certitude of faith. I will try to address that question in the final chapter of this thesis.


\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., pp. 27-30.
philosophical method of post-Cartesian philosophy." The post-Kantian theory of knowledge, anthropology, and metaphysics of the German idealists, especially Schelling, were the philosophical vehicles used. The theology of the "Catholic Tübingen School, the metaphysical dualism of Anton Günther, and the "ontologism" of Romini and Gioberti were built upon it."

Post-Kantians differed from Kant in holding that noumenal reality could be known by intuitive reason (Vernunft), though discursive reason (Verstand) was limited to objective phenomena. The intuitive process of reasoning had two stages. First, intuitive reason passively received metaphysical reality (Glaube). Second, discursive reason scientifically reflected upon the intuited metaphysical reality (Wissen). "Philosophy was understood to be a science (Wissenschaft) of faith (Glaube), or a science of revelation." Christologically, Christ and Revelation in Christ could be

\[\text{\textsuperscript{11}}\text{Ibid., pp. 2, 13.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{15}}\text{Ibid., p. 13; regarding "Ontologism" see Ibid., Chapter 4 and: D. Cleary, New Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 10. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967-79, pp. 701-703; Albert Keller, Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology, Vol. 4. New York: Herder and Herder; London: Burns & Oates, Ltd., 1970, pp. 290-292. Transcendental Thomism tries to avoid "ontologism," while retaining some of its insights. "... the formulas of Ontologism are to be rejected insofar as they affirm the perpetual presence of God to human reason in the form of an object. Nonetheless, there is a justifiable purpose behind this assertion, one which was native to the Augustinian tradition and to which Christian philosophy is again devoting its attention today. It is the effort to explain how the non-objectivated grasp of being, which is characteristic of the human mind, is related to the knowledge of God, 'self-subsistent being', and whether this does not imply a non-objectivated experience of God prior to and at the basis of all proof of the existence of God." Keller, pp. 291-92. As we shall see, it is precisely here that Balthasar differs from the Transcendental Thomists.}\]
known subjectively by intuitive reason and Christology would then be scientifically derived from that intuitive knowledge. In addition, the metaphysical realities available through intuitive reason, in the fashion of Plotinus, composed "an organic universe of interrelated forms or souls." This is the model of "faith" and "reason" that the post-Kantians proposed. It assumed a certain conception of grace and nature, and in its turn determined "the relation between revelation, apologetics, and positive speculative theology...." Naturally, this more subjective intuitive approach to truth, gave the post-Kantian nonscholastics a greater "sensitivity to the intelligibility of history, tradition and community," and a greater "appreciation of the apologetics of immanence" than the Neo-Thomists.

In the second half of the nineteenth century Neo-Thomism was revived to deal with the problems of faith and reason which the traditionalist's fideist approach and the more correlationist post-Kantian approach of Hermes, Gunther, the Tübingen theologians, and the ontologists had failed to resolve. The Neo-Thomists were "reacting against the Cartesian subjective starting point in


"Ibid.

"Ibid., pp. 18-19.
Neo-Thomists took the position that there was no way to correct and adapt current philosophies as they were all "vitiated by the fundamental defect of individualistic rationalism." McCool sums up their position as follows:

In modern philosophy reason was individual reason, separated from the Church's authoritative communication of Christian tradition. The separation of individual reason from the Church's authoritative communication of tradition had occurred within theology at the time of the Protestant Reformation. Descartes had extended it to Catholic philosophy. Rationalism and skepticism were the inevitable results of modern philosophy's separation of itself from Catholic tradition. Therefore they could never be overcome until philosophy had been persuaded to retrace its steps, abandon the modern form which it had assumed with Descartes, and rebuild itself anew in vital continuity with the sound Christian philosophy of the scholastic period.10

In reacting against the Cartesian subjective starting point, the Neo-Thomists "stressed the sensible origin of man's conceptual knowledge." The intentional forms represented in categorical universal ideas, derived subjectively from sensible singular things, that were "the correlates of the changeless forms in sensible things themselves....The intelligibility of being was not grounded in the intelligible motion of the knowing mind" as it was for the post-Kantians. "Nor was it grounded in an unobjective grasp of the moving mind's infinite Goal." For the Neo-thomists the "intelligibility of being was grounded in the contingent intelligibility of sensible things themselves."11 It was a realist philosophy as opposed to the idealism of the post-Kantians. The

10Ibid., p. 11.
11Ibid., p. 19.
11Ibid., p. 11.
Neo-Thomist theory of knowledge was that one came to know God and the mysteries contained in revealed truth through "the indirect and analogous concepts of a judging intellect." By abstraction and analogy one could come to know more what God was not rather than what God was, as St. Thomas had said. In sum, Abstraction and analogy rather than direct and intuitive knowledge of God distinguished the scholastic approach to God from the approach of post-Cartesian philosophy and, despite its rapprochement with modern thought in the twentieth century, abstraction and analogy are still the cognitional characteristics of Thomistic metaphysics and theology.11

The epistemologies of the post-Kantians and Neo-Thomists differed in several ways. First, they differed on how noumenal reality, or theoretical and spiritual truth, is mediated to the intellect. The Neo-Thomists insisted that humans can know such reality only indirectly in a mediated fashion, through sensible realities. The post-Kantians said that such reality can be known directly by intuitive reason before it is conceptualized. Secondly, for post-Kantians the sensible realities, concepts, symbols and truths of the Christian faith have, at most, an instrumental or occasional role in mediating such intuitive knowledge.

The debate between the Neo-Thomists and the other schools became so emotional and difficult that the Church authority had to intervene.11 In 1870, The First Vatican Council, a Council on Faith and the Church, promulgated the doctrine of papal infallibility and approved the Apostolic Constitution Dei Filius, which "clarified

11Ibid., p. 10.

11Ibid.
and reaffirmed the elements of the Church's traditional teaching on revelation and faith which had been obscured or called into question by nineteenth-century philosophers and theologians."15

This was followed in 1879 by Leo XIII's disciplinary document, Aeterni Patris which "proclaimed the Church's official option for the Aristotelian method of St. Thomas in her philosophical and theological instruction."16 The combined effects of these two documents, and Leo XIII's efforts to implement them, particularly Aeterni Patris, shaped the history of Catholic theology in the Neo-Thomist form until the Second Vatican Council.17

The structure and content of the Constitution Dei Filius is a significant reflection of the issues "which had been obscured or called into question by the nineteenth century philosophers and theologians. Dei Filius starts with the metaphysical issues. It clearly teaches that God is the creator from nothing of all created reality and is distinct from the world both in reality and essence."18 It thus reaffirmed Pius IX's condemnation of pantheism in the Syllabus of Errors promulgated in 1864.19 Specific Canons anathematize those specific forms of pantheism which hold that

15 Ibid., p. 216.
16 Ibid., p. 2.
17 Ibid., p. 236-240.
19 Ibid., 1701; DS 2901.
created realities emanate from the divine substance, or that the
divine essence becomes all things, or that God is universal or
indefinite being. In Chapter 2 the Council takes up Revelation.
It affirms the fact of positive supernatural revelation, the
necessity of revelation given the supernatural end of humanity, the
sources of revelation in scripture and Tradition, and the necessity
of interpreting scripture in accord with the mind of the Church.

Chapter 3 addresses the epistemological dimension of truth by
taking up the issue of faith. The Council first defines faith as a
supernatural virtue which requires grace to believe revelation on
God's authority, rather than on the intrinsic truth of revela-
tion. However, it then affirms that faith is consonant with
reason, and that it is itself a gift of God, including the
preliminary faith needed for justification. It then declares that

30 Ibid., 1804; DS 3024.
31 Ibid., 1785-1788; DS 3004-3007.
32 "... faith, which is 'the beginning of salvation,' the
Catholic Church holds to be a supernatural virtue. By it, with the
inspiration and help of God's grace, we believe that what He has
revealed is true, not because of its intrinsic truth seen by the
light of natural reason, but because of the authority of God
revealing it, who can neither deceive nor be deceived;" (my
emphasis) Ibid., 1789; DS 3008. But the question remains as to how
we perceive God's authority at work in persons or events. Vatican
I points to the manifestation of God's power and knowledge in
miracles and prophecy, but these are "exterior proofs" given to
reason so that "the obedience of our faith be nevertheless in
harmony with reason." These "divine facts" are "joined to the
interior helps of the Holy Spirit" and "manifestly display the
omnipotence and infinite knowledge of God." Consequently, "they are
the most certain signs of the divine revelation, adapted to the
intelligence of all men." (DS 3009)

33 Ibid., 1789-1791; DS 3008-3010.
divine and Catholic faith requires belief that revelation is to be found "in the written word of God and in tradition, and those which are proposed by the Church, either in a solemn pronouncement or in her ordinary and universal teaching power..."). There is a duty to embrace the true faith and persevere in it. God gives the Church as an external aid and supernatural virtue as an internal aid to come to true faith and persevere in it.

Finally, in the fourth Chapter the Council addresses the thorny question of the relationship between faith and reason, natural and supernatural knowledge of God. It affirms the two-fold order of knowledge, distinct both in principle and in their object. It then teaches that faith is above reason and leads reason to penetrate revealed mysteries by the analogy of being and the analogy of faith, without there being any contradiction between what is reasonable and what is proposed by faith. In a key section it describes the reciprocal relationship between faith and reason:

... not only can faith and reason never be at variance with one another, but they also bring mutual help to each other, since right reasoning demonstrates the basis of faith and, illumined by its light, perfects the knowledge of divine things, while faith frees and protects reason from errors and provides it with manifold knowledge.

Scholastic theology had a strong influence in the shaping of Dei Filius' approach to faith and reason, and its assumptions about grace and nature. These issues were a major source of the conflict

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33Ibid., 1792; DS 3011.
34Ibid., 1793-1794, DS 3012-3014.
35Ibid., 1799; DS 3019.
between the post-Kantians and the Neo-Scholastics. They were embattled over which approach could best handle the Catholic teaching on these issues. Of course, the underlying presuppositions regarding theory of knowledge, anthropology, and metaphysics had to be clarified in the process."

The Constitution rejected both the fideist positions of traditionalists and semi-rationalist positions of some nonscholastic theologians. It rejected the fideist position that no knowledge of God was possible apart from revelation and defended the reasonableness of the assent of faith against the "blind leap" approach of the Protestant pietist tradition. Scholars maintain that the post-Reformation thesis of a "pure nature," devised to protect the gratuity of grace, influenced both the drafting of the constitution and its subsequent interpretation. The constitution could be read as assuming this particular theology of the relationship between nature and grace. It is said to have "encouraged the development of a nonhistorical Aristotelian scientific theology in the post-conciliar church."

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19 Ibid., pp. 216, 217, 220.

20 Ibid., p. 221.
This scientific theology assumed two distinct ways of knowing, based on the abstract, non-existential, possible distinction between pure nature and supernature. First, there was the natural knowledge of God one could have through reason. Second, was the supernatural knowledge one could have through grace. The result of these assumptions about how one might come to faith led to a scientific apologetics based on proof of the divine origin and truth of the gospel by signs and wonders and rational historical argument. Once one had come by grace of the Holy Spirit to the assent of faith and been justified, one was provided with the first principles which could then be developed rationally by speculative reasoning. McCoool sums up the effect of scholasticism's ascendancy by way of Dei Filius and Pastor Aeternus as follows:

Therefore the definitive victory of the neo-Thomists over their post-Kantians rivals in the closing quarter of the nineteenth century resulted in a tension between Roman Thomistic theology and subjective, historical modern thought that led to the painful confrontation of the modernist crisis, and which Maritain endeavored to resolve through his brilliant development of the Thomism of Cajetan and John of St. Thomas before it broke out again in the controversy over the New Theology a decade before the opening of the Second Vatican Council.

The crucial question is how one comes to make the act of judging as true, that which is present in the object of faith, God in Christ. Does the certitude of faith precede, come with, or follow the judgment of faith which comes from God's authority? Precisely how does God's authority become the motive of faith? This is not clear.

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\[\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 223.}\]

\[\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 13.}\]
Scholastic theology held that the formal object of faith is God Himself or First Truth.\(^1\)

In the actual economy of salvation in which man is elevated to the supernatural order, the first thing that he knows supernaturally is God Himself, the First Truth in *essendo*, that is, His divinity, His innermost life . . . . Although First Truth and the Deity as It is in Itself are abstract theological expressions of a kind that theologians often prefer to concrete ones because of their exactitude, they nevertheless mean God in the concrete, subsisting in three Divine Persons, as these, together with the sum of all divine perfections, have been revealed to man. Consequently God, the First Truth ontologically, is not only the First Truth believed . . . but also the formal object of faith in all the truths and mysteries that have been revealed. For, as St. Thomas Aquinas pointed out, "nothing comes under faith except in relation to God" . . . This is the common and constant doctrine of the Church. The first article of faith, with which in one form or another all the symbols begin and on which all the other articles are based, is: I believe in God, One and Triune.\(^2\)

In the act of recognition of God that is central to the act of faith and the motive for it, both the intellect and the will are involved, but the intellect submits to God's self-disclosure by an act of the will. In other words, because of the nature of the object (God), the intellect is incapable on its own of making the act of judgment of God's credibility which intrinsically satisfies it. God as object will always be greater than the intellect can know or comprehend sufficiently to intrinsically satisfy it. The human finite intellect has an infinite capacity which allows it to know God but can make a judgment of credibility which intrinsically satisfies it, only by evidence which it sees with respect to a


\(^2\)Ibid., p. 798-99.
created reality. The intellect in judging who it is who is expressing their person in Jesus' life-form, is first of all judging a "who" and not a "what." Who is Jesus, not what is the ontological nature of God's being is the question. A functional judgment (who) is being made of an ontological object. While Catholic theology recognizes the subjective dimensions of faith (*fides qua*), "[i]ts concept of faith is primarily objective, looking more to who and what is believed." God Himself, as the ultimate inner motive of faith, "is to be understood as distinct from the objective evidence on which natural, and even religious, knowledge of truth may be based."[n]

The Scholastic view was that the mind conformed itself by the power of the will to the reality of God's authority present in Christ through the weight of the divine objective evidence as seen in the light of grace. Faith knowing of Christ through sensible reality was upheld, but based on a supernatural faith-knowing which was graced assent to propositions about Christ on the authority of God, as perceived in the evidence God gave of Christ's divine nature and origin. As we will see later, Balthasar calls this approach "supernatural rationalism." There was no adequate theological and philosophical explanation available to explain how a personal faith-experience of Christ's personal reality could be mediated by the Word and the Spirit, through historical Revelation

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[n] Ibid., p. 798.

[n] Ibid., p. 799.
as borne through history by the Church to the present. Important theologians of the twentieth century, to which we now turn, attempt to resolve this issue primarily through the approach of Transcendental Thomism.

**General Theological Background - 20th Century**

According to Gerald McCool the history of twentieth century scholasticism can be divided into four stages. The first is the period from the turn of the century up to World War I. Second is the period between World War I and II. The third is the period between World War II and Vatican II. The final period is that after Vatican II.17

At the turn of the century, prior to McCool’s first stage, the Neo-Thomist Scholastic revival had taken a strong hold on the direction of Catholic theology. In its conflicts during the nineteenth century it had been forced to clarify its epistemology, metaphysics, anthropology, and methodology in a way that gave it a greater systematic coherence and unity. But there was more to be done: "scholasticism and the philosophical theology of St. Thomas had yet to be clearly distinguished from each other." In addition, they had not yet seen that the approaches of Thomas and Bonaventure were not compatible, nor had they seen that Thomas’ epistemology and metaphysics were essentially different from that of his

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commentators, Cajetan and John of St. Thomas. Basically, the Neo-Thomists had not done their historical homework. This deficiency would radically affect the terms of the future controversy over "the new theology." McCool sums up what was missing as follows:

The radical uniqueness of Thomas' metaphysics of existence was largely ignored. As a result, the distinctive character of Thomas' philosophy of man and God was also missed. The special role which abstraction and the judgment play in Thomas' epistemology was not appreciated. Neither was the distinction between ratio and intellectus in Thomas' metaphysics of knowledge.... Furthermore, the intelligible connection which links Thomas' metaphysics of God to his personal religious experience was not observed, much less exploited. In this misleading presentation Thomism could not fail to give the impression of being a highly rationalistic system....

... The writing and teaching of scholastic philosophers and theologians displayed a markedly negative attitude toward anything like a philosophy of intuition. Yet philosophies of intuition were the spearhead of the philosophical revolt against positivistic scientism in the early 1900s. Any hope for some rapprochement between Neo-Thomism and modern philosophy was dashed with the advent of Modernism in the first period before World War I. In their attempts to find a way to bring the knowledge of Christ through Revelation to the modern world, the modernists denied that scholasticism was capable of expressing revelation in the way which the modern world needed. This posture "struck at the heart of Leo XIII's program for theological, educational, and social reform." The Church reacted strongly to the new approach to exegesis, theology and doctrine. The Biblical Commission rendered severe decrees to restrict the use of scientif-

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"McCool, Nineteenth Century, pp. 20, 243.

"Ibid., p. 244.

"Ibid., p. 247."
ic methods. Modernism was condemned by the encyclical Pascendi and the decree Lamentabili. The Magisterium saw two dangerous errors at the heart of Modernism. "First was the metaphysics of 'becoming.' The modernists had abandoned the metaphysics of being . . . . They had replaced it with the evolutionary temporality of Hegel and Bergson." Secondly, "they had given up the scholastic notion of truth." The scholastic view was that truth was arrived at by the judgement of the mind conforming itself to reality. "The judgement of the mind unites a stable universal to a changing singular by the 'is' of the objective affirmation. The scholastic epistemology of the conceptual judgement... also shows that being, esse, is the efficient and exemplary cause of truth." The problem with this approach was that it could explain the judgment of the mind conforming itself to reality only in a propositional, highly rationalistic manner. At the most fundamental level, the crucial question was how the reality of Christ, and God in Christ, could be present to the mind in each age with God's authority so as to permit the act of faith. Modernism sought to apply the idealist and romantic subjective solution.

After Modernism, Thomism was viewed as the bulwark to defend the Church against modern errors in epistemology and metaphysics. Thomism now defined itself against "positivism, German Idealism, and Bergsonian philosophy." At issue were the "metaphysics of being and the epistemology of the concept." The epistemology, metaphysics

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Ibid., p. 248.
and theology of Cajetan and John of St. Thomas became the prevailing basis of seminary education.

The Thomist revival in France took its initial impetus from Cardinal Mercier (1851-1926) of Belgium. Shortly after Aeterni Patris he established a higher Philosophical Institute at the University of Louvain. But Thomism in France really flourished in the second Scholastic period between WW I (1914-18) and WW II (1939-45), due to the work of Jacques Maritain, Etienne Gilson and Père Antonin-Gilbert Sertillanges.⁵³

The Neo-Thomist school produced theologians of great ability. Such names as Cardinal Billot, de la Taille, Garrigou-Lagrange, Gardeil, Lebreton, Grandmaison, and Marin-Sola testify to the profound influence the French Neo-Thomists had on the Church. Ambroise Gardeil (1859-1931) focused his interest on the theory of knowledge. His "aim was to defend, and repristinate, Thomism in relation, first and foremost to Kant's critiques, but also with an eye to the voluntarist and pragmatist tendencies of the latest philosophy of the day."⁵⁴ Of course Blondel was the most important representative of those with the voluntarist tendencies whom Gardeil called Neo-Scotist. In opposition to the Modernists like Loisy and Tyrrell, Gardeil developed his theory of the development of dogma. His theory was, of course, based on his epistemology and consequent theology of the act of faith and theology of revelation.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 20-22; McCool, Nineteenth Century, pp. 251-255.

Basically, it depended on the Neo-Thomist view that truth is the conformity of the mind to reality, the ability of the mind to make "absolute affirmations." In opposition to the post-Kantians and Modernists he acknowledges the reality of intuition but holds that "our intuitive powers are only actualized through being receptive to a reality other than themselves." In other words, he does not admit direct intuition of metaphysical realities, only a mediated intuition through sensible realities. The experience of revelation by the Apostles then has to have an objective cognitive content. Despite the fact of interior inspiration, their experience is truly revelation because it has its "guaranteed normative bearing." God's revelation "must come to light above all in our faculty for making absolute, universally valid, affirmations about the real." It leaves them in possession of "a determinate truth which is indefinitely transmissible." The key point, for our purposes, is to notice the way in which his Neo-Thomistic epistemology, while retaining the necessary connection with reality and importance of propositional truth, sought a via media to recognize the role of the intuition and subjective religious experience of God in Christ. The religious experience of the Apostles provided them with first order or second order truths such as one finds in the Creeds. Later reflection moves to different kinds of concepts to explain and formulate the first and second order affirmations. Marin-Sola also

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\textsuperscript{55}Ibid., pp. 161-162.

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid., pp. 162-163.

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid., p. 164.
acknowledged that there must be an "affective way" as well as a logical way for dogma to develop. The strict Neo-Thomists, called the "Logicists," operated on a "concepts only" theory of knowledge, and held that dogma not only must have a logical connection with early dogma and revelation but that it could only develop logically also. The Logicists were opposed both by Gardeil and his contemporary, Léonce de Grandmaison. Both these Neo-Thomist's were willing to recognize the role of intuition in some limited form. Unfortunately, they were unable to ground the role of the intuition in anything other than cognition of first principles. This is the problem that I believe Balthasar's approach solves.

Despite the fact that after Modernism the Thomism of Cajetan and John of St. Thomas became the prevailing theology taught in seminaries, there were those who were still unconverted. Prior to the condemnation of Modernism in 1907, from about 1890 Henri Bergson had become a dominant figure on the French scene. His "evolutionary and vitalistic theories influenced a host of his contemporaries, and he prepared the way for the ... popularity of Existentialism." In this first period before WW I, in France, Blondel published in 1896 his Letter on Apologetics which explained the methodology used in his thesis, L'Action. "Blondel's apolog-

"Ibid., p. 183.
"Ibid.
"Ibid., pp. 186-187.
"Connolly, p. 25.
"Ibid.
etica of immanence presented Christian revelation as the only meaning-giving answer to the dynamic exigencies of the human will. Thus it provided a point of contact with a philosophical community whom the Church's traditional apologetics could not even interest."^1

In 1908 Pierre Rousselot published L'Intellectualisme de S. Thomas which showed that St. Thomas' intellectus, was an intuitive function of the mind. It was an "essential element in St. Thomas' own epistemology and metaphysics. Far from being the highest object of human knowledge, the concept of the ratio, the discursive intellect, in St. Thomas' opinion was no more that the deficient substitute for a missing intuition."^4 Rousselot believed that a

^1Ibid., p. 250.

^4"Thus the 'three acts of the mind' are (1) understanding a quiddity, form, essence, nature, or 'whatness'. . . by 'simple apprehension' (which is not yet either true or false); (2) judgment, composing or dividing two such concepts (judgments alone are either true or false); and (3) reasoning, proceeding from one judgment as premise to another as conclusion. Acts of reasoning are not either true or false; they are logically valid (if the conclusion necessarily follows from the premises) or invalid (if it does not)." Summa of the Summa, edited and annotated by Peter Kreeft. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990, p. 328. Intellectus or understanding is the simple apprehension by abstraction of the universal form from the sensory phantasm according to St. Thomas. But the simple fact of existence or "esse" seems to be an intuitive act of judgment that is direct and immediate without abstraction. It is a judgment of an act not a form. I can judge that something "is" without knowing what it is. In fact, the act of abstraction depends on such a prior judgment, as the act of being gives reality to a form. If we move to the level of persons, what is the nature of the understanding and judgment by which I know another through their conscious and unconscious self-expression? Here another type of "form" which expresses the essence of their personhood, while concealing it from direct and immediate perception, appears. But it would seem that an intuitive ability of the intellect is operating in our judging the meaning and significance of another's personhood. Since, each person is unique by definition, intuition by
clear understanding of St. Thomas' view of the intuitive mind could resolve the apparent conflict between an objective, scientific apologetics, and the dogma that the whole act of faith, both the initial assent, conversion, and justification depended on grace. Rousselot's proposed solution, found in Les Yeux de la foi, maintains that the intellectus, the intuitive mind, can be modified freely by the will before one makes a judgment on the level of the ratio. This is a description of the process by which rationalization or denial might take place and would profoundly effect the ability of the mind to "allow an intelligibility to appear to it on the level of the judgment." A related concept that was important to the act of faith, the theology of revelation, and the development of dogma was Rousselot's concept of loving knowing or sympathetic knowledge. This is "a movement of the intellectus.... The influence of connaturality and the attitude of sympathetic love" in the process of faith, "can account for the reasonableness and freedom of the supernatural act of faith." If he were right, then the gap between Thomistic theology and those based on philosophies of intuition was smaller than Thomists were willing to acknowledge. Rousselot's thought will surface in Henri de Lubac's work.

abstraction of a universal seems self-contradictory. I believe this has important implications for the act of faith, the act by which we recognize the formal object of faith, God in Christ.

"Nichols, From Newman to Congar, p. 198.


"Ibid., pp. 250-251.
which contributed to the New Theology controversy after WWII, and also in Balthasar's thought.

Rousselot died tragically in WW I. But the influence of Rousselot and Blondel "remained a powerful force among the French Jesuits." In his thought Rousselot had been influenced considerably by another Jesuit, Joseph Maréchal. In the period of scholasticism between WW I an WW II three distinct streams of Thomism emerged; those of Jacques Maritain, Etienne Gilson and Joseph Maréchal.

Jacques Maritain brilliantly developed traditional Thomistic metaphysics in his "Creative Intuition which was an in-depth study of the role of the imagination in a Thomistic theory of knowledge." While Maritain maintained the epistemology of the concept, he also respected the nonconceptual knowledge of the artist and mystic. "No other Thomist ... realized more completely Leo XIII's hopes for scholasticism as a unifier of human experience."

Etienne Gilson was fascinated by medieval philosophy. His many years of research led him to the conclusion that a common scholastic philosophy had never existed in the Middle Ages. The epistemology and metaphysics of Bonaventure, Thomas and Duns Scotus were so opposed as to require distinct theologies. Gilson himself preferred Thomas. Gilson discovered that in Thomas' thought the notion of

\^McCull, Nineteenth Century, p. 251.
\^McCull, Unity to Pluralism, pp. 61-63.
\^McCull, Nineteenth Century, p. 253.
\^Ibid., p. 253.
being is acquired through a double operation of the judgment and could not be grasped through an intuition of the imagination as Maritain thought.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 253-254.} The first judgment in Thomas' thought is that something is. It is a judgment of existence, a judgment that something has \textit{esse}, has being. This judgment that something has being is the judgment of an act, for being is not a form. Rather it is the act which confers reality upon form. This insight led him to the conclusion that Thomas' philosophy is not a Christianized Aristotelianism. It is "an integral part of a theology which must begin with the Christian God and descend to his universe following the theological order."\footnote{Ibid., p. 255.} The Thomism of Gilson was fundamentally at odds with the Thomism of Maritain. But it was even more opposed to Blondel's phenomenology of the human spirit.

Blondel was trying to show that the dynamic exigence of the human spirit must lead a philosopher to affirm God's existence....Should he deny it, his very denial would entail a lived contradiction between his verbal denial and the vital drive of the human spirit. Gilson denied that any such lived contradiction could be proved.\footnote{Ibid., p. 256.}

Influenced by Blondel and Rousselot, Maréchal constructed a five volume dialogue (\textit{Le Point de départ de la métaphysique}) between St. Thomas and Kant. His thesis was that had Kant been consistent in his own method, and remembered that the mind's act of knowledge was not static, but was instead a dynamic operation with a tendency toward an end, he would have ended up with a metaphysics
identical with that of St. Thomas. For, according to Maréchal, the end of the movement of the mind in knowing, is the existence of Unlimited Being, as its a priori condition of possibility. Thus he would have come to the starting point of a realistic metaphysics. It would have been identical with that of Thomas Aquinas

...for the a priori condition of possibility for every speculative judgment is the existence of the Infinite Pure Act of Esse as the term of the mind's dynamism.... The extramental correlate of the objective judgment must be matter, form, and existence... But matter, form, and existence are the metaphysical constituents of the sensible singular in the philosophy of Saint Thomas.14

So, in the period between the wars three distinct Thomisms emerge. Each differed from the other about the role of the judgment in epistemology, the abstraction of being, and the nature of Thomas' philosophical theology.15

"The New Theology"

In 1943 Pope Pius XII issued "monumental encyclicals that contributed force, direction and encouragement to the religious movement in France: the theological Mystici Corporis Christi and the scriptural Divino Afflante Spiritu. The French received these as encouragement and a "breath of fresh air."16 The different streams of French thought, the theological renewal, existentialism, post-Hegelianism, the influence of Marxism and Socialism, and the post-war conditions of the time were combining to create a mandate

14 Ibid., pp. 256-257.
15 Ibid., p. 257.
16 Connolly, p. 175.
for the Church to open to the world. Connolly describes the situation as follows:

The best description of the French Church after the war would be to state that she was seized by the missionary spirit. As the onus of the occupation was lifted, the French Church stood marked by certain qualities: a theological movement rooted in the sources of theology, and preoccupied with those notes sounded by the Magisterium; a dynamic Catholic Action movement, many of whose members had shared the wartime horrors with non-Catholics; some extremely capable and enlightened members of the Episcopate, Liénart of Lille, Gerlier of Lyon, Weber of Strasbourg and Suhard of Paris; men in authority of a fairly liberal turn of mind; and, finally, thinkers and writers of great intellectual calibre, open to the intellectual currents of the modern world."

The "new theology" controversy emerged out of this context. Already, in February 1942, the term "nouvelle théologie" had appeared in an article by Mgr. Parente in the Osservatore Romano in relation to two Dominican writers.

In 1941 the Jesuits at Fourvière, near Lyons, started the series Sources Chrétienes, "a series of Patristic translations with the original texts, printed with notes and an extended introduction." In the same year they also started, Théologie: Études publiées sous la direction de la faculté de théologie S.J. de Lyon-Fourvière, "a series of monographs covering a variety of subjects from the patristic studies of Daniélou and Mondésert to the historical perspectives of de Lubac and the speculative analyses of Fessard and Mouroux." This effort was building on the

"Ibid., p. 177.


"Ibid., p. 24.
liturgical and biblical revival which had been in progress since the 1890's. It had been provoked by the profound awareness of the need to find a way to relate Christianity to the modern world. Daniélou and the others involved saw a profound correspondence between patristic theology and "pivotal modern categories as history, human solidarity, and personal subjectivity" which they saw as forming "the warp and woof of patristic thought."""" Hand"

While France was the center of this theological activity, the "new theology" was not limited to France. It included such Belgian and German thinkers as Emile Mersch, Dom Odo Casel, Romano Guardini, Karl Adam, and Dom Anselm Stolz. In France it was led primarily by the Jesuits at Lyons and the Dominicans of Le Saulchoir. It included Henri de Lubac, Jean Daniélou, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Yves Congar, Marie-Dominique Chenu, and Louis Bouyer. Those involved differed in many respects and did not share one theological system.

What united this diverse group were the convictions that 1) theology had to speak to the Church's present situation and that 2) the key to theology's relevance to the present lay in the creative recovery of its past. In other words, they all saw clearly that the first step to what later came to be known as aggiornamento had to be ressourcement—a rediscovery of the riches of the Church's two-thousand year treasury, a return to the headwaters of the Christian tradition."" Hand"

For them return to the sources was a creative hermeneutical exercise in which the burning questions of the present were asked

""d'Ambrosio, pp. 539-540.

""Ibid., p. 531.

""Ibid., p. 532.
of the past. This ressourcement was not simply theological historical scholarship, but an attempt to return to the sources of the Church's vitality, to the "fountain-head of dynamic spiritual life which never runs dry." Their goal was the revitalization of the life of the Church and "a recentering in the person of Christ and in his Paschal mystery." They wanted to establish "a spiritual and intellectual communion with Christianity in its most vital moments as transmitted to us in its classic texts, a communion which would nourish, invigorate, and rejuvenate twentieth-century Catholicism." Here, we see clearly the search for a way to rediscover the faith-knowing of Christ evidenced in the patristic sources, and the search for a way to explain that faith-knowing in contemporary terms.

The return to the sources did not mean that these theologians rejected or despised St. Thomas or the medieval period. Indeed many were committed Thomists, but not committed in the same way the neo-scholastics were. Several of the Lyons Jesuits were committed to a critical re-investigation of the Scholastic tradition. They stood on the shoulders of their predecessors like Rousselot and Maréchal. The debate initiated by these theologians had been carried forward by J.F. Bonnefoy, R. Draguet, and L. Charlier. What they found was that the rigid, non-historical and rationalistic character of much

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11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., p. 537.
13 Ibid., p. 538.
neo-Scholastic thinking and "conclusion" theology did not genuinely reflect St. Thomas. Thomas emerges as one who was "in substantial continuity with the positive theology of the Fathers." Neo-Scholastism, on the other hand, had modified St. Thomas through commentators like Cajetan, and John of St. Thomas. His thought had been further corrupted by Neo-Thomism which had added "heavy doses of Suarezianism and Bañezianism (not to mention [Christian] Wolff and Descartes)." What the ressourcement theologians sought was not a restoration or repristination of St. Thomas or patristic theology, but a capturing of their spirit and methodology."

What Thomas and the Fathers had done was to distill the essence of the tradition for their respective generations. In their organic conception of the unity of theology and life as well as in their hermeneutical effort to rearticulate traditional doctrine in the language of their contemporaries, these classical theologians offer today's Church a paradigm of authentic theological method."

The debate with the Neo-Thomists which eventually led to Humani Generis began in earnest in 1946, with Daniélou's publication of a provocative article: "Les Orientations Présentes de la Pensée Religieuse." In this article Daniélou attempted to describe the current theological situation and the kind of theology which the times demanded. It reflects the discontent which many French theologians felt in the 1940's. He indicts scholasticism for being

"Ibid., pp. 542-543.
"Ibid., p. 543, quoting Gilson, Letters, 33 n. 6.
"Ibid., p. 545.
"Ibid., p. 547.
disengaged from the currents of contemporary thought. In fact, they were mired in Greek philosophical categories which were incapable of engaging the modern world. Scholastism lacked any historical sense, while history from Hegel to Bergson has been a central category of modern thought. "In an existentialist world, it remains resolutely essentialist and objectivist, oblivious to human subjectivity.... [It] is cut off from the daily life of the people of God....and is thus incapable of offering them spiritual and doctrinal nourishment."  

This article stimulated a vigorous attack by the Neo-Thomists in the *Revue Thomiste* in Paris and the *Angelicum* in Rome. It became clear that the "real point at issue was the nature of the development of doctrine, philosophical and theological, and the position of St. Thomas within that development."  

The rebuttal articles sought to defend the identity of the modern Thomist theology of the Garriqou-Lagrange and Maritain school, with that of St. Thomas himself. What the Neo-Thomists feared was that the "new theology" was headed toward theological relativism.  

What the crux of the debate revolved around were issues of nature and grace which involved St. Thomas' metaphysics, anthropology and epistemology. It had become evident that the pure nature, supernature concepts of the Neo-Thomists, foundational to their two-order theory of knowledge, theology of the act of faith, logicist doctrinal development, and

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*"Ibid., pp. 534-535.*  
*"Harvanek, p. 25.*  
*"Ibid.*
scientific apologetics, were not to be found in the medieval Doctors or the Fathers."

Two important works became the focus of the debate. In 1944 Henri Bouillard had published a remarkable study on St. Thomas' theology of justification, *Conversion et grace chez S. Thomas d'Aquin.* And, in 1946, the same year as Daniélou's article, Henri de Lubac published *Surnaturel.* Bouillard's study was purely historical, but in investigating St. Thomas' views on justification Bouillard included some reflections on the historical nature of theology. In comparing St. Thomas' view on justification with those of the Fathers, Bouillard noticed the Aristotelian character of Thomas' thought which was absent in the Fathers. He concluded that the "history of theological notions shows...that the constant and invariable affirmation of a truth...is found expressed in different notions and schemes in different times and places." There is, however, in the evolution of theology "an absolute of affirmation, an absolute which determines and modifies new notions to fit its meaning." These affirmations include scripture and Tradition, and the principles and truth necessary for dogma."

De Lubac's work is a marshalling of the evidence that "none of the Fathers or medieval Doctors ever proposed the possibility of a

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"McCool, *Unity to Pluralism*, pp. 200-203.


"McCool, *Unity to Pluralism*, p. 203.

"Ibid., pp. 26-27."
'state of pure nature.'" Patristic or medieval theology contains no idea of a theoretical double finality for human nature, one purely natural and the other supernatural. The image of God as found in the Fathers and medieval Doctors means the actual image of God in which we were created, not a possible image of pure nature. Likeness to God meant human nature as deified by grace and having an existential desire for the Beatific vision. But de Lubac also points out that the gratuity of that grace is insisted on by the Fathers and Doctors. Humans have a desire for the Beatific vision because that is the end for which they are created, but the actual gift of that grace is still a gift and not something received because one is entitled to it."

De Lubac's claim that for St. Thomas the only actual end of humans is a supernatural one was verified by other Thomists, and Bouillard's claims were not all that radical. But these books were provocative and disturbing to conservative Neo-Thomists. Bouillard's study, while historical, suggested that changing concepts preserved immutable truth. Thus, he "proposed an epistemology and metaphysics that introduced history and evolution into the very structure of theology itself." It was one thing for Gilson to show historical development and pluralism in the Middle Ages, but it was another for Bouillard to claim such development was necessary as a matter of principle."

"McCool, Unity to Pluralism, pp. 203-204.

"Ibid., pp. 210-211."
De Lubac was accused of Baianism and denying the gratuity of grace and the supernatural order. Jean Marie Le Blond had reminded the Neo-Thomists that even on their own assumptions regarding analogy of being and matter and form, theological pluralism should be possible. The Neo-Thomists denied that St. Thomas' thought contained any distinction between signification and representation in the judgment that could provide the basis for pluralism. For them only one conceptual framework was possible.

The debate raged back and forth between the "new theology" theologians and the Neo-Thomists. The principal adversaries were M. Michel Labourdette, the editor of the Revue Thomiste, Garrigou-Lagrange in the Angelicum, and Guérard des Lauriers in L'Année Théologique." However, the Neo-Thomists were influential in Rome. In 1946, Pope Pius XII, mentioned the "new theology" in an address to the General Congregation of the Society of Jesus. Likewise, in an address to the General Chapter of the Dominicans, it was brought up again.\textsuperscript{10}

The "new theology" debate came to a swift end. In 1950, Pius XII issued his Encyclical, Humani Generis. It warned theologians against the dangers of historicism and relativism. The Dominican and Jesuit superiors silenced their theologians and transferred some to other places. The effect was temporary, however. De Lubac and Congar were very influential at Vatican II, Chenu "remained an

internationally respected historian or medieval theology, and Bouillard had a "distinguished teaching career at the Institut Catholique in Paris." Daniélou and de Lubac eventually were made Cardinals in recognition of their contributions to theology.

McCool sums up the situation after Vatican II:

During and after the Second Vatican Council, the "new theologians" were counted among the leading theologians in the Church and their disciples became the leaders of the generation of theologians who succeeded them. Hans Urs von Balthasar was a student of de Lubac's. Karl Rahner emerged from the tradition of Maréchal, and Bernard Lonergan, who claimed to have learned Maréchalianism "by osmosis," carried on the tradition of Rousselot's intellectualism by grounding his new method in theology on the act of understanding, the immediate act of insight which Rousselot claimed was St. Thomas' ideal act of intellectual knowledge. As the history of theology after Vatican II was to show, the future lay with the "new theologians," and the form of Thomism which Le Blond used to vindicate the place of history and pluralism in theology is the form of Thomism which survived the demise of the Neo-Thomist movement in the theologies of Rahner and Lonergan.

The "new theology debate" was the culmination of the development within Thomism itself which gradually led to its decrease as a single organized movement. The emergence of pluralism in its epistemology and metaphysics challenged its internal coherence as a unitary speculative system.\[1\]

Conclusions

The central problem since Vatican I has been the problem of the role of faith and reason in the act of faith in Christ, and in God in Christ. Of course, this involved on the foundational level the nature of the relationship between God and created reality. How could human beings receive and perceive revelation in Christ? By faith or by reason, or by both? If both, what were the respective roles of faith and reason? What was the nature of the faith

\[1\] McCool, *Unity to Pluralism*, p. 225.
perception? Was it simply subjective and intuitive, or was it mediated in some way by historical reality? What established the authority of God which was the motive for faith? Did one have any knowledge of God in and through the act of faith, or did one just have to surrender to God's evidence if one were to act in a rational and prudent manner? Did intuition or religious experience have any role to play in the act of faith? As we have seen, these issues converged in the "new theology" controversy especially around the question of the relationship of nature and grace.

Theologians struggled to found faith in Christ and Revelation on some kind of intuitive knowledge, so as to avoid a purely rationalist, fideist or positivist approach which made God extrinsic to creation. These attempts culminated in the development of Transcendental Thomism especially through Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan. They tried to avoid immanentism by tying subjective knowing to the structures of the human spirit while maintaining the importance of the role of objective reality in bringing knowledge to consciousness. On the subjective side the dangers were idealism and ontologism. On the objective historical side, the danger was historical relativism or making the historical simply the occasion or instrument of faith-knowing.

I believe Hans Urs von Balthasar's approach to these issues provides a more adequate solution. I want to continue now with the manner in which he approached these same problems.
CHAPTER II

HOW CAN WE KNOW GOD IN CHRIST?

Balthasar's Epistemology

Balthasar's Starting Point

Balthasar has said that his starting point philosophically is the concrete contingent finitude which human beings experience as a real phenomenon. "I am, but I could not be." This is the fundamental enigma of humanity, finite beings open to infinite Being. Attempts to leave behind St. Thomas' "real distinction" between 'esse' and 'existence', between the infinite and the finite lead to the conclusion that all being is infinite and immutable (Parmenides) or that all is movement, becoming (Heraclitus). The first is "the solution of Buddhist mysticism," the second "contradicts itself: pure becoming in pure finitude can only conceive of itself in identifying contraries...." Consequently, "it is necessary to commence from an inescapable duality: the finite is not the infinite.... The question is then inevitable: Whence comes the division? Why are we not God? Two attempted solutions lead to pantheism. One posits a fall, a


decline. Salvation is a return "of the sensible finite into the intelligible infinite." The other reasons that the infinite God needed the finite world to perfect himself, to actualize all of his possibilities, or to have an object to love. But if God has no need of the world... Why does the world exist?"¹⁰⁴

"No philosophy could give a satisfactory response to that question.... But, in fact, the true response to philosophy could only be given by Being himself, revealing himself from himself. Will man be capable of understanding this revelation? The affirmative response will be given only by the God of the Bible.... And this posits a counterpart: to be able to hear and understand the auto-revelation of God man must in himself be a search for God, a question posed to him. Thus there is no biblical theology without a religious philosophy. Human reason must be open to the infinite."¹⁰⁵

God’s Revelation requires that human beings be able to perceive and respond to God’s self-disclosure, and therefore a philosophy and a theology of man, an anthropology, is necessary. Thomistic metaphysics approached the question of "being" in Aristotelian fashion, analyzing the nature of the cosmos, of which man was a part. Balthasar draws from St. Thomas but approaches the question of "being" from a more personalist, dialogical perspective. Instead of looking to nature or being in the abstract to find how the concept of being reflects the doctrine of Creation and Trinity, he looks to personal and concrete being as the locus of reflection.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid; as we will see, Balthasar bases the philosophical distinction between the finite and infinite ultimately on the distinction of persons within the Trinity, and the reason for creation on the Trinitarian self-emptying love revealed in Christ. Now we are exploring how he finds philosophically the phenomenological evidence in creation of these revealed realities.
How do we first apprehend the idea or concept of being? How do we perceive and know reality? This question is fundamental to the manner in which we know all created reality and therefore how we can know the revelation of God's love in Christ. More precisely, how can the love of the Trinity revealed in Christ be known through reality in the act of faith, both by the Apostles and us? I want to show how Balthasar answers these questions by setting off his approach against that of the transcendental Thomists.

The Transcendental Thomist Approach

The transcendental Thomists like Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan, though in different ways, posit some type of a priori unmediated pre-apprehension of "Being" by the human spirit which is the basis for all other acts of knowing. As previously discussed in Chapter I, in reaction to Kantianism and rationalistic scholasticism, neo-scholastics such as Cardinal Mercier, Maurice Blondel, Joseph Maréchal, Pierre Rousselot, Karl Rahner, Bernard Lonergan and others sought a way to ground the certitude and objectivity of truth or knowledge in the intrinsic nature of the intellect itself. Influenced by Edmund Hüsserl and Martin Heidegger these thinkers sought a via media between idealism and moderate realism by way of a phenomenology of human consciousness. In this philosophy Being is definitely finite and historical, and lights up the human consciousness, but the question is

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in what manner? W.J. Hill summarizes the manner in which Rahner and Lonergan have utilized this phenomenological approach.

From Rahner and Lonergan has come a new metaphysics in which the being investigated is that which occurs within consciousness. They tend to view being as more phenomenal in kind and closely assimilated to meaning and knowledge. Coreth writes of "an immediate unity of being and knowing in the very act of knowing" . . . From this being there is extrapolated the being of the cosmos. Lonergan, e.g., looks upon being as "whatever is to be known by intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation" . . ., and progresses from the structures of consciousness as sensation, concept, and judgment to the structures of extra-mental being as matter, form, and existence . . . Phenomenology had effected the decisive turn to subjectivity (better expressed in Heidegger's term 'subjectness," Subjektitat, precluding individualism), making man a 'co-constitutor of his world of meaning'. . . . This occasioned a subtle transformation of metaphysics into philosophical anthropology, which when the Christian implications of Maréchal's thought are brought to bear upon it can be made to function as a fundamental theology. 107

Thus, it is the finality of human consciousness, as "co-constitutor," which "affirms,""confirms," or "performs" being in its concrete reality. The historical and finite existence of persons and things are the occasions of the manifestation of being through and in human consciousness. There is real correspondence between being's manifestation in human consciousness and reality, but that correspondence comes about because of the structures of human consciousness, not because being informs consciousness. This differs from Thomism in which the intellect takes into itself the reality of being and "discovers" being--being informs the intellect. The intellect is a blank tablet

until "being" presents itself through the senses. All knowing is a posteriori.

Rahner explains the transcendental view by his notion of the Vorgriff, which is a "prehension or anticipation by the soul of being which, while unconscious, is preconceptual, nonobjective, and unthematic in kind; all a posteriori knowledge is an objectification and thematization of this. . . ." Lonergan explains the transcendental view differently but also posits "prior to every content, it [being] is the notion of the to-be-known through that content . . . ." Ontologism is avoided by identifying Absolute Being with the unconditioned horizon of finite being which only points to God. Both Rahner and Lonergan, though again in different ways, argue for an a priori transcendental knowledge of God through the a priori knowledge of Being. There would seem to be some concession here to idealism and a refined ontologism.

Transcendental Thomists posit a priori knowledge of Being by a reductive analysis which asks what the a priori conditions for the possibility of objective and certain knowledge are. This is where they move from moderate realism to critical realism. How can the perception of reality take place? What can explain a human spirit which is a quest in search of absolute and infinite knowledge of Being? This phenomenon of the human spirit's quest

111 Ibid., p. 452.

112 Ibid., p. 452-53.
cannot be explained unless one posits an a priori consciousness of what it is that the human spirit is seeking.\textsuperscript{110}

I think it is precisely here that Balthasar differs from the transcendental Thomists. As we will see, he believes that the Creator/creature dissimilarity, the dialogical and interpersonal nature of Revelation, and an adequate explanation of the phenomenon of the interpersonal and dialogic nature of human relationships requires that human existence be pure receptivity. The initial awareness of Being can be, and is discovered a posteriori through the phenomenon of the interpersonal, not "co-constituted" or performed by means of an a priori consciousness. Consciousness of being and self is awakened through the phenomenon of the interpersonal and love. Balthasar's epistemology requires that God's revelation in Christ be received and inform the human consciousness through human historical reality illumined by grace. The act of faith-knowing of Christ, and God in Christ, is a participation by grace in God's knowledge of himself in Christ. I believe Balthasar would also take the position that the fundamental quest of the human spirit, though reason must be open to the Infinite, is not, first of all, knowledge of Being, and an autonomy based on knowing. Rather, it is primarily the quest to receive and give love infinitely, and the freedom from egoism or

\textsuperscript{110}Ibid.
self-autonomy necessary to do so. Now, I want to turn to Balthasar's approach to the psychogenesis of Being.

Meta-Anthropology: The Interpersonal Revelation of Being

"I" and "Thou"

Thomistic metaphysics, like Greek and Aristotelian thought, sees humanity as part of the cosmos, and metaphysics and epistemology is developed in the context of the whole of nature of which humanity is a part. Balthasar describes his philosophical approach in the contemporary context:

"For us the cosmos perfects itself in man, who at the same time sums up the world and surpasses it. Thus our philosophy will be essentially a meta-anthropology, presupposing not only the cosmological sciences, but also the anthropological sciences, and surpassing them towards the question of the being and essence of man."

Balthasar's philosophy, like that of Rahner and Lonergan will be a meta-anthropology, but his methodology will maintain the analogy of being and follow the theological order, approaching the question of Being concretely through the interpersonal. That is, he will start from an "analogy not of abstract Being, but of

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112Ibid., p. 3.

113"Analogy of being," for Balthasar, expresses the doctrine of the Fourth Lateran Council, that however great the similarity between created reality and God's reality, the dissimilarity is ever greater. This concept will be explored in more detail later.
Being as it is encountered concretely in its attributes (not categorical, but transcendental). "114

Balthasar's starting point is that

man exists only in dialogue with his neighbor. The infant is brought to consciousness of himself only by love, by the smile of his mother. In that encounter the horizon of all unlimited being opens itself for him, revealing four things to him: (1) that he is one in love with the mother, even in being other than his mother, therefore all being is one; (2) that love is good, therefore all being is good; (3) that love is true, therefore all being is true; and (4) that love evokes joy, therefore all being in beautiful. 115

This is a highly compressed statement which implicitly contains a number of conclusions. First, "being" is first a concrete experience before it is a concept. It is a primal phenomenon, which comes about when one experiences a "thou" for the first time. Part of the primal experience of "being" is the experience of the "thou" and in that experience of the "thou" is contained simultaneously the experience of the "I," the distinctness of my "being" from the "being" of the "thou." But, in that same experience, of "thou" and "I" is the experience of the oneness or unity of "being." "Being" is shared with others. Notice that Balthasar, consistent with his view that being and love are co-extensive 116, puts the experience of "being" in the context of the experience of the love of the "thou." Being, in the concrete of the "I"-"thou" experience, is not experienced

114 Ibid., p. 3.


116 The idea that being and love are co-extensive will be explained in detail later.
abstractly in the infant's thought but in the infant's experience of the transcendental attributes of concrete "being" which are present to the infant in the "thou." These transcendental attributes of the "being" of the "thou" are the manner in which the "thou" is concretely present to the infant, as love which is good, true, and beautiful. So in sum, one could say that the transcendental attributes of personal being which express that "being" are love, goodness, truth, and beauty.\footnote{On the transcendental in general see J.B. Lotz. "Transcendental." New Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 14. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967-79, p. 238-241; for an excellent article analyzing the transcendental in relation to "esse" in itself and in relation to others, see Mark D. Jordan. "The Grammar of Esse: Re-Reading Thomas on the Transcendental." Thomist 44 (Jan. 1980): 1-26; finally, for an excellent article with respect to the interpersonal as the starting point of metaphysics, see W. Norris Clarke, S.J. "The 'We Are' of Interpersonal Dialogue as the Starting Point of Metaphysics." Modern Schoolman 69 (1992): 357-68.}

Another point that Balthasar makes is that the infant experiences not just a pure appearance but the reality of the mother herself. The mother's essence is experienced indirectly and mediately through the form of her appearance, which communicates her being by the "grammar" of her/its transcendental attributes.

Consistent with the analogy of being, God is the fullness of the One (love), the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, even though the dissimilarity between the finite transcendental and the infinite is ever greater than any similarity.\footnote{Balthasar, "A Résumé of My Thought," p. 3.} It is by virtue of the experience of the "thou" that space and the world
exist, not by virtue of the "I." For it is in the response of the child to the mother that the child experiences itself as "I give myself."[119]

The primal value of my "being," initially experienced as being given the gift of myself, can become lost in a positivistic culture which simply takes "being" for granted, as material for our domination. But, in the primal encounter with the "thou," who is an exemplar of God, is included a primal encounter with God who shines forth in the "wonder of being."[114] Here we might say, in contrast to the transcendentalist approach, that the infant has "something like an experience of God" but it is mediated through the concrete being of the "thou."[111] However, this unthemmatic experience is governed by analogy of being so that however similar the exemplary "thou" is in "being" to God, the dissimilarity is ever greater. But the reality remains, that the transcendental attributes of created being do reflect and reveal in


[111]Balthasar extends this to all subsequent acts of knowing: "at the most fundamental level, the dawn of self-awareness in freedom is not the realization that we are simply "there": it is rooted in the fact that we are 'gift' and 'gifted', which presupposes a 'giving' reality. In this sense 'all knowers know God implicitly in every mental act', insofar as 'being itself . . . is a likeness of the divine goodness'; thus all men naturally tend toward God' (Thomas)." Balthasar, *TD II*, p. 391.
and through themselves, God, who is the fullness of the reality which they reflect. Balthasar states it this way:

"This day I have begotten you", says the Father to the Son. This day I have created you, says eternal freedom to finite freedom. The fact that no human "I" can awaken to itself unless it is called "thou" by some other "I" is only the prelude, within the parameters of the world, to what is meant here. For in and through the human "I" there is manifested an Absolute "I", who has from eternity generated an equally Absolute "Thou" and, in the Holy Spirit, is One God with him. It is precisely this process of generation, this giving and receiving of self, and this oneness of both in the Holy Spirit that causes the absolute preciousness--we call it holiness--of Absolute Being to shine forth in its limitless self-affirmation and freedom."

It is only on the basis of this "miracle" of the eternal generation of the Son by the Father, that the creature in its finite freedom, gifted with the gift of self, can "be addressed as a 'thou' and so designate itself an "I" vis-à-vis the Giver." Further, a finite "I" can only dare to call God "'Thou' if, in doing so, it is answering to a 'thou' that comes addressed to itself from the inner nature of the Absolute--from the divine Trinity." Finally,

... I only appreciate fully that God is my "highest good" when I learn (in the Son) that I am a "good" to him, affirmed by him; this is what guarantees my being and my freedom. And it is only when I learn that I represent a "good" and a "thou" to God that I can fully trust in the imparted gift of being and freedom and so, affirmed from and by eternity, really affirm myself too.

\[1^{11}\] Ibid., pp. 286-87; and see pp. 209-10, where Balthasar says "communicated being is not only in general an 'image of God'... but it is actually an image of the three-personal God, in whom the imcommunicability of the hypostases is one with the unity of 'essence' in each of them."

\[1^{13}\] Ibid., p. 287.
Again and again, through analogy of being, Balthasar finds the Trinity, the fullness of Being, reflected in creation and particularly in the phenomenon of human interpersonal interaction. It is the Trinity's action in creation, revealed fully in Christ, that can be the basis for elimination of the fear and anxiety generated in finite creatures by the abyss between the Creator and creature. This abyss, without the Trinitarian revelation in Christ, leads to pantheistic mysticism and formalistic ritualism.

The creature's metaphysical and theological locus is the diastasis of the divine "Persons" in the unity of the divine nature. Here the real difference between the creature and God no longer needs to occasion any anxiety in the former, because ultimately it is grounded in the real difference between the divine hypostases, in virtue of which God can be the Most Worthy and Most Holy One. . . . In the mystery of the Trinity, the creature can affirm itself as an act of thanksgiving to God.\textsuperscript{114}

Balthasar's explanation of the psychogenesis of being is the foundation of an epistemology of receptivity in which the being of the "Thou," through the being of the "thou," informs the "I." This the foundation for his theology of revelation in Christ.

\textbf{How Can We Know Christ Today?}

\textit{Jesus: The Figure of Faith}

In his short, popular work, \textit{Does Jesus Know Us? Do We Know Him?}\textsuperscript{115}, Hans Urs von Balthasar addresses the contemporary contrast between the phenomenon of popular Jesus piety and the

\textsuperscript{114}Ibid., p. 288.

\textsuperscript{115}San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983.
efforts of scientific exegesis to find and describe the real Jesus hidden behind the language and concepts of the New Testament. As Balthasar puts it:

... to a degree, people take no notice of the barriers or simply break through them, in the doubtlessly sound instinct that no Scribe can diminish the uniqueness and the day-to-day significance of the figure of Jesus. "I must get to him," the simple man (am-ha-arez) says, "for he belongs to me."

What Balthasar is pointing to here is the common instinct that a reliable "figure" of Jesus can be attained from the pages of the New Testament, which figure is the object of and motive for the act of faith, for a life based on that faith, and for theology. In other words, a perception of the object of faith, the desirability or goodness of the object of faith, and the intelligibility of that object (A Theological Aesthetics, a Theodrammatik, and a Theologic).

Scripture and Christology

Central to Balthasar's Christology is the

... conviction that only the Scriptures of the New Covenant, taken as witnesses of faith and in their entirety, can produce a tangible and credible portrait of Jesus Christ, whereas every critical attempt to approach him from a position other than that of the faith witnessed to in the Scriptures can only result in a pallid, distorted picture unworthy of belief (and hence devoid of interest).

It is a fact: only the person who is convinced that Jesus knows him personally gains access to knowledge of him. And only the person who is confident of knowing him as he is, can know that he is also known by him.  

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114 Ibid., preface.

117 Balthasar, Does Jesus Know Us?, preface.
These strong statements would appear to be a rejection of scientific exegesis, but in fact, Balthasar does not reject scientific exegesis. He subordinates it and its methodology to the "figure" of Christ which can be found in the New Testament as a whole despite its diversity of approaches to the "figure." His Christology guides his interpretation of and methodological approach to scripture. "All scriptural problems must be approached through christology: the letter is related to the Spirit as the flesh of Christ (we know what that means: his human nature) to his divine nature and Person."\(^{111}\) As we shall see, Balthasar's whole theological synthesis and methodology, with respect to all the central theological questions of God and man, Creator and creature, nature and grace, revelation and faith, faith and reason, theology and philosophy are structured around and resolved through reflection on the relationship between Christ's divine and human natures, and Christ's divine and human freedom. For Balthasar, Christ is both the revelation of the inner triune life of God and the life of true human freedom. For him, a complete Christian anthropology is possible only "within the context of an overall Christology."\(^{119}\)


\(^{119}\)Balthasar, TD III, p. 13.
Christocentric Theology

Balthasar's theological synthesis is Christocentric and theocentric at the same time, for Christ reveals the inner life of the Trinity through his human words and deeds. The immanent life of the Trinity is lived out and manifested economically in Christ's human life.\(^{134}\) Balthasar's Christocentric perspective was shaped in dialogue with Karl Barth and in his study of Barth's theology.\(^{131}\) His integration of the theology of the Trinity and Christology keeps together the *theologia* (theology of God) and *oikonomia* (order of salvation), which became separated after the New Testament and early patristic period. Early and classical scholastic theologies followed the basic historical sequence Trinity-creation-fall-incarnation.\(^{131}\)

Balthasar's theological starting point is

the very center of Christian revelation--the Word of God become flesh, Jesus Christ, God and man--and so we are led unreservedly to affirm that here we have a true form placed before the sight of man. . . . --the fundamental thing is

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that here we have before us a genuine, 'legible' form, and not merely a sign or an assemblage of signs.\textsuperscript{11}

Christ's Figure as Legible "Form"

Behind Balthasar's emphasis on Christ as 'legible' form lie the twentieth century controversies over the nature of the act of faith, and the relationship between nature and grace.\textsuperscript{131} The basic question is how is God revealed and perceived in Christ? How is the object of faith revealed and perceived in the act of faith? Balthasar puts it this way:

The central question of so-called 'apologetics' or 'fundamental theology' is, thus, the question of perceiving the form—an aesthetic problem. To have ignored this fact has stunted the growth of this branch of theology over the past hundred years. For fundamental theology, the heart of the matter should be the question: 'How does God's revelation confront man in history? How is it perceived?' But under the influence of a modern rationalistic concept of science, the question shifted ever more from its proper centre to the margin, to be re-stated in this manner: 'Here we encounter a man who claims to be God, and who, on the basis of this claim, demands that we should believe many truths he utters which cannot be verified by reason. What basis acceptable to reason can we give to his authoritative claims?'\textsuperscript{135}

More precisely, the question is how does God use the human nature of Christ, his historical context and salvation history, to reveal Himself? And, what kind of process of knowing or perceiving this revelation is the act of faith in Christ? What kind of


\textsuperscript{135}Balthasar, \textit{Glory I}, p. 173.
knowledge of Christ or cognitive content is foundational for this act of faith, for the life of faith, and therefore for theology?

Balthasar's Christology is founded on an examination of the nature of a reciprocal interplay between revelation in Christ (the objective reality of the divine presence, divine action, and divine cognitive content) and faith (the subjective perception of that presence, the living of faith's content, and the articulation of content). Theology mediates between these poles in its search for deeper understanding. He refers to this reciprocal interplay between these two poles as a "closed ellipse with two centers." Balthasar incorporates philosophy and literature into the ellipse as pre-theology. 136

The foundational examination of the nature or "form" of revelation in the figure of Christ and its faith perception is the subject of the first leg of Balthasar's trilogy, The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics. 137 However, since the perception of Christ, the object of faith, in the act of faith draws one out of oneself into a life in Christ, one thereby becomes part of the divine drama of infinite and finite freedom which is the essence of Christ's human life. Without leaving behind the perception of the object of faith with the "eyes of faith," one moves on to a new way of knowing God in Christ by a life con-

136 Balthasar, Does Jesus Know Us?, p. 61; TD III, p. 59, 63.

137 The seven volumes of the first leg of the trilogy are: I: Seeing the Form, II: Clerical Styles, III: Lay Styles, IV: The Realm of Metaphysics in Antiquity, V: The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age, VI: The Old Covenant, VII: The New Covenant.
formed to Christ. This is another dimension of the reciprocal interaction between revelation and faith. This dimension of life in Christ is the subject of Theodrama: Theological Dramatic Theory. The third dimension of the reciprocal interaction between revelation and faith is that of God's theology and ours. Balthasar describes it thus:

How can God come to make himself understood to man, how can an infinite Word express itself in a finite word without losing its sense? That will be the problem of the two natures of Jesus Christ. And how can the limited spirit of man come to grasp the unlimited sense of the Word of God? That will be the problem of the Holy Spirit.

This is treated in the third leg of the trilogy, Theologic, and an appendix, Epilogue.

These three legs of the trilogy correspond to three transcendental attributes which all being including personal being have through existence and activity. These three attributes of being: beauty (self-manifestation), goodness (self-gift), and truth (self-expression or intelligibility) are present in Christ's personal being, actions and words and are the fundamental ground of the human perception of the meaning and significance of

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131 This leg of the trilogy contains five volumes only three of which have been published in English to date. I: Prolegomena; II: Dramatis Personae: Man In God; III: Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ; IV: The Action (Die Handlung); V: The Last Act (Das Endspiel).


133 Theologic contains three volumes which have not yet been published in English: I: The Truth of the World (Warheit der Welt); II: The Truth of God (Warheit Gottes); III: The Spirit of Truth (Der Geist der Warheit). Epilogue (Epilog) has been published in English by Ignatius Press, 1992.
Christ, and ultimately of the Triune God in Christ. Obviously, they are not accidents of personal being but are attributes of the substance of personal being itself, which in the case of personal being find their unity in that of personhood. Each being, but particularly the highest form of finite being, the person, is as a being, someone perceptible, desirable or good, and intelligible. This will be explored in more depth later.

In *Theodrama III. Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ*, Balthasar outlines his methodological approach to his Christology. His first task is "to gain access to the figure of Christ, which is only possible through pondering the specific character and structure of the New Testament sources, the Gospels in particular." His next task will be to use the figure of Christ obtained from the sources to "ask--by way of confirmation--how is it possible for such a figure to be represented; and this will explain the condition in which we find the sources themselves." Then he will proceed to "a speculative Christology and raise the question of the meaning and limitations of the 'Chalcedonian model.'" Finally, he will consider the "issue of the inclusion of the theodramatic characters in Christ . . . ." With respect to all of these steps he raises the fundamental question whether the concept of theological "form" which was analyzed in *The Glory of the Lord* can "stand up to the attacks of the historico-critical method? At this point the struggle for the foundations of dogmat-
ics, and of all Christian faith, becomes acute and--dramatic.\[141\]

Balthasar's theology of Christ's theological 'form' as contained in the act of faith and its relation to the historico-critical method is foundational to Balthasar's approach to Christology and the act of faith in Christ.

Christology is, after all, "faith in Christ seeking understanding." But the first question is what does Balthasar mean by "faith in Christ." Since revelation and faith are correlatives, what he means by revelation in Christ will determine what he means by faith in Christ, and this will determine his methodology. Issues of nature and grace, and metaphysics and epistemology underlie questions about the nature of revelation and faith. Most fundamental in resolving these underlying questions is the question of how one approaches their resolution. This is the question of methodology and the proper relationship between theology and philosophy, and grace and nature, in coming to know reality as it really is, in both its natural and supernatural dimensions. Even if one were to deny the relevance of metaphysics to theology, that would be a metaphysical position, so the question of metaphysics is unavoidable. The crux of the matter for Balthasar's Christology is whether Christ's self-expressive historical "life-form" can be in continuity with the faith life-form of Christ contained in the New Testament and that passed on by the Church. First, I will explore Balthasar's theology of the perception of Christ's "life-form" in the act of faith, and then,

\[141\] TD III, p. 55-56.
in Chapter III, move on to the nature and grace issues which are involved in knowing Christ.

"The Nature of the Act of Faith: Seeing the Form"

What is the Nature of the Act of Faith?

The available evidence (New Testament, Early Doxologies, Hymns, and Pagan Perceptions of Christianity) all point to worship of Christ along with adherence to Jewish monotheism in the earliest Palestinian Jewish Christianity. How did Jesus' contemporaries in the process of interpretation move from simple encounter with him or reports about him to a faith which worshipped him and made him Kyrios? In this kind of a judgment the question becomes the nature of the intrapersonal dynamics of the act of faith. Especially the relationship between certitude arrived at by the intrinsic power of reasoning through knowledge and judgment; and certitude given as a gift of God to which the intellect and will freely chose to submit in reliance on God. As we saw earlier, Vatican I made the most important and complete doctrinal statement on the nature faith and the role of reason. It intended to respond to the errors of semirationalism and fideism.

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... faith, which is 'the beginning of salvation,' the Catholic Church holds to be a supernatural virtue. By it, with the inspiration and help of God's grace, we believe that what He has revealed is true, not because of its intrinsic truth seen by the light of natural reason, but because of the authority of God revealing it, who can neither deceive nor be deceived (Denz 3008)."

In this definition, the key phrase which needed further clarification was "because of the authority of God revealing it, who can neither deceive nor be deceived." How was God's authority revealed in and through the life-form of Jesus to the Apostles and disciples? What is the substantive content being judged about Jesus' life-form in such an act of faith, and how does such a judgment take place?

Does the Act of Faith Include Knowledge of God?

As discussed previously, Scholastic theology also held that the formal object of faith is God Himself or First Truth. But, the question was what kind of knowledge of God, the formal object of faith, could one have through and in the act of faith? If God himself, by his authority, was the motive and basis for faith and its formal object, in what way was he known? Or, did faith include knowledge of God at all?

The Vatican I definition of faith was arrived at in a context in which the understanding of nature and grace was founded on the idea of "pure nature." As we have seen, the idea

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of two kinds of knowledge, one natural and the other supernatural, was derived from this concept.

Thus the mainstream of post-Vatican I Catholic theology has attempted to define, often with great precision, the extent to which the will’s assent to God’s authority is directed or prepared by rational considerations. It has also considered the extent to which in such an act of faith the truth of what is revealed is in fact perceived.\(^\text{114}\)

The question crucial to the act of faith was whether the First Truth, the formal object of faith, was in fact perceived or known in any way in the act of faith. What Balthasar calls "supernatural rationalism" was an understandable reaction to the Romanticalist, Idealist, and Modernist currents of thought which were part of the neo-Kantian efforts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.\(^\text{115}\) "Supernatural rationalists" wanted to avoid any hint of intuition, religious feeling, or immediate perception which tended to naturalize religious knowing. The efforts of Blondel, Rousselot, Maréchal, and later the "new theology" were all attempts to overcome these fears, and the sterility of "supernatural rationalism." The act of faith had been reduced to assent or faith in God based on the rationality of the proofs (signs, wonders, prophecy, Resurrection) which demonstrated God's presence and authority, seen of course, by the gift of the light of faith. This was backed up by the external authority of the Church. Faith and actual knowing had been separated.


\(^{115}\) Balthasar, \textit{Glory I}, p. 139.
Faith Gnosis of God's Glory in Christ

Balthasar perceived that it was vital to apologetics to reintegrate the element of "pistis" and "gnosis" in the theology of the act of faith. Faith could not be content to define itself as propositions accepted on authority. It had to "bring man to an understanding of what God is in truth."

... the content of this self-revelation of God's bears the name of doxa ... the analogy suggests itself between aesthetic and theological revealed reality and its reception. This, then, already means that the element of authority, on which theological faith is based as its ultimate motive and formal object, must possess a wholly peculiar colouring attributable to God alone, and this quality clearly distinguishes the divine authority even from the ecclesial authority which proclaims and enacts it. The divine authority belongs to the divine doxa as it manifests itself; indeed, authority and doxa are but one in so far as in both of them God's divinity approaches the believer.

God's glory or doxa is of course, the majesty of the Triune kenotic love revealed in the person, action, and words of Christ, particularly in the mysterium paschale. It is the revelation to the "eyes of faith" of this love in Christ, which is the authority of God to which the human heart submits.

The majesty of this absolute love—the central phenomenon of revelation—is the source of every form of authority possessed by the mediators between man and God. The primal authority is possessed neither by the Bible ..., nor by the kerygma ..., nor in ecclesiastical office ... the primal authority is the Son interpreting the Father through the Holy Spirit as divine love. For it is only at the source of revelation that authority (or majesty) and love coincide. All an authoritative call to submissive faith in revelation

116 Ibid., p. 140.
can do is to prepare men to see the love of God made manifest, and help them to value that love fittingly.\(^{11}\)

The Relation Between God and Being in the Act of Faith

Balthasar's explanation of how that doxa or love of God in Christ is perceived, first by the Apostles, and now by us, depends on his metaphysics of personal "being." As we saw, personal being in its transcendental attributes is manifested in interpersonal relations. As with all being, by analogy there is a natural revelation of God in the natural transcendental attributes of personal being. But, in the union of divine nature with human nature in Christ, we have much more than this natural manifestation. Absolute Personal Being, who is pure act of being in the person of the Word, has now united himself to created contingent personal being.

... the formal object of theology (and, therefore, also of the act of faith) lies at the very heart of the formal object of philosophy (along with the mythology which belongs to it). Out of those mysterious depths the formal object of theology breaks forth as the self-revelation of the mystery of Being itself; such a revelation cannot be deduced from what the creaturely understanding of itself can read of the mystery of Being, nor, even in the manifestness of the mystery of God, can such revelation be grasped by this intellect without the divine illumination of grace. ... But it is no less a Word from God, an intelligence concerning Being itself and thus, at the same time philosophy.\(^{11}\)

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\(^{11}\)Balthasar, *Glory I,* p. 145; notice that Balthasar does not equate or identify in any way the theological and philosophical formal objects. Instead, the theological shines through Being but is not closely identified with Being as in the transcendental approach.
God, the ground and fullness of all being, who is the fullness of the transcendental attributes of beauty, goodness, and truth in the unity of love, "reveals himself once and for all in a positive-historical, spatio-temporal form... The mystery of I-Thou within the Godhead must find its epiphany in an I-Thou mystery between God and man;..."

The "Form" of Gnosis in the Act of Faith

What Balthasar means by "form" with respect to personal being is related to the manner in which the mysterious unity and uniqueness of the "whole" or "Gestalt" of a person's being is self-expressed. It is the self-expressive "form," not the ontological form which esse needs to exist. The very nature of the transcendental attributes of a "being" is that they are not accidents, not categorical attributes, but subsist in the very unity of the person's "esse" or act of being. Unity is a transcendental attribute of any "esse" that has a form. Unity is what the form gives an existing being. Or, put another way form is what reveals the unity of an existing being. But, the ontological unity or form permits the transcendental attributes to appear to others in their self-expressive "form." The self-expressive form reveals the beauty, goodness and truth of the existing being. And as we will see, it is beauty that constitutes the appearance or the perception of the phenomenon of the truth and goodness of

\[149\] Ibid., p. 147.

\[150\] The following discussion is based on Glory I, pp.23-34.
another's being. Because of the unity of being, the transcendental attributes co-inhere each other. However, the element of human freedom in a human being who is also sinful determines whether its transcendental qualities of beauty, goodness and truth will be expressed. It is the spirit of a person, incarnated in their body, which expresses through the body that form (spirit-body) which has its origin in God, the pure act of Being. It is precisely God's power and most characteristic prerogative to confer personal "esse" in its unique individual spirit-body form. "Esse" and form need each other as neither can exist without the other.

This God-given personal form (spirit-body) is destined to pour itself out in a chosen life-form that is consistent with its personal form which is "image and likeness" of God. To the extent it does so, it has personal integrity and congruence with the reality of its unique personhood. In a sense it manifests and becomes what God always intended it to be. It expresses its transcendental attributes of beauty, goodness and truth in the unity of personal love. But, it must do this freely, by a choice which assumes it knows or perceives, however dimly, its unique identity in Christ. Balthasar sees personal "form" as that which we perceive mediately when we perceive in another's life-form, their self-expression of their personal meaning and significance.

With St. Bonaventure he agrees that the essence of form lies not in its being a potential object of sense perception, but rather in its intrinsic power to express—whatever mode of appearance the expression may take. In the Incarnation God essentially express himself in a manner that allows us to
speak of a *divine form*, even though the expressing God remains hidden within the expressive form.\textsuperscript{151}

Here, "whole" or *Gestalt* cannot mean either that all of God has been expressed, or that God's expression of himself has been exhausted. It can mean that the fullest expression of God in this creation has taken place in Christ.\textsuperscript{151} What God has revealed about himself in Christ is itself, through the medium of human reality, *formally* structured. As Christ's body is a created body, so God's "life-form" in this world is created, but is a true self-expression of God. The *divine form* of self-expression in Christ is that of the kenotic love of the Triune God. The fullness of Being and the transcendental attributes are united with contingent being. The *mysterium paschale*, with the Cross as its center piece, is the climax of that self-expression and self-disclosure.

But, not only God is disclosed and expressed. Christ is the archetype who reveals that personal integrity and congruence with


\textsuperscript{151}Balthasar carefully explains what is meant by the fullness of the Godhead dwelling in Christ: "Instead of speaking of the 'form of revelation' we could also, with the same qualifications, speak of the 'revelation-body' in view of the fact that, on the one hand, 'the whole pleroma of the Godhead dwells corporeally in Christ' (somatikos), that is to say, in the way that a spirit inhabits a body or that God's Spirit of glory dwells in the old temple . . . . And none of this can be understood in a purely figurative sense, since Christ's corporeal body is and remains the point of union (Eph. 2.16) while all other 'religion' compared with his corporeality remains at best a 'shadow' (Col 2.17)." Balthasar, *Glory* 1, p. 433.
oneself is found only in the "image's" integrity and congruence with God. Here, another dimension of the fulfillment of human freedom in divine infinite freedom is revealed.

But the Christian form is structurally a part of the miracle that transfigures and ennobles the whole sphere of being and which in itself guarantees that a spiritual form will thrive as the greatest of beauties. The image of existence is here illuminated by the archetype of Christ, and set to work by the free might of the Creator Spirit with all the sovereignty of one who need not destroy the natural in order to achieve his supernatural goal. For this reason, however, it is clear that in any age--and most especially our own--the Christian will realize his mission if he truly becomes this form which has been willed and instituted by Christ.\[13\]

The Objective Nature of Christ's "Form"

As the Archetype, Jesus is the Word, the Image, the Exegesis of God. He is God's theology in the flesh. "He is what he expresses--namely, God--but he is not whom he expresses--namely, the Father. This incomparable paradox stands as the fountainhead of the Christian aesthetic, and therefore of all aesthetics!"\[14\]

Balthasar gives three reasons why God's revelation must possess an objective form. In the first part of Glory I Balthasar has established that the subjective experience of the act of faith does indeed contain a "gnosis" or an experience of religious knowing of God in Christ. This subjective experience "finds the reason and justification for its existence in an experienceable object" and "without this object that experiential ability can by no means be demonstrated in its totality nor indeed be

\[13\] Ibid., p. 28.

\[14\] Ibid., p. 29.
made comprehensible." In giving the reasons he first explains that our faith object, that is, what is revealed in Christ "can be correctly understood only when it has been made visible in itself." He makes it clear that our object is not "God in Himself." Then proceeding on the faith assumption that there is a radical difference between God and humanity, the infinite and the finite he says:

If God is the infinitely free agent who, in his freedom, invents a world and, also in his freedom, creates that world; and, if on top of this, he is the triune God who in Jesus Christ becomes man, then there are three interconnected reasons why God's revelation must possess an objective form.

First, since God is infinitely free, God's infinite subjectivity "can in no sense be identical with the human religious subject." And, "a revelation of God may occur ever so interiorly in the subject and, nonetheless, God will remain interior intimo meo." God in His transcendence remains someone who must be believed and someone to whom one must surrender unconditionally. "Even the most intimate self-disclosure of God in the soul has a 'form', even if it is spiritual: the form of experiences, sensations, illuminations, which as such are not the self-disclosing God himself."
Second, "If God has first of all revealed himself as a Creator, and if this creation is necessarily ... a manifestation of God, it follows that this manifestation takes its form from the form of the world itself." He then develops the argument that God's divinity is made visible through creation but only in an analogous way. The Glory of God which is manifested through the creation is not to be identified with the glory or splendor of creation itself. It is the difference between the form and what the form expresses by its form. What is the relationship between the natural revelation of Creation and the revelation in Christ?

The revelation of the triune God in Christ is not simply, to be sure, the prolongation or the intensification of the revelation in the creation; but, in their essence, they are so far from contradicting one another that, considered from the standpoint of God's ultimate plan, the revelation in the creation is seen to have occurred for the sake of the revelation in Christ, serving as the preparation that made it possible.

Finally, he develops the arguments to show that the appearance of the revelation of the Triune God requires an objective form, a "super-form," especially since God's appearance is not an independent image of God, but a unique hypostatic union of the Word (the Archetype) and the image (Jesus). The analogy of being, which will be discussed in connection with nature and grace, has to be maintained here also. However similar the transcendental attributes of beauty, goodness, and truth may be to those attrib-

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139 Ibid.

140 Ibid., p. 431.
utes in God's being, God's Transcendental Attributes are infinitely dissimilar. God's Being, as the pure act of kenotic love, appears as doxa or "glory," in Christ. This is God's splendor, beauty, majesty, the appearance of His Being, in a human-divine life-form.\textsuperscript{161}

Beauty and "Form" in the Act of Faith

God's \textit{divine form}, expressed in Christ, paradoxically climaxes in its greatest splendor, beauty, and majesty, in the ugliness and tragedy of the Cross. God in the flesh is crucified by His creatures precisely because of His love. There could be no greater ugliness, tragedy or evil. How can this be beauty? It is precisely here that we find God's revelation renewing the minds of his creatures in their understanding of the truth about reality, and revealing what the Resurrection unveils. That is, that all human reality, even the worst of sin, can be and is transfigured and transformed by the love of God in Christ.\textsuperscript{161} There can be no greater example of the descending nature of

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{161}Ibid., p. 432-433.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{161}... the glory of Christ unites splendor and radiance with solid reality, as we see pre-eminently in the Resurrection and its anticipation through faith in Christian life.

As Karl Barth has rightly seen, this law extends to the inclusion in Christian beauty of even the Cross and everything else which a worldly aesthetics ... discards as no longer bearable... it embraces the most abysmal ugliness of sin and hell by virtue of the condescension of divine love, which has brought even sin and hell into that divine art for which there is no human analogue." Ibid., p. 124.
\end{quote}
Revelation which calls upon creation to view itself in the light of God's understanding.

Von Balthasar's theology of form plunges its roots more deeply in the New Testament than in a philosophical aesthetic. The suffering and death of Christ, far from being the exception they would be in a worldly aesthetic, here become the model. . . . The entire volume on the New Testament (III/2/2) presents the divine glory as essentially consisting in the kenosis of God's Word. . . . Cross and damnation thereby come to belong to the very essence of divine form. A theological aesthetic describes how God's perfection becomes actually manifest, and Scripture reveals it to consist in the "correspondence between obedience and love, between self-annihilation in hiddenness and the ascent toward manifestation" (III/2/2, p. 242).[14]

It is precisely here that Balthasar's distinction between his theological aesthetics of perceiving the form, as distinguished from an aesthetic theology, is most clearly seen. I have deferred discussing the relation between "beauty" and "form" because of the common difficulty of understanding Balthasar's use of it in terms of philosophical or contemporary ideas of it. The analogia of the Cross (analogia crucis) reveals clearly the limits of the analogy of being, in terms of using natural "beauty" to understand God's beauty, or for that matter, any of the other transcendental attributes of personal being. More generally, this is the problem between natural forms as a vehicle for supernatural revelation which will be discussed in the section on nature and grace. As developed there, nature is taken up into grace, and put at the service of grace; human love participates in the intratrinitarian love for the world. Balthasar

... does not deny the relative autonomy of the natural form, but he assumes this natural aesthetic into an aesthetic of grace which, while fully respecting the autonomy of nature, nevertheless in the light of the Christian mysteries aesthetically transforms the natural. Revelation itself radiates the light in which we see its form. In lumine tuo videbimus lumen. "The light of faith stems from the object which revealing itself to the subject, draws it out beyond itself--into the sphere of the object" (I, 181). God's revelation establishes both its content and the believer's ability to comprehend it. Christ reveals as the God who expresses, and stands revealed as that which he expresses.14

Beauty and the Light of Faith

What this implies is that the "glory" of God shining on the face of Christ cannot be seen unless our faces are unveiled by the light of Christ Himself. For,

all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit." (2 Cor. 3.18)

Analogy of being finds itself at the very heart of the act of faith. One cannot "see" the beauty of the Triune love in Christ simply in or through the natural transcendental attributes of His human "being." One cannot encounter God's Being and "glory" in Him unless one's face is "unveiled" and one is given the light of faith with which to "see." "[But] when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed." (2 Cor. 3.16) The light of faith is a participation in the knowledge and love of God in which God sees Himself in Christ, and we in that light of God, see God and ourselves in Christ.

14Dupré, p. 401.
It is not that we demand grace by virtue of our peculiar dynamism; it is grace which both claims and expropriates us. The ascendancy of grace in us is what compels us, and it is also what bestows absolute authority on God in us. Considered in this first aspect, fundamental to all others, the auctoritas Dei revelantis is revelation as it witnesses to itself in us. We never could or should believe an historical existent on the basis of divine testimony if we did not believe it by virtue of the witness of God's being to itself which shines out for us in the interior light of grace. The Son of God, who in history witnesses to God and is witnessed to by God, convinces us only because we have God's witness in ourselves.

As we see epitomized in the life of Christ, it is in Christ's self-expression in His life-form, which is identical with His consciousness of mission, that the truth and goodness of His "form" (being) are manifest as "beauty." Beauty is what makes the truth and goodness of Christ's being attractive and love-worthy. It is the value and worth of the truth and goodness of Christ's being as it shines forth in His life-form. "We are confronted simultaneously with both the figure and that which

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165 Balthasar, Glory I, p. 162.

166 "The form as it appears to us is beautiful only because the delight it arouses in us is founded upon the fact that, in it, the truth and goodness of the depths of reality itself are manifested and bestowed, . . . The appearance of the form, as a revelation of the depths, is an indissoluble union of two things. It is the real presence of the depths, of the whole of reality, and it is a real pointing beyond itself to these depths. . . . both aspects are inseparable from one another, and together they constitute the fundamental configuration of Being."

"When it comes to confronting this structure . . . with the contents of Christian theology, it should be clear from the outset that there can be no univocal transposition and application of categories. This must be so because the living God is neither an 'existent' (subordinate to Being) nor 'Being' itself, as it manifests and reveals itself essentially in everything that makes its appearance in form." Balthasar, Glory I, p. 119.
shines forth from the figure, making it into a worthy, a loveworthy thing."

Here the unity of the transcendentals is emphasized. In Christ, and in us, "esse" is constituted and expressed in the unity of love. Love and being are coextensive, and the truth and goodness of our love/being are manifested as beauty. Therefore, Balthasar can say that "beauty" is the primal phenomenon—that which appears to our consciousness as the reality of another's being. It is the splendor of the goodness and truth of their love/being shining forth in the deeds and words that are their self-expressive life-form. Since their "form" (love/being) is a unity, their life-form, to the extent it expresses that God-given "form" manifested in Christ, the archetype and measure of all forms, is a unity. The unity of the form shines forth as "beauty." In the act of faith, beauty, the light of faith, and God's love are different ways of referring to the same reality. That means that the only way it can be perceived is as a unity, through a synthetic act of the intellect, such as is attributed to the intellectus. In what I have read of Balthasar, he does not explicitly tie faith perception to this aspect of Thomistic psychology. But in his discussion of "The Spiritual Senses,"

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167Balthasar, Glory I, p. 20.

168The idea that love and beauty are co-extensive is unusual and will be developed in detail in a separate section.

169Balthasar, Glory I, p. 20.

some type of synthetic operation of the intellect which grasps
the "whole" intuitively (in an immediate perception), but sensu-
ally, seems to be what he has in mind. He discusses the "Spiritu-
al Senses" as part of the experience of faith. Experience of
faith is crucial to Balthasar's aesthetics. I will explore this
later in more depth. But, I point it out here because theological
aesthetic perception is more than simple intellectus while that
may also be a constituent dimension of it. Also, in this dis-
cussion Balthasar is very careful to avoid any systematization
that would seem to suggest that a definitive psychological
description of how God gives the light of faith to the human
spirit could be given. But he is insistent that it is mediated
through the senses even in mystical experiences.

Unity of Content and "Form" in the Act of Faith

Since this primal "form" can only be seen in its unity, it
cannot be broken up critically into its constituent parts nor can
it be gotten behind and transcended Platonically. Balthasar
stresses the necessity to maintain in the hypostatic union, the
unity between the life-form (Christ's human life) and the content
(God's self-disclosure). This is essential to "the subjective
unity of faith and vision in the Christian life" which would be
"incomprehensible if it could not be elucidated in terms of a
unity in the objective revelation which demands and conditions

\[\text{Ibid., pp. 20-21,}\]
it." In other words, God's self-expression and disclosure in Christ's human form is true to God's essence, without itself being that essence. It is a revelation of God's glory without being identical to God's glory.

The beauty and glory which are proper to God may be inferred and 'read' off from God's epiphany and its incomprehensible glory which is worthy of God himself. But in trying to perceive God's own beauty and glory from the beauty of his manner of appearing, we must neither simply equate the two--since we are to be transported per hunc (Deum visibilem) in invisibillum amorem--nor ought we to attempt to discover God's beauty by a mere casual inference from the beauty of God's epiphany, for such an inference would leave this epiphany behind. We must, rather, make good our excessus to God himself with a theologia negativa which never detaches itself from its basis in a theologia positva: DUM visibilit-er cognoscimus.\[113]\[112\]

Here, the analogy to human personal self-expression and disclosure helps us to understand. When one honestly self-discloses there is an integrity or fittingness between the chosen form of self-expression and the person who is being expressed in the self-expression. What is intended here also is reflected in natural aesthetic form, wherein there is a fittingness or integrity between the form and what the artist is expressing. Personal being, in its self-possession, possesses the truth of its self in complete freedom of choice of self-expression. But, a true self-expression truly reveals the person in that self-expression. However, when we apply this to Christ, the person of the Logos

\[112\]Ibid., p. 435.
\[113\]Ibid., p. 124.
revealed in Him, is ever greater in dissimilarity than any similarity we can perceive in His life-form.

Balthasar is concerned that this integrity between the form and its content be preserved so that Christ not become a mere symbol or sign Platonically pointing beyond himself to some greater insight or spiritual reality.

And so it is fitting to remember in this context what we said earlier when we discussed the question of subjective evidence: in relation to the central phenomenon of revelation we can by no means speak of 'signs' which according to their nature, point beyond themselves to something 'signified'. Jesus the Man, in his visibleness, is not a sign pointing beyond himself to an invisible 'Christ of faith'—whether this view is nuanced more in a Platonizing Catholic sense or in a criticistic Protestant manner. The image and expression of God, according to the Biblical assertion, is the indivisible God-man...

If Christ is perceived more in terms of final causes he will no longer be seen as God's self-expression, but as the instrument or occasion through which one seeks something deeper. Similarly, if in a Platonizing manner, the created human reality through and in which God has revealed is seen as concealing the spiritual or heavenly, Christ again becomes a means to enlightenment.

For now everything corporeal about Christ is simply regarded as an image that still conceals, and which stimulates us to seek and understand the spiritual element in him, and both things together become an occasion and a springboard from which we soar to the divine. Not only everything sacramental and institutional about the Church, but Christ's whole humanity thus becomes all too clearly something for those 'simple' Christians who need material crutches, while the advanced and the perfect can dispense with the symbol, whose spiritual core they have been able to reach.

\[\text{Ibid., p. 437.}\]

\[\text{Ibid., p. 437-38.}\]
Unity of Content and "Form" in Theology

Theology then, because its formal object is the "divine form" self-expressed by God in the Word made flesh, is "indissolubly united to this visible form," and has therefore a necessary aesthetic quality. But, "aesthetic" must have the theological objective meaning and ontological grounding Balthasar has explic- cated, rather than the purely subjective meaning current in the culture since the eighteenth century. 174 However, the reality to the contrary is that theology has moved toward a rational interpretation of Scripture (exegesis), of nature and history (fundamental theology), and of the ecclesiasti- cal tradition (dogmatic theology). By thus neglecting the form of the Incarnation it has failed to do justice to revelation itself as Christians have concretely received it. The form thereby becomes reduced to a mere sign pointing toward a mystery that lies entirely beyond it. 177

Balthasar seeks to "reintegrate grace and nature, thought and feeling, body and mind, culture and theology within a syn- thetic, comprehensive, theological reflection on form." 171 But, form is simply the way, through one's life-form, we perceive the unity of the transcendental attributes of a personal "being," under the appearance of "beauty," if they have lived with true integrity. More germane to our subject, it is the way that God's presence in Christ is perceived. The mystery of Being is revealed in Christ, so philosophy is a necessary part of theology. Thus,

176 Dupré, p. 385-387.
177 Ibid., p. 385-86.
178 Ibid., p. 386.
there is the necessity of rediscovering the necessary connection between metaphysics (meta-anthroplogy) and theology, if we are to truly perceive and understand Christ. But, this is difficult in a milieu still colored by the skepticism of the Enlightenment.

It is more difficult because our eyes lose their acumen for form and we become accustomed to read things by starting from the bottom and working our way up, rather than by working from the whole to the parts. Our multi-faceted glance is, indeed, suited to the fragmentary and the quantitative: we are the world's and the soul's analysts and no longer have the vision for wholeness. For this reason, psychology (in the contemporary sense of that term) has taken the place of philosophy. For this reason, too, we no longer credit man with the ability to achieve form, whether metaphysically or ethically.\(^{119}\)

Two Essential Dimensions of a Theological Aesthetics

It is the primal form in Christ that is the formal object of the act of faith and as we saw earlier, the source of the authority of God which is the motive of faith. If perception of the primal form in Christ through his life-form is the object of faith, it is also the object of theology. But the kind of perception of Christ which takes place in seeing this primal form, or the object of faith, is not a detached observation. God in Christ encounters the believer, and vice versa. One cannot encounter God in a detached manner. In our judgment about God's presence in Christ, we judge ourselves in the light of God's Word, as the Gospel of John carefully points out. In the act of faith, and therefore in a theological aesthetics, there are two essential dimensions. One is the seeing of the real, the objective presence

of God in Christ. "...[A]n object which is actually 'God' but God as 'mediated' (per) by the 'sacramental form of the mystery' (mysterium) of the 'enfleshed Word'" This first perception is meant in the sense of taking into oneself, allowing to become part of oneself "of something true...which is offering itself." The object itself provides through its splendor the light in which we see light, and therefore in our seeing we allow it to become part of us.\(^{111}\) We are not offered something which we are "compelled to accept obediently in blind and naked faith something hidden" from us. Rather, "something is 'offered' to man by God, indeed offered in such a way that man can see it, understand it, make it his own, and live from it in keeping with his human nature." This light of faith is God's invisible love; "the lux tuae claritatis, is the appearance of God's amor invisibilis."

The second dimension builds on the first. Our perception of God's amor (eros), or God's going out of Himself in Christ, is a function of the goodness and truth of God perceived as beauty or glory. God's eros stimulates a like eros in us, causing us in response to freely go out of ourselves to God. This needs to be understood in a strictly theological sense, the theological sense of enthusiasm.\(^{111}\) "The enthusiasm which is inherent to the Christian faith is not merely idealistic; it is, rather, an enthusiasm

\(^{111}\) Ibid., p. 120.

\(^{111}\) Ibid., pp. 121-22.
which derives from and is appropriate to actual, realistic Be-
ing.\footnote{Ibid., p. 123.}

These two dimensions or phases Balthasar calls the theory of vision and the theory of rapture. The first he equates with fundamental theology and its central question as he defined it: How is God's revelation in Christ perceived? The second he equates with dogmatic theology. That is, "'aesthetics' as a theory about the incarnation of God's glory and the consequent elevation of man to participate in that glory."

For the object with which we are concerned is man's participation in God which, from God's perspective, is actualized as 'revelation' (culminating in Christ's Godmanhood) and which, from man's perspective, is actualized as 'faith' (culminating in participation in Christ's Godmanhood). This double and reciprocal ekstasis--God's 'venturing forth' to man and man's to God--constitutes the very content of dogmatics, which may thus rightly be presented as a theory of rapture: the admirable commercium et conubium between God and man in Christ as Head and Body.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 125-26.}

As Balthasar points out the methodological implication is that fundamental theology and dogmatics are as inseparable as the two dimensions of faith from which they flow. Those on the road to faith are already moving in the dawn of the light of faith and are being drawn by the light of the object of faith as Balthasar has defined it. In dogmatics faith continues to grow as a fides quarens intellectum.

But this continued growth is not to be thought of as a leap from the preambula fidei of fundamental theology and the evidence it provides . . . --a leap to pure fiducial faith.
Rather, the facts of revelation are perceived initially in the light of grace, and faith grows in such a way that it allows the self-evidence of these facts—an evidence that itself was 'enrapturing' from the outset—to continue to unfold according to its own laws and principles. . . . Paul, in the locus classicus of his theological aesthetics, nevertheless speaks of a 'vision of the Lord's splendor with unveiled face', through which 'we are transformed into the same image' (2 Cor 3.18). Paul thus unites vision and rapture as a single process.

The Place of Theological Aesthetics in Theology

As we have seen Balthasar is insisting against "supernatural rationalism" that God, the formal object of faith, is actually encountered and known in Christ's life-form. Despite the abyss of dissimilarity between God in Himself and created being, God can manifest Himself through created being by means of the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in Christ. The act of faith includes both pistis and gnosis. The trusting self-surrender of pistis is to a truly perceived objective vision of God in Christ (gnosis), which is a perception of God's kenotic love in Christ. The light of faith is God's love to which the only response can be love—the love of God for Himself in us through the Holy Spirit ("God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Rom. 5.5)). At the same time he is answering the Protestant extreme that requires faith to be a blind leap. For Balthasar is insisting that there is an analogy of being which makes faith possible through created being. The Protestant view of faith has its Kierkegaardian

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Ibid., pp. 126-27.
subjective, existential school and its Hegelian idealistic school. Against all these views Balthasar is insisting on the unity of theology and philosophy, that Being must be allowed to reveal God. Or, better, that God must be allowed to reveal Himself through and in Being, while retaining his ever greater dissimilarity from created Being.\textsuperscript{115}

Balthasar distinguishes theological aesthetics from two other ways of reading revelation, the rationalist and the transcendental-personalist. He describes the rationalist approach first.

According to the first of these, we may see in it historical signs and the manifestations of an acting God. These signs are witnesses of the highest personal urgency which of themselves prove themselves to be signs of God, and which mean to be read and understood as such . . . . Whoever distrusts their demonstration of the divine authority speaking through them would be acting contrary to the laws of human discernment, both of theoretical reason (which has here received evidence of credibility) and of practical reason (which orders that one should entrust oneself to a trustworthy witness). Thus understood, the rationality of faith rests totally on the persuasive character of the revelatory signs, their power to convince man's reason . . . . This is an anthropological theory of faith which dispenses with the philosophical dimension, the faith-theory of positive theology as developed primarily by the Baroque scholasticism and Neo-Scholasticism of the Jesuits.\textsuperscript{116}

Theology in this theory of faith proceeds from first principles and rationally constructs its system. The object of faith is not encountered in Christ, that vision must await the beatific vision. There is no continuity between faith's vision now and the beatific vision.

\textsuperscript{115}Balthasar discusses these issues in \textit{Glory I}, pp. 131-147.

\textsuperscript{116}Ibid., p. 147-148.
The second way of reading revelation, the transcendental-personalist, does from the beginning focus attention on the formal object of faith: "God's eternal truth as he is in himself and as he witnesses to himself in revelation." But the eternal truth of who God is in himself is identified with the depths or inwardness of absolute Being. The mystery of God's inner life and love is manifested in the depths of philosophy's formal object. Consequently, this theory of faith "tends to build on the foundation, first, of the spiritual subject's cognitive dynamism and, second, on the luminous and illuminating character proper to absolute Being." This theory is a form of Alexandrian or Augustinian illuminism. The Logos who is the light of Being, shines directly into the human spirit in a way that the intellect receives the Word "as a kind of grace and revelation . . . ." What is specifically Christian in revelation is raised above the valid object of philosophy. Historical facts simply become part of the "final dynamism of cognition." The transition of faith to theology from philosophy is made by translating "the general philosophical theory of knowledge into the Christian Trinitarian mode. . . ." Christ is seen "as the redeeming illuminator of the mind and revealer of the Father." Faith then is an inchoate


beatific vision. Balthasar includes Blondel, Scheuer, Maréchal, and Rousselot with those who

in a moderate way take their departure from the subjective dynamism of cognition and act, and who then argue to the interior appropriateness and reasonableness of the transcendent faith act, made possible by the light of grace, from the 'restless heart' of man, from its need and emptiness (Masure), and from unlimited expectations.¹¹³

The advantages of this approach are that extrinicism and heteronomy are removed; both the natural and supernatural aspects of the act of faith are preserved and grounded objectively upon Revelation, and subjectively and existentially on the human spirit's dynamic orientation to its formal object. But, whether the objective grounding in Revelation is adequate is in question. Also, there is the question whether philosophy by the internal standards or structures of the human spirit becomes the measure of Revelation.¹¹⁴ Faith tends to move toward immediate mystical and interior experience "which half enjoys the light of the eschatological visio beata."

Balthasar sees each of these approaches as attaining only "one side of Christian faith, and the insight and vision which belongs to it." Both need to be purified from the common deficiency of referring to the historical events of revelation as "signs." The rationalist approach treats the signs as pointers to God which themselves do not "stand within the light of divine Being. The transcendental-personalist approach, by emphasizing

¹¹³Ibid., p. 149.
¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 149.
the interior immediacy of revelation, makes the signs "so transparent . . . that in the sign only the signified is of interest, and in the historical only that which is valid for eternity." The dualism of "ostensive sign and signified interior light . . . can be abolished only by introducing . . . the thought-forms and categories of the beautiful." The light of the form as it appears in the phenomenon of its beauty does not come from outside the form but shines out from its interior.

Visible form not only 'points' to an invisible, unfathomable mystery; form is the apparition of this mystery, and reveals it while, naturally, at the same time protecting and veiling it . . . . The content (Gehalt) does not lie behind the form (Gestalt), but within it. Whoever is not capable of seeing and 'reading' the form will, by the same token, fail to perceive the content. Whoever is not illumined by the form will see no light in the content either.

For Balthasar the perception of the beauty of God's love in Christ is crucial to a proper understanding of the truth and goodness in Christ's love. Theoretical reason, with truth per se as its object, without seeing the splendor of the truth, "remains pragmatic and formalistic." Its "only concern . . . will then merely be the verification of correct facts and laws . . . . " Without seeing the beauty of the good, practical reason "remains utilitarian and hedonistic." How it satisfies my good or my needs will be the focus. Only the value of the being-for-me will be seen, not the desirability of the being-in-itself. For the faith-perceiver to go out of himself to God, aesthetic reason must be

\[191\] Ibid., p. 150.

\[192\] Ibid., p. 151.
allowed to be part of the act of faith and the doing of theology.\textsuperscript{113}

In the luminous form of the beautiful the being of the existent becomes perceivable as nowhere else, and this is why an aesthetic element must be associated with all spiritual perception as with all spiritual striving. The quality of 'being-in-itself' which belongs to the beautiful, the demand the beautiful makes to be allowed to be what it is, the demand, therefore, that we renounce our attempts to control and manipulate it, in order truly to be able to be happy by enjoying it: all of this is, in the natural realm, the foundation and foreshadowing of what in the realm of revelation and grace will be the attitude of faith.\textsuperscript{114}

Revelation and Experience: The Experience of Faith

Experience Must Be Part of the Act of Faith

The act of faith contains the two related dimensions of a perceivable object and a response that is part of the perception of the object. The response is part of the perception because the light of God's love for Himself is that in which the believer participates in order to "see."

The eye with which the believer sees God, as Eckhart forcefully expressed it, is the eye with which God sees himself. In modern language, the conditions for the possibility of 'theological knowledge' are the very conditions that constitute the 'theological' object, with this important restriction that the object itself provides the conditions for its knowledge.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., p. 152; Balthasar points out here that aesthetic perception is a "fact beyond reasonable doubt." He says: "Nor is it now our concern to ask in what (epistemological) manner form is perceived—what, for instance, the significance of 'intuition' is for human perception. It is enough to accept that the aesthetic 'seeing the form' is a fact beyond reasonable doubt." Ibid.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., p. 153.

\textsuperscript{115} Dupré, p. 402.
The unity of faith and experience are critical to the theological standing of Balthasar's theological aesthetics.\footnote{For commentary on Balthasar's approach to experience, see in addition to Dupré's comments: Christophe Potworowski, "Christian Experience in Hans Urs von Balthasar." \textit{Communio} 20 (Spring, 1993)1: 107-117; Peter Casarella, "Experience as a Theological Category: "Hans Urs von Balthasar on the Christian Encounter With God's Image." \textit{Communio} 20 (Spring, 1993)1: 118-128. Potworowski and Casarella read these articles at the second meeting of the Balthasar Society, held in conjunction with the 1992 Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America. One place Balthasar treats the topic at length is in \textit{Glory}, 1, pp. 219-425.} If the act of faith in the perception of the form of God's love in Christ does not include in its essence a true mediated experience of God, then any claim that there is a true "gnosis" is empty. The "form" becomes a mere aesthetic form detached from its content.

A study of theological form then, turns into a branch of natural aesthetics . . . wherein the form functions only as the \textit{appearance} of a totally different, supernatural reality. For von Balthasar, the \textit{gnosis} of theology grows entirely out of the experience of faith and belongs to the same order.\footnote{Ibid.}

Balthasar's theology of the experience which is part of the act of faith is built on the nature of human existence as receptivity and the nature of the grace of the light of faith. To perceive God's love in Christ is to see that the essence of Christ's love response to the Father is humble and grateful obedience. To put one's faith in Christ is to enter into Christ's experience. It involves a going out of oneself, a surrender of "one's self and knowledge as the norm of experience."\footnote{Potworowski, p. 113.}
As an attitude, faith is the surrender of one's own experience to the experience of Christ, and Christ's experience is one of kenotic humiliation and self-renunciation, a reality which . . . rests on the foundation of Christ's hypostatic consciousness as Redeemer. For this reason, in 'mysticism' [and analogously in Christians everywhere] every deeper experience of . . . God will be a deeper entering into . . . the 'non-experience' of faith, into the loving renunciation of experience, all the way into the depths of the 'Dark Nights' of John of the Cross, which constitutes the real mystical training for the ultimate renunciation.¹⁹

This paradox of faith as an experience of letting go of experience as the norm of our knowing of God and His ways, while it is a painful surrender of an illusory autonomy, is an entry into and growth of the infinite freedom and love of the Trinity. That love is an obedience to goodness and truth which have their inexhaustible origin in God, and can only be received in Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Such faith is a true entry into and growth in participation in the life and "missions" of the Trinity, an entry into the obedience of God to His own essence and reality, which is kenotic love. Christ is the Trinitarian obedience incarnated.²⁰ He is the immanent life of the Trinity lived economically in human flesh. Given the infinite reciprocal self-renunciation which grounds the infinite reciprocal self-gift of the life of the Trinity, this participation can only be a gift that is received though the gift of the Holy Spirit.


²⁰"Thus, he must already be obedient even as God, and his human obedience unto death must be the epiphany of a divine--that is, trinitarian--obedience. In the Son of Man there appears not God alone; necessarily, there also appears the inner-trinitarian event of his procession; there appears the triune God, who, as God, can command absolutely and obey absolutely and, as the Spirit of love, can be the unity of both." Ibid., p. 479.
Spirit. Christ's obedience, and ours, are the obedience of Trinitarian love.

The kingship of God, who reveals himself as love, is shown to us in the humble obedience of the Son to the Father, and so we are shown that this obedience is essentially love. It is certainly the model for human love before the majesty of God, but more than that, it is the supreme image of divine love itself appearing. For it is precisely in the Kenosis of Christ (and nowhere else) that the inner majesty of God's love appears, of God who 'is love' (1 John 4.8) and therefore a trinity. The Trinity, though to our reason an unapproachable light, is the one hypothesis which clarifies the phenomenon of Christ as he is present in Scripture, the Church and history, because it is phenomenologically adequate, and does not do violence to the facts.

The Christian life-form, in whatever particular vocation it may be expressed, is thus a participation in a Trinitarian Theodrammatic, a drama of God's love for His creation, and God's action in it to redeem it for participation in the Trinitarian life. Human ontological receptivity is then the natural ground for the receptivity of the Trinitarian life, which is in the economic order the life of Christian faith. Christians are called to enter by faith into the "begottenness" and the "mission" of the Son to the world, receiving fully the Father's kenotic life, and in that reception to live it fully in the Son in the world, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

This attitude is the loving assumption of the will of the loved Father, and in the identical act the Father loves the Son and the world, and allows the Son to bring back the world to the Father in his self-giving even to the point of death. Thus the willingness of the disciple who has been called to allow himself to be disposed of is taken up directly into the universal saving will of God. It is, in Jesus' call, the permission to offer one's existence to this

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saving will to be disposed of by it. Everything rests on the triune love of the Father: the one who offers himself turns to it as the origin of all love. And in the free obedience of the Son whom the disciple follows, this love of the Father appears to him concretely.\footnote{Potworowski, p. 115, fn. 24, quoting Balthasar, "The Three Evangelical Counsels," in Elucidations, translated by John Riches. London: SPCK, 1975, 142. Emphasis by Potworowski.}

Experience as the ground of gnosis in the act of faith is, I believe, the link which binds fundamental theology to dogmatic theology in Balthasar's thought. How we know Christ cannot be separated from knowing Christ, except in a theoretical way. The knowledge or experience which is at the heart of the act of faith is the fountainhead of that knowledge of Christ, and God in Christ, which is the object of theology. But, there is an additional dimension of knowing which is anticipated and grounded in the act of faith, which is vital to theology and logically conditions it. That is the subject of Theo-Drama, the second leg of Balthasar's trilogy. It is there that Balthasar treats at length the question of how infinite freedom and finite freedom as receptivity can be compatible without dissolving finite autonomy into the infinite. As one might suspect from the foregoing, only love can provide the answer. I cannot, within the confines of this thesis, explore that topic further. I only want to highlight the fact that a theological aesthetics as a theology of perception cannot be separated from the Theo-dramatic life in Christ; that is, from the living of the divine life of faith which one enters into and continues to live by a perception which is
deepened in that very act of living in it. Balthasar situates his Theo-drama between his aesthetics and his logic because it is in fact at the heart of theology.\[3] The three phases, which cannot be totally separated from each other, are explained by Balthasar as the following:

- Theo-phony = Aesthetics
- Theo-praxy = Dramatic theory
- Theo-logy = Logic

Now we will turn to the nature and grace issues implicit in the foregoing discussion, and examine the idea of analogy of being in more depth. Briefly put, the question is how in Christ we can participate in God's knowledge of himself by grace.

CHAPTER III
THEO-DRAMATICS: LIFE IN CHRIST

The Unity of Reality

The Nature of the Problem

Balthasar's views on nature and grace and the unity of reality are intrinsically connected to his concept of "the analogy of being," which runs like a seam throughout his Christology and theology. The "new theology" controversy raised again in new form the challenge which the Enlightenment had raised with respect to the possibility of objective revelation by God in human historical forms through which human beings could know with certainty the cognitive content of that revelation. The thrust of Enlightenment thought denied such a possibility. Christians affirmed it but struggled to articulate theologically and philosophically the nature of the relationship between God and the world which made it possible. The problem was how to maintain the unity of reality with respect to God and creation, nature and grace.

The neo-Platonic Augustinian synthesis which maintained the unity of reality had been called into question by the Aristotelian-Thomistic synthesis which also maintained the unity of reality, but with a tension between the realms of faith knowledge
and that of reason. In the Thomistic synthesis which emphasized the independence of reason in the realm of nature, philosophy if misused could take over theology. As Balthasar says:

The most characteristic feature of Thomism is probably its strong emphasis on philosophy as something to be employed before and within theology. The indivisibility of this before and within probably testifies to the historical position of Thomas Aquinas better than anything else could. Behind him lay the world of the Church Fathers—the one, concrete supernatural order where philosophy stood within theology. Ahead of him lay the twofold order (natural versus supernatural) of modern times, which found its ultimate formulation in Vatican I (DZ 1799).  

Balthasar sees St. Thomas as a transition figure pointing forward to the separation and autonomy of the natural and philosophical sciences from theology. He points out that though the three central "tractati" of theology, the Trinity, Christ, and the Church," structured and dominated St. Thomas' thinking, they do "not hold a central structuring place in his theology. . . ."

In fact,

Thomistic thought operated emphatically from below up. From the world of sense perception and concrete experience it moves, through abstraction, to universal concepts and a demonstration of the principles contained therein. Here again we have a methodology that is predominantly philosophical; its use in theology is limited. Theology concentrates on God, the supreme concrete reality, in whom nothing can be abstracted, and insofar as theology examines the Revelation of this God in the world, its object is historical, concrete, and particular. Aquinas readily admitted this, but he went on to point out that particular realities "non pertinent ad perfectionem intelligibilium."[n]

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[i] Ibid., pp. 213-15.

[ii] Ibid., p. 215.
In his book on Karl Barth, Balthasar is contrasting St. Thomas' method from below with that of Karl Barth which is exclusively theological. He points out that Barth's real concern is to ground theology in "concrete singulars and the absolute Concrete, where happening and doctrine are embodied in the person and activity of Christ." Balthasar agrees that this focus on the concrete historical events of Christ's life and on his person could "contribute a great deal to . . . renewal in Catholic theology, even if his conclusions were not adopted." Thus methodologically, the historical and concrete Christ should be the focus of how the unity of divine and human nature could be understood. But, the question remains as to how to approach the union of the divine and the human in Christ.

Balthasar's Approach: Existence as Receptivity

Theological or Philosophical Anthropology

Here we have a basic question about the essential nature of personal being and autonomy, and whether the essence and being of the human spirit can in the first place be determined by philosophical anthropology, or whether it must of necessity be part of Revelation. Does philosophical anthropology or theological anthropology have priority? What is the proper method of approaching this question, from above or below? Concisely put, what does Christ's obedience and freedom teach us about the essential nature of personal being, knowing and loving? Is personal being

[87] Ibid., pp. 216-217.
primarily a quest for infinite knowledge of Being or is it a primarily a quest to enter into the infinite Triune freedom of God to receive and give love? What is the true nature of personal being and autonomy, and how can we know this? It is Balthasar's position that the descending nature of God's gift of self to us gives the initiative to God both as to the content of the gift and the form of its reception. Its form or content cannot be deduced philosophically from created reality. Therefore theological method has to conform itself to the content and form of revelation.

At every point the essential thing is this: that which is conferred by grace can be understood as being what it is [that is, grace], but it can never be logically reconstructed in retrospect. I cannot say: this is what I have always "really" been expecting, or what my mind and heart have always been oriented towards, so that only the slightest impulse from outside was required to allow my pre-understanding to crystallize into perfect insight. That which offers itself with the basic character of free grace can never be overtaken rationally without destroying the distinctive quality of this grace.

The self-authenticating character of God's revelation in Christ does not permit philosophy to dissolve the mystery into what can be known of human nature's existential or transcendental needs. Balthasar uses an argument from St. Anselm of Canterbury in the following passage:

Faith must recognize the validity of the claim sufficiently in the claim itself to allow of assent. But it would not be faith if it were able to work out this validity in a rational system and expound it exhaustively. There must always be

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something which eludes or obstructs faith when it thinks that it is able to see through the conditions for the possibility of the reality that stands before it. When Jesus says, "I am the Truth," "I am the Resurrection," he is saying that God is present in him. But: Si comprehendis, non est Deus [if you understand it, it is not God]. If God interprets himself in Jesus Christ then Anselm's formula for God applies to this manifestation too: "id quo majus cogitari non potest [that than which nothing greater can be conceived]. The context makes it clear that this means neither exhaustive knowledge--as truth--nor a dynamic-comparative knowledge--as though the objective, utter "greatness" of God corresponded to a subjective, ever-expanding thought in man. It is rather that the majus [the greater] of the one who manifests himself takes possession of the cogitatione [the thinking] in such a way that the latter, by acknowledging its being over-mastered, praises the perfect victory of the inscrutable truth of God.119

As previously noted, Balthasar agrees that "man must in himself be a search for God, a question posed to him."110 As we will see in this discussion of nature and grace, against Barth Balthasar will affirm the positivity of the human spirit, and the necessity that human beings have some minimum similarity to God to allow there to be a relationship.

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110 "On the one hand, this God, Creator of the world and of man, knows his creature. 'I who have created the eye, do I not see? I who have created the ear, do I not hear?' And we add 'I who have created language, could I not speak and make myself heard?' And this posits a counterpart: to be able to hear and understand the auto-revelation of God man must in himself be a search for God, a question posed to him. Thus there is no biblical theology without a religious philosophy. Human reason must be open to the infinite." Balthasar, Résumé of My Thought, p. 2.
Infinite and finite freedom

Any discussion of the human and divine in Christ, and the relation of nature and grace, must face the question of the relation between infinite and finite freedom.

In all acts of knowledge, including the primal phenomenon previously discussed in the section on "I" and "thou," the "I" in the consciousness of its presence to itself is aware of its self-possession of its own finite freedom. Balthasar points out the need to keep in mind the difference between the Thomistic view of one's self-awareness and that of the Augustinian school, particularly St. Bonaventure. For St. Thomas the soul's habitual knowledge of its own existence, which precedes any abstraction, is "only actualized indirectly, through its powers, which are distinct from the soul's essence and are referred to objects." Whereas the Augustinian school holds that "the reflex character of all intellectual knowledge involves the knower possessing himself, especially since Bonaventure makes no real distinction between the soul and its powers." I cannot enter in depth to Balthasar's extensive discussion of the nature of finite freedom, I can only set out here his position on the relationship between the two. The primal experience of this freedom as part of the primal phenomenon of "being" includes of necessity the awareness of infinite freedom on which it is dependent for its own freedom.

\[\text{TD} \text{ II, p. 207-208, fn. 2.}\]
\[\text{III See Ibid., pp. 207-242 for Balthasar's position.}\]
The awareness of the gift of "being" is also an awareness that one has not been given a subsisting "thing,"

but rather, the core of freedom, because in giving being, God gives himself. In the gift, God himself is present, however much he remains hidden, distancing himself from the gift in the interest of human freedom . . . . Thus, the 'character of existence as gift' turns out to be the 'nucleus' of ontological difference . . . . What it means to us to be the recipients of this gift is revealed in the encounter with another human who turns to us. Therefore the saying is especially valid today: "The metaphysical question is about Thou. As over against the cosmos it seems to be buried, . . . but it is always about to burst forth" . . . .

Balthasar's statement of the Christian task summarizes the solution to the relationship between finite and infinite freedom:

The Christian task, in the face of the Stoic and Plotinian enterprise, is to heighten the formal model into a relationship between freedoms according to which finite freedom can only arise out of, and persist within, primal freedom . . . ; it is precisely because it has its origin in freedom that it is really free.

1. The Christian answer to the Neoplatonic paradox . . . is the New Testament doctrine of the Holy Spirit, who, as the love of God poured into the hearts of believers, brings about two things at the same time: he liberates finite freedom so that it may embrace its own, ultimate freedom; and he does so by initiating it into a participation in infinite freedom.

The revelation of the full meaning of finite human freedom and the necessity of its dependence on infinite freedom for fulfillment is found only in Christ. It is in Christ's exercise of his human freedom, in the context of the hypostatic union between divine and human natures in one person, that the meaning of human and divine freedom is revealed. It is in Christ that we

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111 Bieler, p. 141-42, citations omitted.

see both the epitome of human freedom and obedience, which is at the same time a manifestation of the Son's relationship with the Father lived out in the economic order. How can Christ have human freedom given the oneness of His person in the Word? This is the ultimate problem of the analogia entis. I cannot develop here the manner in which Balthasar demonstrates how this can be worked out on the level of Christ's human consciousness. But the fact that Christ does have complete human freedom reveals the ontological reality that human freedom can be dependent on infinite freedom without being destroyed—rather that dependence assures its fulfillment if it is accepted. Existence for Balthasar, in its ontological, epistemological and interpersonal dimensions, is receptivity. We turn now to how this receptivity allows reality divine and human, uncreated and created, to be in unity.

The Problem of "Nature"

Another aspect of St. Thomas' transitional character is illustrated by his view of "nature," which is much in dispute in the "new theology." St. Thomas "attributes only one end, a supernatural one, to the created spirit. Like the Church Fathers he sees only one indivisible world order in which nature and grace form one unity." While he recognizes a natural end for the created spirit it cannot be separated, even hypothetically,

115 Balthasar works out this ultimate problem of "analogia entis" in the consciousness of Christ based on his consciousness of mission. See TD III, pp. 220ff.

from the supernatural end. The Reformers, followed later by Baius and Jansen, tried to make the synthesis of nature and grace present in Augustine's thought, a matter of right. Baius insisted that God could not deny grace to man without destroying his very personhood, for grace was necessary for man to be man. This position forced the Church to insist on the separation of the natural and supernatural orders so as to defend the gratuity of grace and God's freedom. In turn gratuity and God's freedom defend the distinction between God and creatures. But this defense led to the development of a "natural theology" which had as its object "nature in the pure state (natura pura)."  

The concept of "nature," Balthasar points out, has been used ambiguously in philosophy and theology. The Church in her reaction to Baius was refining the concept of nature so as to protect the gratuity of grace. As Chalcedon clarified the patristic debate over natures and person in Christ, the period from Trent to Vatican I developed the clarification of the whole order of grace. In the definition of a twofold order at Vatican I, the process started by Baius reached its consummation. Balthasar sees that the only way to avoid the extremes of a pantheistic metaphysics which cannot distinguish between philosophy and theology, and a "radically Protestant dialectics" which splits the concept of nature, is to use the concept of nature analogously.

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111 Ibid., pp. 218, 219-221.

111 Ibid., pp. 220-221.
But Balthasar insists that the starting point cannot be a philosophical analysis of what human nature is apart from God. Such an analysis cannot achieve insight into the nature of God or how God relates to human nature. Revelation and faith give the realization that our vocation to the beatific vision can "in no way be regarded as deducible from the essence or being of a creature." Only God through revelation can give a positive definition of grace.

The positive definition of grace can only be given through grace itself. God himself must reveal what he is within himself. The creature cannot delimit himself clearly over against this unknown quantity nor can he know exactly what distinguishes grace from himself. Only Revelation can clarify the distinction for us. The de facto real world God created is one in which human beings are in fact ordered to a supernatural vocation. But it is "the union of two distinguishable and distinct orders that are not separable in reality." The philosopher cannot know by reason alone the nature of the relationship between the two orders. But, "[a]s fides quarens intellectum, faith can distinguish between the two realms and probe the structure of this complex reality."

But faith cannot do this by simply taking over the philosophical definition of "nature;" it can do so only by redefining the terms used in light of the theological reality. This is similar to the process which took place in the definition of the

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119 Ibid., pp. 223-4.  
118 Ibid., pp. 224-5.  
111 Ibid., p. 225.
terms "nature" and "person" used to resolve the christological issues in the Councils leading up to Chalcedon. The element of mystery in the nature of the relationship between God and humanity must remain, for faith to be faith. Consequently, the concrete analogy of being and the conceptual and abstract analogy of "nature," "do not neatly coincide with one another."

As one man has no rightful claim to the full self-disclosure of another man, so analogously creatures have no right to God's self-disclosure in Revelation. Here we have a real analogy, because a real analogy exists between the divine and human subject. It is only an analogy, however, because the divine subject is both nearer to, and farther from, the human subject than any other human thou is.\[111\]

**Analogy of Being: Nature and Supernature**

Theoretically, it would seem that the way to proceed to achieve a definition of "nature" would be to deduce it by subtraction from all that is supernatural in human nature. But Balthasar argues that "the content of the concept of pure nature cannot be given exact elucidation." The proper approach is to focus only on the real world, "which is the only legitimate object of theological thought."\[113\] Balthasar carefully delineates the nature-grace relationship as reflecting the fundamental reality of the dissimilarity between God and creatures, without

\[111\] Ibid., pp. 226-227.

\[113\] Ibid., p. 228; By now Balthasar's basic phenomenological approach to theological reality should be clear. His method has been called a "theological phenomenology." Medard Kehl, S.J. "Hans Urs von Balthasar: A Portrait," pp. 34-35. But it is a realist phenomenology, not limited to the phenomenon of the appearance in consciousness.
denying the similarity. At the same time he emphasizes that theology must recognize the "servant status surrounding creation's relationship to God." Nature is a formal concept which represents that minimum which is the condition which makes possible any situation

... where God might choose to reveal himself to creation; that minimum can be called the analogy of being. If there is to be Revelation, it must move from God to a creation, to a creation that does not include the notion of Revelation in and of itself. The nature which is presupposed by grace is createdness as such.\footnote{Ibid., p. 228.}

God's freedom is protected in that the decision to create such a creation to which God will give a participation in the Triune inner life, is a free one. But,

this decision must take the form of the analogy of being, which is grounded in the essence of God himself. Created being as such must be nondivine, relative, and dependent, but it cannot be wholly dissimilar to its creator. If it is a spiritual-intellectual being, both its ontic and its noetic structures must bear some relation to its creator. Its thinking process must be affected somehow by the fact that it was thought up by the creator.\footnote{Ibid., p. 229.}

This minimum condition of possibility, which Balthasar calls "analogy of being" and on which the "theological contingency" depends, is not something into which the theological contingency can ultimately be dissolved. "Theology is not a superstructure built atop philosophy." With respect to the analogy of being referred to here, Balthasar is careful to point out that the philosophical does not blend smoothly into the theological. The
The difference between God and creature is qualitative and not simply a matter of degree. One cannot move from philosophy to theology (from below to above) or from theology to philosophy (from above to below), and combine them to form an integrated total. "The two movements point towards each other, but they can never meet in a total, unifying embrace. This very fact is proof of the difference between them."

Again and again, Balthasar stresses in agreement with Barth "that being God and being creature are totally dissimilar as such." However, this dissimilarity is stressed when we talk about nature as the basis of the difference between God and man. On the other hand, grace stresses the similarity and communion between God and man. But what grace does is allow man to know God by the Logos taking on "a creaturely shape ('the servant of Yahweh') and even in the forma peccati, which is radically dissimilar to God." The theological analogy does not complete or abolish the philosophical, rather it "sheds definitive light on what the philosophical analogy is as such: it shows us what the similarity can mean (i.e., participation and sonship) and how far the dissimilarity can go (i.e., God's abandonment of himself)."

Balthasar establishes the possibility of distance between God and the creature "in the infinite distance between the divine

"Ibid., pp. 229-230.

"Ibid., p. 230.

"Ibid., pp. 230-231."
persons within the Trinity itself.\textsuperscript{113} Moreover, the distance contained in the formal concept of nature is based on Jesus Christ Himself.

All creation is grounded in the Logos, more precisely, in Jesus Christ. The possibility of creation being distant from God derives ultimately from the Son's readiness to empty himself, to stand over against his father in a relationship of obedience and service. The relationship between the necessity of nature's presence and the contingent fact of Revelation becomes plain when we realize that the distance of formal nature is a real presupposition for the descent of the Logos to humanity; that, at the same time, on a higher plane, the formal concept of nature presupposes the Son's willingness to make this descent.\textsuperscript{114}

Union of Nature and Supernature in Christ

Balthasar's views on nature and grace, his stress on the dissimilarity between God and creature while affirming the similarity, the relationship between the theological analogy and the philosophical, flow directly from a theological analysis of the hypostatic union of natures in Christ, the Word made flesh. Along with de Lubac, and in conformity with the patristic tradition, he seeks to reunite nature and grace by enfolding nature within grace, but maintaining its distinctness. The key to this

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., pp. 230, 236. "Let us repeat once again. The distance between the two subjects here is not created by grace. It is a distance that belongs to nature itself, but it has its deepest roots in the distance that prevails between the divine persons in the Trinity, and it is grace which makes this interdivine distance visible to us and makes possible a fruitful interchange between Word and faith in the distance that separates God and creature. Since participation in the Trinitarian persons is the purpose for which creaturely personhood and subjectness was provided, it is also the thing that grounds and makes possible this natural substrate." Ibid., p. 236.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., p. 231.
is the concrete reality of the hypostatic union. How can God become man without dissolving Christ's humanity into His divinity as in monophysitism? Or, without losing His divinity in His humanity, as in Nestorianism? Balthasar's christocentric perspective on nature and grace is clear from this passage:

It is in Christ that human nature and its mental faculties are located in their true center; it is in him that they attain their final truth in the manner in which God, the creator of nature, wanted nature to exist from eternity. In order to investigate the relation between supernature and nature, man does not need to step outside faith; he does not need to make himself the mediator between God and the world, between revelation and reason; he does not need to cast himself in the excessive role of judge over the relation between the natural and the supernatural world. All that he needs is to understand and believe in "the single mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 2:5) "in whom all things in heaven and earth were created... all through him and for him" (Col. 1:16). Just as Christ did not leave the Father when he became man to bring creation in all its spheres to fulfillment, so also the Christian does not need to step outside the center, Christ, to mediate Christ to the world, to understand his relation to the world, to build the bridge between revelation and nature, between philosophy and theology.\[113\]

To understand the theological positions Balthasar adopts on analogy of being we need to explore his understanding of Christ as the center of Creation and Revelation, and the self-expression of God in a truly human medium.

Creation in Christ

It is apparent from the above passage that a key insight into the centrality of Christ in creation is the fact that everything in creation was made "through Christ and for him." This includes humanity, and makes the Logos the archetype for Christ, the God-man, and therefore for "humanness." Balthasar emphasizes the theme of creation in Christ in "the proper, absolute, and objective sense."\(^{114}\) Another way of saying this is that "humanness" was created precisely for the archetype itself, the Son, that he might become the image without ceasing to be the archetype. Thus, "the humanity of Christ shows itself to be the singular humanity of the Son of God. For this reason it is the complete form of the human."\(^{115}\)

An important consequence of Balthasar's emphasis on the theme of creation in Christ is the primacy he gives to God

who always acts first, setting himself in (creational) relationship over against all human movements of ascent and transcendence. These are by no means devalued, but they receive their deepest meaning only from the prior relationship of the creator to humankind.\(^{116}\)

It also means that human beings must have some minimal similarity to God (formal nature, analogy of being) which permits the hypostatic union without confusion or mingling of natures. This


\(^{115}\)Ibid., p. 213.

\(^{116}\)Kehl, "A Portrait," p. 21; Kehl notes: "It is precisely this primacy that he sees as not wholly preserved in the transcendental theology of Maréchal and Rahner." Ibid., fn. 55.
similarity permits Revelation of God through and in creation by a "genuine self-representation on his part, a genuine unfolding of himself in the worldly stuff of nature, man and history--an event which in a supereminent sense may be called an 'appearance' or 'epiphany'."

Why did God create something he did not need? Balthasar says that the answer to this question can come only from Revelation.

The Christian response is contained in these two fundamental dogmas: that of the Trinity and that of the Incarnation. In the Trinitarian dogma God is one, good, true, and beautiful because he is essentially Love, and Love supposes the one, the other, and their unity. And if it is necessary to suppose the Other, the Word, the Son, in God, then the otherness of the creation is not a fall, a disgrace, but an image of God, even as it is not God.

And as the Son in God is the eternal icon of the Father, he can without contradiction assume in himself the image that is the creation, purify it, and make it enter into the communion of the divine life without dissolving it. . . . It is here that one must distinguish nature and grace."

Christ the Concrete "Analogia Entis"

The tension between dissimilarity/similarity finds its basis and its zenith in the hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ. "Between the divine and the created natures there is an essential abyss. It cannot be circumvented." Analogia entis is an all embracing law that

. . . according to the Fourth Lateran Council (against Joachim of Fiore), . . . must have universal application, that is, it must extend to the creatures supernatural eleva-

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tion, through grace, to divine sonship; so too, we can conclude, it must apply to that highest union between divine and created being, in the God-man himself.\textsuperscript{111}

As the ultimate union between divine and created being, "it must constitute the final proportion . . . between the two and hence must be the 'concrete analogia entis' itself." It is crucial that it not be misinterpreted in the direction of identity of natures. It is only the unity in the person of the Logos that allows attribution of qualities of one nature to the other (communicatio idiomatum). While the natures are undivided, the unity of natures is in the person, and "however close the union, they are 'unconfused', 'the properties of each remain unimpaired [sozomenes]' (DS 302).\textsuperscript{119}

**Diastasis in the Trinity: Basis for Analogy of Being**

The dissimilarity between God and creatures must be able to be maintained within the union, just as, analogously, the distance or dissimilarity of persons within the Trinity is maintained in unity of nature. In fact, it is the Trinitarian distinction of persons which grounds both the possibility of a creation and that creation's distinctness from its creator.\textsuperscript{144} Why is this? Because, the difference in persons in the Trinity is a real dis-

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., p. 221.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., p. 222.

\textsuperscript{144} In this Balthasar is following Bonaventure who "affirms that a God who is not Trinitarian would not be able to create." Bonaventure also says: "God would never have been able to generate the creature by his will, if he had not generated the Son by nature." Scola, p. 212.
tinction, not simply a formal or modalistic distinction. Each person of the Trinity has a metaphysical personal reality, and as seen in the life of Christ, personal freedom. Our human categories of person and individual are inadequate to fully grasp the nature of the real distinction within a unity of one nature, so we have to surrender to the mystery. But the reality of real distinction in God makes the real distinction between esse and essence, creator and creature possible. If there can be no real distinction in God, how can there be any in creation? If there is distinction of persons in God then will not creation reflect in an analogous way such distinction? Can or would God create anything that does not in some way reflect His essence? As pointed out earlier, God's essence is the basis for analogy of being. And the concept of analogy of being encompasses and sums up the double tension between the dissimilarity/similarity reflected in the real distinction between esse and essence, Creator and creature. The similarity is that both Creator and creature have being in a union between being and nature, esse and essence. The dissimilarity is that only God can and must "be" even without us; we need not "be." Only in God are being and essence identical.¹⁴¹ The similarity grounds the ability to know God through creation and God's Revelation by analogy, but the

dissimilarity in the analogy grounds God's incomprehensibility even in Revelation itself.\textsuperscript{112}

Revelation in Christ

The self-disclosure of the Trinity which takes place in Christ\textsuperscript{113} takes place in a totally human way and form, even while all Christ's actions are those of the Logos. The modality of Revelation in Christ's humanity is and remains itself the Revelation. It is not a sign, or a Platonic symbol of deeper spiritual reality or Revelation, it is the Revelation.\textsuperscript{114} As Balthasar says: "God, who with divine freedom, but also with divine consistency, has fashioned for himself in his creation a body through which to reveal his glory."\textsuperscript{115}

If the distance and dissimilarity between God and creature is to be maintained, the Revelation of God in Christ's humanity

\textsuperscript{112}There is the danger that these two dimensions of analogy will not both be maintained. The apophatic will swallow the cataphatic. This is the danger in the contemporary feminist disputes over God-language. When the apophatic swallows the cataphatic, human subjectivity projects itself onto God. The historical events of Revelation become merely symbolic and instrumental, and the true sacramental nature of reality is in jeopardy. For in depth analysis see, Francis Martin. "Feminist Theology: A Proposal." Communio 20 (Summer 1993)2: 334-376.

\textsuperscript{113}"For the surest thing that can be said of man is that he is not God. Thus, he must already be obedient even as God, and his human obedience unto death must be the epiphany of a divine—that is, a trinitarian—obedience. In the Son of Man there appears not God alone; necessarily, there also appears the inner-trinitarian event of his procession; there appears the triune God, who, as God, can command absolutely and obey absolutely and, as the Spirit of love, can be the unity of both." Balthasar, Glory 1, p. 479.

\textsuperscript{114}Ibid., pp. 437-441.

\textsuperscript{115}Ibid., p. 441.
cannot be identical with God in Himself. Rather, it must be a personal self-disclosure which conceals the mystery of God's essence both on the level of person and nature. There is a clear analogy here to the phenomenal experience of human self-disclosure to others, but there is also an infinitely greater difference of nature and personhood. The mystery and otherness of God are concealed in Christ's humanity. God's greatest possible manifestation of Himself in Christ remains an ineffable and mysterious concealment.

It is manifestness because here God is explained to man by no means other than himself . . . by his own being and his own life. What is most familiar to man is suddenly turned for him into a word and a teaching about God: how could he not understand! But it is concealment because the translation of God's absolutely unique, absolute, and infinite Being into the ever more dissimilar, almost arbitrary and hopelessly relativised reality of one individual man in the crowd from the outset appears to be an undertaking condemned to failure. 

Of course, since man has become the language of God's self-disclosure, "man is disclosed along with God." A key point here is that God (grace) does not use humanness (nature) in an extrinsic way, but a totally immanent way. In a way which does not destroy nature or human freedom, but brings it to perfection by elevating it to a participation in divine life which it had no right to and could not achieve on its own. God is able to disclose both Himself and man simultaneously while maintaining the integrity of each, precisely because God is the fullness of that

\[\text{\textsuperscript{16}}\text{Ibid., p. 457.}\]
Being, of which man is an existent. Human nature and human freedom are enfolded within God's gift of Himself in grace and within God's infinite freedom without being absorbed by it, because it is precisely that grace and freedom which make human being and freedom possible.

The reality of God's concealment in Revelation is seen by Balthasar as the apophatic nature of revelation contained within the cataphatic. The incomprehensible dissimilar is contained within the knowable similar. While the "basic form of 'ever-greater dissimilarity however great the similarity' (in tanta similitudine major dissimilitudo, Dz 432) is irrevocable," it does not have to mean that "God's Being remains infinitely hidden and unfathomable over and beyond all analogous utterances about him . . . ." It can mean that "God 'appears unreservedly and, therefore, even in his ever-greater incomprehensibility really comes into the foreground and into the form that appears.' In other words, God's incomprehensibility is a positive and integral dimension of Revelation which takes place by the modality of a self-emptying love within a human "existence determined by sin,

\[117\] Ibid., p. 459.

\[118\] Balthasar notes in TD III, p. 220, fn. 51, in reference to E. Przywara, that this text from the Fourth Lateran Council "is found in an altered form in the new edition of Denzinger. What he [Przywara] read was this: 'Inter Creatorem et creaturam non potest tanta similitudo notari, quin inter eos maior sit dissimilitudo notanda.' The tanta on which Przywara laid such stress ('in tanta similitudine maior dissimilitudo': however great the similarity--even by supernatural agency--the dissimilarity is even greater') is no longer there in DS 806."
corrupted by death and alienated from God." In fact, it is precisely the quality of God's kenotic love which makes God incomprehensible to us. Despite the real grasp of God we will be given in the beatific vision God's incomprehensibility will remain.

It would be ridiculous—and would run in the face of all religious experience of God—to interpret the visio facialis as a comprehensio (katalepsis) in the sense of worldly science or even philosophy: the axiom si comprehendis non est Deus is as true in heaven as on earth, only there it is transformed from the spes to the res. To see God sicuti est means precisely this. . . . the kenosis will emerge to view as what it is in reality: not as God's self-alienation . . . , but as the appearance, conditioned by the world's guilt, of the God who in himself is incomprehensible in his love for the world.151

Balthasar sees in the hypostatic union of divine and human natures the concrete analogue for the relationship between nature and grace. Nature is seen as within grace, but remaining distinct. But there is no natural bridge between the human and divine natures, or between nature and grace.151 The distance and dissimilarity of natures and persons is maintained. God has created the world and human beings to be a medium of the self-expression and self-gift of his kenotic life and love (glory) in Christ even while giving that medium true freedom. It is precisely through the freedom given that God will express and reveal His infinite freedom to love kenotically, and offer us the

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149 Ibid., pp. 461-462.
150 Ibid., p. 462.
151 Ibid., p. 442-443.
opportunity to participate in God's infinite freedom so as to bring our own freedom to a perfect fulfillment it could not achieve by its own self-perfection. The form of God's revelation in concealment reflects

. . . a threefold tension: (1) the inner-worldly tension between the manifestness of the body and the hiddenness of the spirit; (2) the tension, rooted in creation, between the cosmos (as image and expression of a free God who in no way is compelled to create) and God himself; and (3) the tension, rooted in the order of grace and redemption, between the sinner who has turned away from God and the God who reveals himself as redeemer in the concealment of the Cross.  

Analogy of Being and Barth's Analogy of Faith

Balthasar's stress on dissimilarity becomes more understandable if we realize that he is in dialogue with Barth, who after moving beyond total opposition between God's nature and human nature (pure dialectics), took the position that "analogy of faith" was first of all God's action on man's being; it was an action taken by God in creating and redeeming us.  

The only way to describe the action taken by God is through the concept of analogy, but it was not a similarity in being as far as Barth was concerned. Barth's formulation of analogy was as follows:

In man's profession of faith, God's Word becomes man's thought and man's word. The dissimilarity is total, but there is not a total strangeness between them. The human counterpart of the divine prototype is a real counterpart.  

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131 Ibid., p. 441.

132 Balthasar traces this evolution in the section of his work on Barth entitled, "The Shift to Analogy," pp. 73-100.

133 Ibid., p. 95, citing Zwischen den Zeiten 1: 254.
Secondly, for Barth, "Creation's likeness to God is a one-way street. It is fashioned from above by the Word, which lays hold of creation. It is the action of God upon creation." Analogy of faith is grounded not in similarity of being but in the fact that God has acted on creation in Revelation in such a way as to establish communion between God and man, which communion cannot be due to some law of nature. The truth communicated about God by God in human terms and concepts is present only because God has sovereignly chosen to "make our truth an expression of his truth." Balthasar, while also stressing God's dissimilarity retains the positivity of the created order as required by the very nature of God's creative act and the fact of the Incarnation. For Balthasar there must be commonality between God and creation for sin and redemption, love and communion to be possible. Balthasar agrees with Barth that in the concrete order of salvation, where man is a sinner Barth's form of analogy is the "final form" of the relationship intended by God from the beginning. But Balthasar insists "that in this relationship the presupposed relationship of creation is permanently elevated and brought to its perfection." *

**Analogy of Being and "Pure Nature"**

Looking at the dissimilarity from the human viewpoint, the distance between God and creature cannot be preserved effectively by a concept of "pure nature." This concept "is probably the

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*Ibid., pp. 95-96.

price that had to be paid to rationalism" in its attempts to defend the gratuity of grace and protect "the concept of nature from Protestant subversion." The formal concept of nature (analogy of being) reveals that "everything touched by grace retains its natural side: grace is always in a nature and for a nature." As a matter of actual fact human nature as created "has only one end, a supernatural one." There is no such thing as "pure nature" in the real world. Consequently, the only thing one can do is respect the mystery of grace given to that real nature which actually exists and explore it reverently. The realm of nature cannot be given precise and clear definition. "Its lower limit will be the formal concept of nature . . . . Nature fundamentally is creation as such; in terms of the hearer of Revelation . . . , it is the conscious, free subject."  

In brief, Balthasar believes with de Lubac that the concept of "pure nature" is not a useful theological concept. Balthasar contends that a "formal concept of nature" which is the "analogy of being" is the best way to deal with the distance or dissimilarity of God's being from that of the creature. God's freedom is protected in the act of creating a creature whom he desires and intends to give a share in the life of the Trinity, but within

137 Ibid., p. 233.
138 Ibid., p. 232.
139 Ibid., p. 235.
the context of a drama of infinite freedom and the finite freedom of the human subject.

Balthasar respects the meaning of *Humani Generis* with respect to the necessity of a two-fold gratuity. There is a "two-fold gratuitous act of God inherent in the gift of creation."¹⁴⁰

When the word of God goes forth, the creature is given insight into God's purpose in creation and realizes something entirely new: God undertook that first communication of this being, whereby finite, self-aware, free beings were created, with a view to a "second" act of freedom whereby he would initiate them into the mysteries of his own life and freely fulfill the promise latent in the infinite act that realizes Being. This "second" act does not need to be temporally distinct from the first: the final cause, since it is the first and all embracing cause, includes all the articulations of the efficient cause--that is, the world's coming-to-be and God's becoming man. To that extent, any "claim" the creature might make on God (assuming the word has any meaning) would always come too late, in view of the total gift already made and the response expected, namely, total gratitude.¹⁴¹

### Extrincism or Immanentism? The Third Way of Love

From the human viewpoint, what is the positive content of the human subject's similarity to God (image and likeness or formal nature) which permits God to freely give us a share in the Trinitarian life, without that positive content requiring God to do so? Or, without God's gift of grace amounting to the self-perfection of humanity in Christ? Here we meet directly the problem of extrincism versus immanentism. It is the problem faced by essentialist or rationalistic christologies which risk extrincism. It also is the problem faced by consciousness or degree


Christologies which run the risk of immanentism. With respect to an immanentist approach through religious philosophy or human existence, Balthasar says:

Christianity is destroyed if it lets itself be reduced to transcendental presuppositions of a man's self-understanding whether in thought or in life, in knowledge or in action. So it would seem at first that the extrinsic and historical approach of recent apologetics must be the only other way.

Is there then no way between the Scylla of extrincism and the Charybdis of immanentism?\(^{11}\)

Balthasar suggests that there are two approaches which do avoid these polarities, the personalist and the aesthetic "form." These two approaches converge into one, to form Balthasar's "Third Way of Love," which is the title to Chapter III of Love Alone. In Love Alone, Balthasar sketches the basic pattern of his seven volume work, The Glory of the Lord. It is, he says,

\[\ldots\text{a theological aesthetic in the dual sense of a study of perception, and a study of the objective self-expression of divine glory; it will try to demonstrate that this theological approach, far from being a dispensable theological by-road, is in fact the one possible approach to the heart of theology---the cosmic world-historical approach, and the path of anthropological verification, being secondary aspects, complementary to it.}\]

Consequently 'aesthetics' has for us a purely theological sense: the perception in faith of the self-authenticating glory of God's utterly free gift of love.\(^{12}\)

Balthasar is using 'aesthetic' in a very precise theological way. He is not using it

\[\ldots\text{in the subjective sense which the new theory of beautiful form, characteristically called aesthetics (i.e., science of perception), acquired in the eighteenth century....For when that term began to be used for referring to a}\]

\(^{11}\text{Balthasar, Love Alone, p. 43.}\)

\(^{12}\text{Ibid., pp. 8-9.}\)
theory of beautiful form, it shifted the meaning from the form itself to a particular mode of perceiving: the human subject achieves a temporary harmony with the perceived object by endowing it with its own interiority. 

For Balthasar, Kenotic Love, the pure act of God's Being, is perceived in its appearance in Christ in the "form" of beauty or glory. The beauty of the Trinity's kenotic love is objectively present in the person, Cross and Resurrection of Christ, not in our faith perception of them. Our faith perception receives what is actually present in them. "Beauty, as a transcendental quality belongs to Being itself and is, indeed, its primary manifestation." For him the ontological culminates in the theological. The transcendental properties of created being, more precisely personal being, are the means the Trinity uses to reveal itself as Kenotic Love in Christ. However, the analogy of being must be preserved so that the transcendental attributes which are the medium of Revelation are not simply identified with the fullness of Love, beauty, goodness and truth found in the Trinity. Beauty is the form of Love's appearing in Christ, the archetypal of human being and icon of God's personal Being.

Being itself here unveils its final countenance, which for us receives the name of trinitarian love; only with this final mystery does light fall at last on that other mystery: Why there is Being at all and why it enters our horizon as light and truth and goodness and beauty.

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145 Ibid., p. 387.
146 Glory I, p. 158.
Balthasar views the anthropological approach to the justification of the demands of faith as methodologically in error: the framework of God's message to man in Christ cannot be tied to the world in general, nor to man in particular; God's message is theological, or better theo-pragmatic. It is an act of God on man; an act done for and on behalf of man--and only then to man, and in him. It is of this act that we must say: it is credible only as love--and here we mean God's own love, the manifestation of which is the manifestation of the glory of God.

Christian self-understanding (and so theology) is found neither in a wisdom superior to that of the world's religions, based on divine information . . . ; nor on the definitive fulfillment of man as a personal and social being through the realization of the effects of revelation and redemption . . . ; but solely in the self-glorification of divine love. . . .

Being as co-extensive with love

The identification of Being and Love as co-extensive is uncommon and requires some explication. It is grounded, as was Balthasar's view on nature and grace, in the persons and love of the Trinity as revealed in Christ, culminating in His Cross and Resurrection. Personal being, human or divine, in its self-possession, possesses the truth of its personal being in complete freedom of choice of self-expression. Personal being is possessed only in relation to other persons, but in the freedom of its own truth. In human terms this means language is an integral part of human being and relationships. The freely chosen self-expression or self-gift of another in love can only be received as "wholly-

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16 Balthasar, *Love Alone*, pp. 7-8; the immanent aspect of how human being and speech can be a revelation of both the personal being of God and the ultimate reality of created being as love is explicated in "God Speaks as Man," in *Explorations in Theology I: The Word Made Flesh*, pp. 80-93.

other". Applied to God's love in Christ: "A love so boundless . . . undreamed of by man or the world, can only be perceived and received as the Wholly Other." That Being and Love are co-extensive is based strictly on the theological reality of the Incarnation, Cross, and Resurrection of Christ, and the revelation of the Trinitarian kenotic love contained therein.

And so it is not the ascent of religious man to the absolute One but rather the descent of the trinitarian God of love to man that is the departure point of the theology of von Balthasar. The corresponding attitude in man to this event is the (Marian) attitude of disponibilitas, the (Ignatian) attitude of indifferencia.

The mysterium paschale is the central redemptive reality that reveals that kenotic love is the pure act of God's intrapersonal Being, and that therefore all being is co-extensive with love. In the light of this love the full reality of the nature of all being, epitomized in personal being, is revealed. Individual existents in their individual acts of esse are participations in the pure and full act of Personal Being, who is love. The idea of human beings as the "image and likeness" of God is seen in its

116Ibid., p. 485.
117Balthasar discusses in some detail the idea of "image and likeness" in TD II, pp. 316-334; this discussion is an "Excursus" in the context of "grace" and infinite and finite freedom, pp. 312-16. In essence, finite freedom is sustained continuously by infinite freedom and through grace is offered the only way human finite freedom can transcend and realize itself. That is, by union with infinite freedom in Christ.
full ontological reality. The nature and essence of human being and personal freedom, grounded in the infinite freedom of inter-Trinitarian kenotic love, finds its fullest expression in Christ's love. "The absolute Thou that meets man, says von Balthasar, is not a Someone who happens to have the property of love but rather is the One who is constituted as such by love. The trinitarian, personal process is love. And this is true neither as an abstraction nor as a collective but as something inconceivably personal: the one God (Father) sends me (us) his 'only Son' in order to fill me (us) with his Holy Spirit of love. In response to such an event the created person can find not even a half-way or moderately credible answer based on his own power. Even if the person is struck to the core . . . he can offer nothing in return. The answer can only be to let God be God in the person, to keep for God all space which he has claimed for his love. 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.' The answer made possible by grace can therefore only be the greatest possible disponibility . . . This is not something merely negative, a resigned lassitude—because one has nothing to offer of one's own, as if one could give God permission to take what he wants and needs on one's own power. Rather it is something positive; it is a generous indifference, which is indistinguishable from the highest form of joy. It surrenders everything, almost as if one were possessed, gladly doing whatever the divine majesty might demand simply because that is its own gracious will."[17]

"Openness" of human nature as the human basis for grace

As this passage makes clear "indifference" is one's positive and free identification of God's will to good with one's own, out of a desire to be, in Christ, one with God's love. One's own freedom to love kenotically is perfected only through free but obedient union with and surrender to God's infinite freedom. The total dependence of human freedom's fulfillment on surrender to

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love could not be clearer. Jesus is the one who reveals that the interpersonal infinite freedom of the persons of the Trinity is expressed in the obedience and surrender of the Son to the Father, in the love of the Holy Spirit. This "indifferent and loving obedience" of the Son "is the foundational act of Jesus Christ's whole existence."\textsuperscript{113} And this is precisely because he is living out as a man, the immanent life of the Trinitarian love in the economic order. There is a simultaneous revelation of the nature of divine and human freedom, and their compatibility.

With respect to the personalist dimension of the appearance of personal Being he says:

No I has the possibility or the right to master intellectually the Thou who encounters him in his own freedom, nor can he understand or deduce his attitude prior to their meeting. For love granted to me can only be "understood" as a miracle; I can never account for it, either empirically or transcendentally--not even from a knowledge of our common human 'nature'. A Thou meets me as an Other.\textsuperscript{114}

Love and beauty

But how can the love of another even on the human level be perceived? How can it manifest itself as a whole to us? As previously pointed out 'aesthetics' is a theological concept, which, building on the philosophical idea of aesthetics as seeing the form of objective beauty, is the "perception in faith of the

\textsuperscript{113}Ibid., pp. 486-87.

\textsuperscript{114}Ibid., p. 44; in fn. 1 Balthasar explains "understood": "The moment I think that I have understood the love of another person for me--for instance, on the basis of laws of human nature or because of something in me--then this love is radically misused and inadequate, and there is no possibility of a response. True love is always incomprehensible, and only so is it gratuitous."
self-authenticating glory of God’s utterly free gift of love.” (my emphasis) How does it appear to us except as something beautiful, wonderful and glorious?

... just as in love I encounter the other as the other in all his freedom, and am confronted by something which I cannot dominate in any sense, so in the aesthetic sphere, it is impossible to attribute the form which presents itself to a fiction of my imagination. In both cases the ‘understanding’ of that which reveals itself cannot be subsumed under categories of knowledge which imply control. Neither love in the freedom of its gratuitousness, nor beauty, since it is disinterested, are ‘products’--least of all of some person’s need.111

The personalist and aesthetic dimensions of Being converge even in nature where

eros is the chosen place of beauty. The object we love ... always appears wonderful and glorious to us ... The two related poles were surpassed in Revelation where the divine Logos descends to manifest and interpret himself as love, as agape, and therein as the Glory.111

The positive content of the human, because of the free nature of personal love and the form of its self-presentation, cannot anticipate or derive from itself by way of existential need or self-perfection, the gift of God’s love in Christ. The positive content of the human is simply its openness to the totally free act of God’s love.119 Or, as developed above, its disponibility, or Ignatian indifference. The problem of extrinsicism or immanentism (or Transcendence and immanence) cannot be solved on the purely ontological level, it must be solved on the

111 Ibid., p. 45.
119 Ibid.
interpersonal level in the way that free persons love and receive love. The ontological difference between God's being and our being must remain, but can be bridged by the similarity of both being personal intelligent spiritual beings capable of kenotic love. Gratuity is founded both in the dissimilarity of Creator and creature by nature or being, and in the nature of interpersonal love or self-gift and the manner of its presentation. Additionally, of course, in the case of grace, God must provide the gift of faith by grace which enables the gift of God's love in Christ to be perceived and received.

*Potentia obedientialis*

The compatibility of divine and human freedom in the person of Christ is the foundation for the theological and philosophical position of the created spirit as receptivity. If human nature receives in Christ union with the divine nature, and that reflects the reality of Christ's eternally receiving himself from the Father in complete distinction of person and freedom, then an ontology of receptivity is grounded in the Trinity itself. This ontology of receptivity is then worked out philosophically in terms of the phenomenon of the human "thou" awakening the "I" in another. "Truth" is a transcendental attribute of the "being" which is received in the infant's early encounter with its mother. Both with respect to the "truth" which is an attribute of created being and of Revelation which uses created being as its medium, human beings are in a posture of openness, disposibility, or obedience. We have touched on this earlier with respect to the
positive content of human nature to the reception of grace. This is Balthasar's interpretation of potentia obedientalis:

The infinitely open and unfinished character of truth, whose essence is to be constantly open to something greater, clearly appears to the creature only when it accepts in its depth its created condition, adopting without reservation the attitude of obedience and availability (potentia obedientalis) in the face of divine truth.

This receptivity is not a pure passivity but "rather a capacity whereby I allow another to dwell within me." The experience of the fullness of being and freedom cannot come autonomously but only in relationship to the ultimate other. This reflects the reality that we initially receive our primal experience of our "I" and possess our "I" in the fullness of freedom only in relationship to a "thou." Only God can be a self-sufficient being and experience Himself as such. Receiving into ourselves the "being" of others is not an impoverishment but an enrichment. However, it depends on our consent.

In other words: to a greater power of self-determination, there corresponds a greater possibility and capacity to allow oneself to be determined by another. The passivity which must then be admitted depends on the deepest freedom of the spirit which accepts, in all the freedom of love, to be freely determined in love.

It is important to note that potentia obedientalis, though it is not pure passivity, is also not a natural power or a disposition of the human subject to attain God or even receive God's Revela-

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tion. It is an ontological receptivity which must be empowered by God's grace. I will return to this later.

In contrast to the transcendental Thomist approach, the ontological character of receptivity moves the emphasis from the knowing subject to the reception of being, to being "informed" rather than co-constituting.

Balthasar situates his position on knowing, more specifically on the respective places of the subject and the object, between naïve realism and the transcendental critique of knowledge. Human subjectivity is dependent on the world of objects and on the world of the other, by whose revelation it awakens to the world and to itself. Through this dependency on the other, human subjectivity is indissolubly tied to the principle of intersubjectivity, which for Balthasar is a privileged experience.\[^{12}\]

The primal experience between mother and child can only be understood as a response of love to love, a response of an "I" to a "thou." It cannot be reduced to the "I." This experience cannot be satisfactorily explained on the basis of the 'formal structure' of the human spirit, from 'sensible impressions' which would trigger a constitutive process of categories, which itself would be ordained to a dynamism affirming 'being-in-general' and an objectification or thematization of beings, concretely given.\[^{13}\]

\textit{Desiderium naturale visionis; }"freedom in quest of Freedom"

For Balthasar, "esse" is in the first place "the mystery of the openness of finite freedom to infinite freedom."\[^{14}\] In the primal experience of being, there are four differences which are

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\[^{12}\]Ibid., p. 110.

\[^{13}\]Ibid., p. 111.

part of the experience which can be isolated on reflection. The difference between "I" and "thou," the difference between an existent "being" and the "act of being" (Being) shared in common with other beings, the consequent difference between essence and existence, and finally, the difference between the act of being (esse) and the "subsistent freedom of the absolute being (Sein), which is God' (H III, 1, 954-55). It is divine freedom which explains the infinity of "esse's" participations and particularly explains the individual finite experience of freedom. It is the experience of the autonomy of "esse" which points back to an infinite freedom. One's consciousness of the "givenness," finitude, and contingency of one's "esse" grounds the desire for "esse" as an object of the intellect and will. Balthasar sees this consciousness as the real basis for intimacy with God.

It is precisely here that a new kind of intimacy of God in the creature becomes clear, an intimacy which is only made possible by the distinction between God and esse. Allowing natures to participate in reality—God's most proper prerogative—must be seen positively as posited and determined by God's omnipotent freedom and therefore are grounded in the unique love of God. It is precisely when the creature feels itself to be separate in being from God that it knows itself to be the most immediate object of God's love and concern; and it is precisely when its essential finitude shows it to be something quite different from God that it knows that, as a real being, it has had bestowed upon it that most extravagant gift—participation in the real being of God.

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\[\text{iii}\] Bieler, p. 138-139.

Balthasar interprets personal finite freedom as the desiderium naturale visionis, "freedom in quest of Freedom." But, he does not include a supernatural element in that desire. He points to St. Thomas and Henri de Lubac as the formulators of "the paradox of man."

Just as man is referred to the free openness of another man in order to be himself, so too, we can simply say, he (he, that is, who is directed and oriented towards the absolutes of the True and the Good) is also referred to the free openness of God, without being able to postulate it on his own. This paradox precedes all discussion on the subject of the "supernatural existential," even if and whatever may be the truth of the fact that nature was created in view of the Supernatural, in view of the incarnation of God; even if and whatever may be the truth of the fact that the paradox of nature finds its ultimate explication only owing to the supernatural order (to which there can thus also belong something like a "supernatural existential"). But the paradox remains inscribed in the original fact of the consciousness of self, insofar as consciousness knows itself at the same time as given, and, through this, as an image. This is why de Lubac rightly emphasizes that in the natural desiderium visionis, in the aspiration to know God as he is in himself, there is no need to have any supernatural element; this can (and should) be affirmed wholly independent of the fact that God has for all time already made something of his intimacy known, and desires to make men capable of understanding it.\textsuperscript{111}

Balthasar will go no further than allowing the human spirit in its created freedom to have a desire for Infinite Freedom, which it has no potential to satisfy or even to receive, without grace, from within itself. It has no capacity to "establish a 'personal' relation with God" and it knows from its own freedom that God who is infinitely free must take the initiative.\textsuperscript{111}


\textsuperscript{111}Ibid., p. 265.
Potentia obedientalis and "supernatural existential"

We have to return now to the question of the potentia obedientalis. The human spirit in its finite freedom desires Infinite Freedom, but does it have a "natural disposition" to receive what it desires and has been created to have? Previously we have seen that Balthasar viewed the potentia obedientalis as an openness, a disponibilty, a readiness to receive, an "attitude of obedience and availability." But it is quite clear that if the term is to be used theologically it must be seen as a gift of God's grace which elevates the natural ontological receptivity of the human spirit. He says:

But it is precisely this potency of being called (as in the case between human subjects) that man does not at all possess in the face of the divine call. If he is in spite of everything capable of perceiving and responding to the call of God—a call which issues from no natural created order, but from the depths of the eternal and the Absolute—then this capacity must be conferred on him at the same time as the call; only the divine word of grace confers on him the grace of response. We can in this case speak of obediential potency, but we must remain conscious that the transnatural potency to which we refer in the word potentia is absolutely not the creature's own potency . . . , but rather a potency belonging solely to the Creator. The power of God is so great that his creature will obey him even when it finds in its own being neither the disposition, nor the tendency, nor the possibility for such obedience.\textsuperscript{114}

Here Balthasar is distinguishing himself from Rahner, whom he sees as tending to transform obediential potency and the natural desire for God by the supernatural existential into the creature's natural disposition to receive God's offer of Himself.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., p. 266, citing Balthasar, "L'Accès à Dieu," Mysterium Salutis V(French ed.), p. 48.
Rahner has moved everything back to the act of creation, from the creature’s side as well as God’s. Balthasar speaks directly to the issue:

Obediential potency designates in philosophy a recognized and integral availability (relativity), ontic and noetic, of the creature towards the principium et finis. But it does not designate the (theological) anticipation of the (potential) Word and of the (real) silence of God. The creature does not hear a silence of God, unless it is with the "supernatural" ears of faith (or unbelief) before the God of grace (or of anger). If we do not maintain this limit, the critique of Barth on the "point of anchorage" (Anknüpfungspunkte) can be justified. 139

Balthasar is insisting that God’s gift of Himself in Revelation and the grace to receive that gift are intrinsically connected and cannot be separated because of their nature as personal call from an infinite God. The grace to receive Revelation is an integral constituent of the human historical reality in which it is imbedded. In Christ, God truly enters human history and grace becomes an integral part of that history in a way that it had not been. The analogy of being allows the creature to have only the minimum necessary for a freely chosen relation with God if God so gives Himself. This minimum is the creature’s dialogical nature and its desire for and openness to Infinite Freedom. The only "supernatural existential" that Balthasar will allow is on God’s side. God’s freely issues a call to the human spirit which if accepted, kindles in that open but powerless spirit, not a desire

which is already there, but a capacity to listen and freely respond to the personal invitation."

Christ the concrete measure of anthropology: reversal of perspective

Balthasar's Christocentric approach to the issues of nature and grace by way of the Christological "analogy of being" make Christ the concrete measure "between God and man, between grace and nature, between faith and reason." In doing so, he has concretized an abstract problem, and reversed the perspective or approach to it. The traditional emphasis and method was to approach the problem from an ascending perspective of the perfection or fulfillment of human nature. By considering the problem from the viewpoint of the hypostatic union of two natures in Christ, there is a reversal of perspective because Balthasar shows that it is the divine nature which takes human nature into its service of love, but by human consent. "Nature, then, is perfected by being made the vessel and expression of the divine. It gives itself over to become this expression." Thus, nature is transcended not simply by being open to its own greatest possibilities but to the possibilities of God, who takes nature

\[11\] Ibid., p. 268.

\[12\] Balthasar, "Characteristics of Christianity." The Word Made Flesh, pp. 161-180, at 177; the following discussion is based on Ouellet, pp. 273-280.

\[13\] Ibid., p. 178.
into the service of the life of the Trinity as it is lived out economically in the life of Christ.

His humanity is the expression and instrument of the divinity, and by no means is the divinity the expression and instrument of the humanity. In every respect, the humanity is fulfilled in that it sees itself, with all its upward stirrings, brought into the service of God's revelation, into the downward movement of his grace and love.\textsuperscript{134}

The human esse in its similarity within ever greater dissimilarity to God, in its desire for Infinite Freedom and its openness or receptivity to the Infinite, is that minimum condition of the possibility of God's freely choosing to take it up into the life of the Trinity. This inversion of perspective on nature and grace is thus grounded in two personal freedoms, human and divine, rather than in ontological necessity by reason of some compatibility of natures.

... the meaning of human existence receives its ultimate and unhoped for determination from the fact that it is absorbed and engaged in the service of God's engagement with the world, and thus in the service of the trinitarian exchange \textit{in Christo}.\textsuperscript{135}

Summary of Balthasar's Nature and Grace Methodology

From the above exposition of Balthasar's position on nature and grace one can see that his methodology starts from within faith with the reality of the Creator/creature distinction, the hypostatic union of divine and human natures in Christ, and the distance between the persons of the Trinity, expressed in the

\textsuperscript{134}Ibid., p. 162-63.

\textsuperscript{135}Ouellet, p. 278.
Logos becoming man and living a life of obedience and service to the Father, even to the point of ultimate abandonment on the cross. His methodology then is a descending one which follows the theological order and a truly theological concept of creation. Such an approach leads to a true metaphysics (meta-anthropology) of concrete Being in its actual transcendental attributes, rather than abstract Being. It is concrete in that he focuses on the human reality of Christ as the God-man, the fullness of Being united with contingent human being. The fullness of beauty, truth and goodness, united with and revealed in and through the human transcendentals. His philosophical positions are derived from the implications of the most fundamental doctrines of faith: Creation, Trinity, Incarnation, Redemption. In reflecting philosophically on these doctrines, his ordering theological principle is that of the Fourth Lateran Council: the dissimilarity between created and divine natures is always greater than the similarity. Or as he puts it: "Between the divine and the created natures there is an essential abyss. It cannot be circumvented." With respect to the relationship between theology and philosophy, and faith and reason, he does not first explore natural reality with the power of reason and then bring that knowledge to theology. Rather, he looks at natural reality to find there how it reveals the created basis for what God has revealed through faith, without expecting creation to demonstrate the inevitability or necessity of Revelation. Theology encompasses philosophy without

1Balthasar, TD III, p. 220.
destroying its distinctiveness. But, as pointed out earlier, the two simply point towards each other rather than merging smoothly together. His philosophical positions on the issue of nature and grace reflect his metaphysics of infinite and finite being, or better, a meta-anthropology.
CHAPTER IV
CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The Search for Foundations for Faith

In his work, *Foundational Theology: Jesus and the Church*\(^{197}\), Francis Schüssler Fiorenza contends that since the Reformation, Protestant and Catholic theology has been on a quest for the original sources of faith. In the search for the foundations of faith, three basic methods emerged: the historical-theological, the historical-critical, and the transcendental.

An Epistemology of Faith Knowing

In Chapter I, I have tried to trace this quest in terms of the search for an epistemology, or theological theory of how we know Christ, and God in Christ, in the act of faith. Assuming the historical and ontological reality of Jesus the Christ, how can he be known by us in what we call the act of faith? In this act, we claim to know the formal object of our faith, God in Christ. If we are to know God in Christ, then two things are necessary. Christ, in his personal ontological reality, must be able to be present to us in some way, and we must be able to encounter him in a personal way which is a true affirmation of his reality.

\(^{197}\)New York: Crossroad, 1984.
Without this, faith is reduced to doctrines about Christ and conceptual verification of Christ's reality through divine evidence illumined by grace, and becomes more akin to religious ideology. As we have seen, Balthasar describes the attempts to found the act of faith on rational evidence as supernatural rationalism. In the section entitled "The Nature of the Act of Faith: Seeing the Form," I discussed Balthasar’s approach to the act of faith and to theology.

**Faith Knowing, and Faith Concepts and Language**

In our knowing and affirmation of Christ's personal reality, and the reality of the Triune God in him, there must be some correspondence between the knowledge we have of Christ, and the concepts, symbols, and language used to express that knowledge. But what kind of correspondence? Do we receive the knowledge of Christ's meaning and significance from Christ through the Word and the Spirit in our experiences? Or do we, through our subjective intellectual structures, dynamically determine Christ's meaning and significance through our experience and then express it in thought, language and ritual? Is Christ's meaning and significance intrinsic to his personal reality and does it inform our consciousness in our experiences? Is our knowledge of Christ through a true encountering of Christ mediated by historical reality and the Spirit? Or, is Christ's meaning and significance something we arrive at as a prudential judgment of, and insight into, the meaning and significance of our experiences and/or philosophical anthropology? Is conversion a matter of encounter
or insight? Insight is, of course, part of any personal encounter, but there can also be insight without personal encounter.

Faith Knowing by Encounter

I think it is clear that for Balthasar the act of faith and true conversion is a matter of personal encounter of Christ through his "legible form" as presented to us by the Spirit through the Scriptures and the Church. This encounter is the foundation of divine faith, rather than any objective scientific sources or transcendental correlation. More precisely, it is through the perception of the beauty of God's kenotic love in Christ that one truly encounters Christ, and God in Christ.\footnote{Supra, p. 68 and following.}

St. Paul, in his letter to the Romans puts it this way:

[...]

Through the Word and the Spirit Christ's personal reality is present for acceptance or rejection, just as truly as his personal reality was present in Palestine. But, on some minimal level the beauty of God's love in Christ must be encountered in the act of divine faith, if any true surrender to God in Christ is made in that act. As we have seen, it is Balthasar's view that it is precisely in the encountering of God's love in Christ, that one encounters the authority of God which is the basis of divine
faith as distinguished from natural faith.\footnote{Supra, p. 68 and following.} One could, I suppose, perceive the goodness and truth in the Church's doctrine about Christ and perhaps even assent to it based on natural faith, without truly encountering the personal reality of God's love in Christ, and therefore God's authority.\footnote{See Urdanoz, p. 798: "Divine faith cannot exist as reserved to the strictly natural order, although it is possible to assent to divine and revealed truth for merely natural and human reasons, but acquired and natural faith of this kind is not formally, but only materially, divine, as would be the faith professed by a rationalist or a formal heretic." I will return to the nature of this act of faith shortly.} I say personal reality, to distinguish it from physical presence which is a different matter. As a Eucharistic community Catholics affirm not only the mediated presence of Christ through Word and Spirit but the transformed physical presence of Christ. True encounter with Christ's personal and physical reality is what we celebrate. Just as during his earthly existence, those who follow Christ most closely in discipleship know his personal reality most deeply and surely. Insight or understanding of Christ's personal reality is the fruit of faith and an entering into the life of Christ. Many who know the Scriptures and much about Christ, like the Scribes and Pharisees, may not know his personal reality as his disciples do.

Certitude in Knowing Christ

This brings us to the central epistemological question of the last three centuries. Can the human intellect know noumenal
reality with any certainty in the act of faith? As Christians, we believe we know the personal noumenal reality of Christ with the certitude of divine faith. That certitude is based on God's authority encountered in God's love in Christ, and is therefore divine faith as distinguished from a natural faith based on the intrinsic plausibility or rationality of the evidence. The human will moves the intellect in a genuine act of divine faith because of trust in God who has been encountered. Nonetheless, the affective or fiducial surrender and commitment which is based on the trustworthiness of the One encountered, has an intellectual dimension. The intellect, moved by the will, is persuaded of real truth based on the trustworthiness of God, encountered in Christ's witness of God's love. The intellectual assent is made for moral rather than strictly logical or intellectual reasons. The perception of God's authority or trustworthiness is the motive of the act of faith. Certitude flows from the judgment which recognizes God in Christ in the act of divine faith. But, that perception and judgment is a consequence of encountering the overwhelming kenotic love of God for us in Christ. If God's love is not poured out in our hearts through our encounter with Christ, how could we know God as trustworthy? How could we have certitude? Or as St. Paul points out by reverse implication in the passage quoted above, how could we hope in God if God's love had not been poured out in our hearts?
Certitude by Faith or by Reason

In emphasizing the necessity of the subjective recognition and judgment of God's love in Christ as the motive for faith, personal surrender and certitude (fides qua), there is the danger of minimizing the objective (fides quae) dimension of what it is that is believed. Of course, to recognize and judge that Christ is God through the perception of God's kenotic love in Christ is a subjective judgment of ontological truth. As discussed in the section "The Objective Nature of Christ's 'Form'," the subjective experience of faith contains a "gnosis" of "an experiencable object," an objective "super-form."

On the other hand, in emphasizing the objective dimension of what is believed there is the danger of seeking certitude about one's faith in the intrinsic rationality of what is believed rather than in the divine motive for faith, which is the encounter with God in God's love in Christ. Where certitude for faith is sought also can determine the starting point for one's theological methodology. If one is seeking certitude for one's faith in theology, one must start from below with rational evidence, with philosophical anthropology, or with some subject-bound

Balthasar uses the greek term pistis to name the choice to surrender to God, and gnosis to name the choice to perceive the objective reality of God's love in Christ. I believe that gnosis is still part of the fides qua. Balthasar's point is that the fides qua is a mediated knowing of God as formal object, as well as a personal surrender. This knowing can be formally separated from that of the fides quae, which embraces all that God teaches on his authority, but existentially no separation is possible.

Supra, p. 73 and following.
approach. If one is secure in one's faith, then one could start either from above or below and be led by faith. This is what Balthasar says St. Thomas did with philosophy; in using it before and within theology he started from below.\textsuperscript{104} The methodological danger of starting from below is that Revelation can become an extrinsic norm for theology, even for one who is secure in their faith, rather than being integrated into theology. In fact, according to Yves Congar, while St. Thomas held that "by grace, faith in us is a divine knowing, a definite communication of God's knowledge. . . . this communication is rather imperfect and the human spirit naturally desires a fuller grasp of the objects revealed."\textsuperscript{105} This fuller grasp could be sought by contemplation or mysticism or by the use of reason. But it is the use of reason alone, working from the first principles of Revelation contained in the articles of faith or the creed, which is in fact, the task of theology according to St. Thomas.\textsuperscript{105} Thus began the rational, logical, scientific construction of doctrine from revealed first principles. Congar sums up his conclusions:

\begin{quote}
. . . theology, as St. Thomas understood and practiced it, appears to us as a rational and scientific consideration of the revealed datum, striving to procure for the believing human spirit a certain understanding of the datum. It is, if you will, a scientifically elaborated copy of the faith. What objects of simple adherence the faith delivers, theology develops in a line of humanly constructed knowledge, seeking the reason for facts; in short, reconstructing and
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{103}Supra, p. 100.


\textsuperscript{105}For discussion see Congar, pp. 92-103.
elaborating in the form of human science the data received by faith from the science of God Who created all things. Thus through his spirit directed by faith, man arrives at a strictly human understanding of the mysteries, utilizing their connection or their harmony with his world of natural knowledge.\textsuperscript{106}

Balthasar points out that in fact, this is what happened to the mainstream of post-Vatican I Catholic theology.\textsuperscript{107} If one seeks certitude or foundations for faith through the historical-theological, historical-critical, or transcendental methodologies, one is seeking certitude in objective rational evidence or philosophical anthropology. Revelation becomes an extrinsic norm for human insight and is not an integral part of theology. Certitude is being sought through natural faith, and philosophy tends to take over theology and shape it according to its presuppositions. Historically, this may have happened for reasons of apologetics. But as Balthasar argues, apologetics is in methodological error in seeking to bring others to faith or to defend the faith on foundations which are not the foundation of faith. Philosophical or other rational arguments to remove obstacles to faith can only complement and support a proclamation or presentation of the faith based on the appearance of God in God's love in Christ. While the formal object of philosophy and theology are the same, philosophy can only point to God as revealed in Christ, it cannot make that Revelation necessary by an apologetics of immanence. It cannot justify God's love and grace in Christ.

\textsuperscript{106}Ibid., p. 102.

\textsuperscript{107}Supra, p. 66 and following.
Conversion must come by encounter with that love in Christ and not by rational insight. Hence, the title of Balthasar's book *Love Alone*. The kind of foundationalism which Balthasar has criticized has also been severely critiqued by the hermeneutical theologians, particularly Francis Schüssler Fiorenza.

Form and Content, and Analogy of Being

In emphasizing that the certitude of the act of faith is based on God's authority as perceived in the love of God in Christ, Balthasar stresses the necessity to maintain in the hypostatic union, the unity between the life-form (Christ's human life) and the content (God's self-disclosure). God as formal object, while differing in an ever greater way from his 'legible form' in Christ, was in fact present in Christ in the person of the Word, and was expressed and experienced as such.

It is important in applying the analogy of being to the knowledge of God disclosed in Christ, that the analogical difference not be understood in a way that contradicts or empties the similarity of its real content. This similarity is the only basis we have for a truly historical Revelation of God in and through the person of Christ. Without it the Incarnation becomes a charade, an acting as if, which can only point to or be a sign of God's reality and presence in Christ. Then Revelation must occur directly to the human consciousness by an illumination which uses the person of Jesus as the instrument stimulating the insight. The *via negativa* must not be allowed to diminish the true knowl-
edge of God available through the *via positiva*. Rather, as Balthasar points out God's incomprehensibility is present in the very knowledge we have of God in his love in Christ. God as knowable is incomprehensible, and always will be even in the beatific vision. In other words, the difference is a positive difference which emphasizes that whatever human perfection is the vehicle for God's self-disclosure and our encounter and knowledge of him in Christ, the fullness of this perfection in God is ever greater, not simply by degrees, but by God's unlimited, uncreated nature.

The unity of form and content is essential to "the subjective unity of faith and vision in the Christian life" which would be "incomprehensible if it could not be elucidated in terms of a unity in the objective revelation which demands and conditions it." God is truly present and encountered in Christ's life-form, both by the Apostles and us. I believe we can say that God's love in Christ has an objective ontological reality which, while distinct from God in himself, truly is God's presence and can be perceived and therefore experienced in Christ's "superform." It is ontological truth (*veritas in essendo*), identical with reality, by which God, the formal object of the act of divine faith, reveals himself to be encountered by us. It is not simply logical truth (*veritas in cognoscendo*), identical with intellectual knowledge, or moral truth (*veritas in dicendo*) which

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311 Supra, p. 81 and following.
is the conformity of proposition to known truth. We cannot separate the reality of God as formal object of faith from God's love in Christ, except by abstraction. It is, of course, subject to the analogy of being. We do not experience God as he is in himself, but as he expresses himself in Christ. This is why Balthasar emphasizes that an experience of and knowing of God is part of the act of divine faith.

As previously discussed, the transcendentalist-personalist way of reading revelation does not adequately maintain the unity of form and content. As Balthasar points out, it builds on the Augustinian-Neo-platonic tradition and is a form of Augustinian illuminism. Rather than the Logos, who is the light of Being, shining forth on the face of Christ in a way that informs and illuminates the human consciousness he shines directly into the human spirit in a way that the intellect receives the Word "as a kind of grace and revelation . . . ." Historical facts simply become part of the "final dynamism of cognition." The transition of faith from philosophy to theology is made by translating "the general philosophical theory of knowledge into the Christian Trinitarian mode. . . ." Christ is seen "as the redeeming illuminator of the mind and revealer of the Father."
Knowledge of God in Christ Through Analogy

Analogy in St. Thomas Aquinas

Augustine and the Fathers, given their Neoplatonic view of reality, had no need of an explicit doctrine of analogy, since intellectual knowledge does not arise from the sensible world.\footnote{111} Such a Neoplatonic view of created reality and our knowledge of it, obviously supported a more subjective, mystical approach to knowledge of Revelation.

Aquinas, on the other hand, develops and uses analogy more than any previous theologian.\footnote{113} Since the sensible world, through abstraction and reason, did provide a basis for knowledge of the created world, the question now is what is the relationship between "being" and God; and, knowledge of "being" and God through reason, and knowledge of God and "being" through faith? Analogy became the key to the relationship or correspondence between these realities. Analogy as a concept speaks to the nature of the relationship between the perfections in two or more subjects.\footnote{114} But, the debate quickly moved to whether there can be real correspondence between created "being" and God, or put


\footnote{113}{Ibid.}

\footnote{114}{Ibid. "Analogy, a technical, philosophical, and theological term, commonly designates a kind of predication midway between univocation and equivocation. Thus it denotes a perfection (the 'analogon') that, though found similar in two or more subjects called 'analogates,' is neither simply the same nor simply different."}
differently do we have real or true knowledge of God by reason through analogy? Or, can we know God only through faith? Or, is analogy the basis of knowledge both by faith and by reason? If so, what kind of knowledge do we have through analogy?

Aquinas' view was that the relationship between created "being" and God was neither univocal nor equivocal, and therefore the perfections in each were "partly the same, partly different." "A consequence of this is that there is no single clear meaning for an analogous predicate (ST la, 13.5 ad 1)." Where a perfection is truly found in both analogates, it is intrinsic, where imposed on one by the mind, it is extrinsic.115 Created "being" and God are related by causality and participation. Perfections in creatures are present by reason of God as exemplary cause and by reason of participation in being.

After the existence of God is known and His nature as pure act is apprehended, then His causal eminence in regard to His creatures is seen to consist in this, that He is being, goodness, and other similar perfections by His essence and therefore infinitely; whereas creatures both are and are what they are by participation (ST la, 14.6, 25.2 ad 2, 45.5, 57.2, 79.4, 93.2 ad 1 and 4; In Dion de div. nom. 1.3, 2.4). Inasmuch as the being-by-essence is simple and self-identical, the analogy of participation in being is necessarily an intrinsic analogy. Hence, whatever is predicated of God according to this analogy is truly a knowledge of God, even though it remains a knowledge of Him through His creatures. Because God is the cause of the world through intellect and will (ST la, 44.3), He is the exemplar of all things; and created things are related to Him as images (ST la, 3.3 ad 2, 35.1 ad 1, 93.1; In 1 Cor. 11.10, as representations (ST la, 45.7), and as similar to Him (De pot. 7.7 ad 4 in contrarium; ST la, 4.3 ad 4). At the same time, created beings as individuals are seen to be related to each other

115 Ibid., p. 463.
as diverse participants in the One Being that is being by essence. 316

Aquinas identified three kinds of correspondence by analogy: attributive, metaphorical, and proportional. Attributive and metaphorical analogies give knowledge of God's dynamic perfections. Proportional (and also attributive) give knowledge about God's nature as it is in itself. Proportional analogies predicate a perfection "properly and intrinsically of each analogate." 317 God's love in Christ's human presence and actions, through which God reveals his presence in Christ, would seem to be such an analogy. But the reality of the unity of form and content in the hypostatic union makes this a unique situation, in that the fullness of personal being is now united with concrete human being in the person of the Word. Christ is not simply any human being expressing God's love, but is God loving us in Christ. Christ as concrete analogy is unique. The doctrine of the Incarnation affirms that created nature in a human being, as "image and likeness" of God, permits God to unite himself to it in the person of the Word. Is also permits Christ to live out the immanent life of the Trinity economically, in a way that is truly expressive and self-disclosive of both the divine and human natures. Nothing else in creation can be as perfect an analogy because nothing else is united to God hypostatically. It is as

316 Ibid., p. 465.

univocal analogy as is possible given the distinction between
Creator and creature, and the necessity that God in himself be
ever greater and dissimilar than any analogical similarity.

The transcendentals, unity, beauty, goodness, and truth,
include a mode of participation and "are the concern of both
natural theology and revealed theology." The only way we can know
the meaning of affirmative statements about God based on the
perfections of creatures or on Revelation is by analogy. But
the question remains as to what kind of knowledge of God we can
have through analogy, and particularly of God in Christ, the
concrete analogy. St. Thomas held to the view that in addition to
knowledge of God possible by negative affirmations (via negat-
iva), we could have a positive knowledge of God by analogies (via
positiva). For example, if we say that God is wise, or good,
the analogy describes something in God that is "partly the same"
as it is in created reality. "... St. Thomas insists that when
affirmative predicates are predicated of God, they are predicated
of the divine nature or substance." On the other hand since
God as an object of our intellect in this life can be known only
imperfectly through created reality, our concepts and words share

311 Klubertanz, p. 465.

319 The following discussion is based primarily on Frederick
Philosophy, Part II. Albert the Great to Duns Scotus. Garden City,
V: God's Nature."

318 Ibid., p. 70.
in that imperfection. Our knowledge is real but imperfect, and so our concepts and terms must be vague and uncertain in meaning. They cannot be fully univocal, but neither are they equivocal. But there is still the difficulty of the positive content of the concept as applied to God. Is the similarity purely logical (veritas in cognoscendo) or is it ontological (veritas in essendo)? If we abstract the essence of "wise" or "intelligent" or "loving" and apply it to God, is that not a univocal application? It was for this reason that Duns Scotus later insisted that we can form univocal concepts applicable to both God and creatures, though there is no univocity in the real order in respect of God and creatures. Of course, this view of Scotus depends on a particular definition of univocal which ignores the distinction between finite and infinite perfection. This conclusion by Scotus would pull the ontological rug out from under analogy and make it into a purely logical concept. Therefore, the concepts and words used of God would yield no real knowledge of God's reality in Himself.

In fact, St. Thomas' epistemology would seem at first sight to be at odds with his natural theology of analogy. For Thomas held that the active and passive intellect depended on phantasm

\[322\] Ibid., p. 77-78.

\[323\] This discussion is based primarily on Copleston, *Mediaeval Philosophy, Part II*, Chapter Thirty-eight, "St. Thomas Aquinas VIII: Knowledge."
or sensory images for abstraction of universals, and ultimately for all knowledge of created reality or of God, apart from revelation or mysticism. If this is the case, how could the intellect have any real knowledge of immaterial substances, particularly God? Can there be any metaphysical knowledge or any knowledge which transcends the senses? St. Thomas answer is based on the fact that intellect as such is the faculty of apprehending being, and has as its primary object the apprehension of being. The active power of the intellect is the key to his position. For it enables the intellect to abstract what is universal in all particular reality, that is first of all "being" and secondarily essence. Implicit in this operation is cognition of the relation of immaterial being to sensible being. Sensitive cognition is the material cause of intellectual cognition which extends beyond material being. Therefore the intellect can know immaterial objects but only by analogy.31 With respect to whether the positive content of the analogy must be either univocal (Scotus) or equivocal, St. Thomas answers neither. Copleston sums up his views this way:

To demand that the content of analogical ideas should be perfectly clear and expressible, so that they could be understood perfectly in terms of human experience, would be to misunderstand altogether the nature of analogy. St. Thomas was no rationalist, though he allowed that we can attain to aliqualis cognito Dei. The infinity of the object, God, means that the finite human mind can attain no adequate and perfect idea of God's nature; but it does not mean that

31Ibid., p. 113-14.
it cannot attain an imperfect and inadequate notion of God's nature.  

Revelation can extend our knowledge of God without any contradiction between theology and philosophy, as when we know by faith that God is triune.

Analogy and Knowledge of God in the Franciscan School

An indication that Aquinas' insights, though profound and helpful, were not the final solution was the fact that the Franciscan school, especially St. Bonaventure, maintained the spirit of Augustine in the more mystical orientation of Bonaventure's doctrine. With respect to faith and reason, simply put St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas differed over whether reason had its own intrinsic light or needed the light of faith to attain any true knowledge, at least with respect to transcendent realities. Their differing views of Aristotle followed on this difference. For St. Thomas, theology, while rooted in Revelation and grace, and developing under God's providence, "is strictly a rational construction." For St. Bonaventure theology involves a dynamic synthesis of faith and reason; it is a perception or a type of seeing of the depths of the revealed truth using the infused gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is more of a recognizing God's order and the intelligibility of reality in the light of

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311 Ibid., p. 116.

314 Ibid.

317 Copleston, *Medieval Philosophy, Part II*, pp. 36-40. "... it is not right to exaggerate their difference of outlook." Ibid., p. 38.
faith, than a rational construction by the human spirit. St. Bonaventure's emphasis was on the will and love of God as the key to true perception and the integration of reason into faith. Theology is more of an affective, moral, experiential or religious mode of reflection or contemplation guided by the Holy Spirit. While Bonaventure used Aristotle, he did not have confidence in reason on its own as a means to come to deeper understanding of the faith, or as a means to knowing truth about transcendent reality. He held to a reciprocal relationship between theology and philosophy, but taught that theology fulfills philosophy and assures that it will not fall into error. Without theology philosophy cannot attain to the full truth about reality. For example, a philosopher might by reason come to know God is the exemplary cause of all being, but he could never know without theology that the divine Word is the exemplary cause of all things.

But, Bonaventure's emphasis also had its dangers. Though Bonaventure had a strong doctrine of exemplarism and analogy based on a metaphysics, his emphasis on the mystical and contemplative could be the basis for denying any true natural theology and basing all real knowledge of God on Revelation. John Duns Scotus is generally known for preparing the way for Ockham and

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\[\text{313} \text{Congar, pp. 119-20}\]


\[\text{313} \text{Copleston, Mediaeval Philosophy, Part I, pp. 288-89.}\]
Nominalism - the critical theology of the fourteenth century. While there is a definite sense in which this is true, taken alone it is a distortion.\textsuperscript{331}

Yves Congar points out that Scotus was reacting to two issues of the time. First, consistent with the Augustinian tradition he was reacting to Albert-Thomistic philosophical "naturalism." Secondly, he was trying to refute incipient Nominalism.\textsuperscript{331} In reaction particularly to the second, he went even further than St. Thomas in affirming the objectivity of human knowledge. He insisted that the primary object of the intellect was all that is intelligible, or being as being. In his view this was necessary if metaphysics was to be possible for the human mind.\textsuperscript{333} But he also affirms that all human knowledge comes through the senses and that the intellect simply has an intrinsic capacity to know without any innate ideas or principles.\textsuperscript{333} In addition to the intellect's ability to abstract universals Scotus held that the intellect could apprehend the individual thing by a confused primary intuition, contra St. Thomas. This he believed was essential to maintain the objectivity of human knowledge. Interestingly, he repudiates St. Thomas' view "on the ground that the Apostles believed that a certain visible, palpable, individual human being was God." Thomas' view was adequate for scientific

\textsuperscript{331}Copleston, \textit{Mediaeval Philosophy, Part II}, pp. 204-209.

\textsuperscript{333}Congar, p. 127.

\textsuperscript{333}Copleston, \textit{Mediaeval Philosophy, Part II}, pp. 210-213.

\textsuperscript{334}Ibid., pp. 219-221.
knowledge of essences or universals but not for knowledge of the individuality of a thing. Since, a singular thing is intelligible in itself, an intellect in theory should be able to know a thing in itself, but in this life because the intellect does not know a thing in itself directly, the intellect can have only a confused primary intuition of the thing as existent. If we say that the intellect can have no intuition of the individual thing as existent we destroy the objectivity of knowledge.\textsuperscript{135} He defended St. Thomas' idea that the intellect has its own natural light and had no need of divine illumination to reach certitude from the first principles of Revelation. His theories of the univocity of being, individuation, and formal distinction (\textit{distinctio formalis a parte rei}) all had the purpose of protecting the objectivity of knowledge.\textsuperscript{136}

Scotus' teaching that we can know the individuality of a thing, I believe, is an important contribution to an epistemology of revelation in Christ, and therefore to our ability to understand what we know when we know a person relationally and intu-

\textsuperscript{135}Copleston, \textit{Mediaeval Philosophy, Part II}, pp. 214-217; Scotus distinguishes intuitive knowledge from abstractive knowledge. "The difference between intuitive knowledge and abstractive knowledge is not, then, that the former is knowledge of an existent object, the latter of a non-existent object, but rather that the former is knowledge of an object as existent and actually present, that is, in intuition properly speaking, whereas the latter is knowledge of the essence of an object considered in abstraction from existence, whether the object actually exists or not." Ibid., p. 221. One can also have imperfect intuitive knowledge of an existent object as existing in the past.

\textsuperscript{136}Ibid., pp. 207-208, 224-31, 231-34, 239-40.
itively. St. Thomas' epistemology, as pointed out above, is built on knowledge of universals abstracted from sensory phantasms and denies we can know a thing in its individuality. And it would seem, we could not perceive the "whoness" of a person as opposed to "whatness." The Triune God revealed in Christ, the "object" of our faith, could not be personally encountered and recognized in this life through the transmission of his historical life-form in Scripture and Tradition, and the power of the Holy Spirit. All we have are the truths of faith, authenticated by miracles, especially the Resurrection. Those truths validate the existence, and reality of God and point to fulfillment in the beatific vision of the object of our faith, but don't really present that object through created forms for even imperfect encounter and recognition now. Grace becomes a created form given to the soul.

The more contemporary view of grace as being the actual personal presence of God, and the self-communication of God the "object" of our faith, mediated by created forms and the Holy Spirit, seems inconsistent with such a rationalistic conception of Revelation. It would seem that all participation in grace is a finite participation in God's own life and knowing of Himself.337

Based on my limited exposure to Balthasar's writings it seems to me that his thought about analogy is, in part, a synthesis of the thought of Thomas, Bonaventure and Scotus. From Thomas he takes the insistence on knowledge of God through the sensual and according to analogy while rejecting a rationalistic interpretation of the way that knowledge is arrived at. From Bonaventure he takes the intuitive, mystical faith emphasis on the mode of knowing God in Christ, but rejects any hint of illuminism and insists on the objectivity of that knowledge through Christ's "super-form" or life-form. With Scotus, I believe he would affirm the ability of the intellect to have a synthetic, intuitive knowing of the personal individual presence of God in Christ. But, he would differ from Scotus in insisting that the knowledge by analogy is of ontological truth and not simply logical truth. The remaining question is how a person, divine or human, self-expresses or communicates the truth of their being to another. And, how do we as that other, perceive and know the truth of the other which they are communicating?

Christ the Concrete Analogy

It is important to note that St. Thomas even defines "person" in terms of "whatness," in terms of an individual rational substance, or a subsistent being with a rational nature. He defines it primarily ontologically rather than functionally or relationally. It is not that St. Thomas did not have a dynamic

notion of being. He did. He saw personal being as the most perfect expression of what it meant to be, and as intrinsically active and self-communicating. But historically, there was a need to distinguish between person and nature, with respect to the persons of the Trinity, and in relation to the person of the Word in Christ. St. Thomas never fully drew out the implications of his thought about the relational nature of the persons in the Trinity. With respect to the human person, he returned to the definition of Boethius noted above. This is inadequate in terms of describing what positive content is constitutive of the personal uniqueness of an individual rational substance. It defines what constitutes ontic individuality but not personal reality. It is personal reality which God is self-disclosing and communicating in Christ. Esse and essence or even substance and form do not seem to be completely adequate to explain one's unique personal reality. This creates a real problem when transferred to the three persons in God, or when used to try to explain how the Word is the person of Christ and yet Christ is fully human. When transferred to the Trinity, one ends up with three ontic individuals, unless in the transposition one qualifies the human concept of personal individuality by stripping it of ontic individuality. While this is necessary in moving analogically from creatures to God, one is then left with a very confused idea of the nature of

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the divine persons. With respect to Christ, if person is an individual rational substance and Christ is fully human how can one avoid ending up with two persons in Christ? This definition has led to the idea in contemporary thought that person is synonymous with individual consciousness and freedom, or individuality, which in turn has brought true incarnation of the Word into question, if the full humanity of Christ is to be preserved.

Thomas' solution was that the humanity of Christ subsisted in the act of being of the Word. The persons of the Trinity were described relationally. Scotus solved the problem by making a distinction between human individualized nature and human personality. Scotus defines "personality" as one's independent, inalienable existence. "In the case of Christ, existential independence was given to Jesus, not by virtue of his human individuality, but by the divine power of the Word." For him, in Christ there is no "assumed man" but only an "assumed nature," which "is concretized, individualized, in its human factuality . . . , and personalized, made independent, given subsistence, in the divine Person of the Word."345 Scotus' view continued the Franciscan emphasis on the humanity of Christ. It preserves Christ's full humanity, determines what is essential to it and what is not, and then shows how Incarnation of the person of the Word is possible. More recent approaches, using Lonergan's idea that consciousness is a quality of a person or subject, rather than of nature or

faculty such as intellect or will has provided a better solution.\(^{31}\) But this too is an ontological solution, and does not address the question of what constitutes a unique personal reality or how the truth of the personal reality is communicated. Personal reality is intrinsically unique by nature and cannot be defined by terms and concepts which express universality rather than uniqueness. One can experience another person's unique reality only by encountering them in some way. Their personal reality as experienced can be *communicated* and related to others in terms of their unique life-form, as Jesus is described in the Scriptures.\(^{32}\) The essence of one's personhood, whether ours or Christ's, can never be known directly in this life and defined. It can only be known and experienced by encounter. The essence of personhood can be defined only in terms of the nature of relationships, that is in terms of the functional meaning and significance of persons to one another.\(^{33}\)

Certainly, what we mean by recognizing God present in Christ, can only be known and expressed in terms of who this


\(^{32}\)A clear implication of this is that one is on some level conscious of one's unique reality. If so, Jesus was conscious of his personal reality as God or he could not have communicated it through his words and actions.

\(^{33}\)For further discussion of the idea that relativity towards another constitutes the human person, see: Joseph Ratzinger, "Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology." *Communio* 17 (Fall 1990)3: 437-454; Hans Urs von Balthasar, "On the Concept of Person." *Communio* 13 (Spring 1986)1: 18-26; and, W. Norris Clarke. "Person, Being and St. Thomas," cited above.
other is for us. The very idea of a personal God is relational, rather than ontological in the sense that we somehow perceive and abstract the essence of the other. God as idea or concept is the recognition of an ultimate relational reality between creature and Creator. It is the personal reality of God in Christ, as revealed by the quality of God's kenotic love and miraculous deeds, that God communicates to us. God's ontological and metaphysical nature can only be secondarily derived from the nature of God's communicated personal reality, or from the purely rational sources of philosophy. As pointed out in the section on grace and nature, that problematic can be solved best on the level of the interpersonal or relational, rather than on the level of difference in natures. God's personal reality cannot be a universal abstraction of anything we know. Even Absolute Being is a concept which universalizes what we know of Being; it is not an ontic entity, or God himself.

Balthasar's emphasis on knowing God as formal object in Christ through the experience of God's love, exemplifies his view that one must see the essence of personhood in a Trinitarian light and in the nature of the relationship, rather than individuality as such. One is most fully a person, when one lives one's life in Christ, in a life of love (mission). Further, I believe his theological aesthetics provides the only adequate way to understand how the personal reality of God in Christ is expressed and communicated analogically, first to the Apostles.

\[^{34}\text{See, Balthasar, "On the Concept of Person," pp.23-26.}\]
and now to us. Personal reality, God's in Christ, or any personal reality, can only be expressed, communicated and known, intuitively and synthetically, in and through a "life-form" which reveals the meaning and significance of another for us. Analogy as applied to God's personal reality in Christ the concrete analogy, is not the rational and intellectual extension of human perfections to an infinite degree. Nor is it the philosophical use of reason to examine analogically the attributes of God as the fullness of perfections found in the created order. Rather, it is an analogical personal encounter with God in Christ, in which an intuitive, synthetic judgment of God's personal reality is made under the influence of the light of God's love shining on the face of Christ, through Christ's words and actions. One is free to choose to accept or reject that light, to see or not to see.

The unique way in which a person, uses the "stuff" of created being (the transcendentals), to express their personal reality through words and deeds, actions or inactions, reveals who they are for us. It is not a revelation of their ontological essence, but a revelation of their personal reality. That reality has a "life-form" which can be perceived only aesthetically and personally, if one is to know the person's significance and meaning for them, as distinguished from the simple truth and goodness of their actions. Love alone reveals the true and unique personal significance of the other for us, and that personal and unique love can be perceived only as beauty. As Balthasar's has
contended, only God's love can reveal his unique personal and
divine reality, which is the basis for our experience of his
authority and the motive for the act of divine faith.

To sum up then, analogy in the realm of faith knowing of
God, through God in Christ, is analogy by personal encounter. The
medium of the analogy is not a concept or idea, but Christ's
"super-form" or "life-form." It is a graced, aesthetic, intuitive
and synthetic judgment of God's personal reality. Analogy in the
realm of natural theology or philosophy, is a purely rational
judgment and a purely natural knowing of God's metaphysical
reality based on the intrinsic principles of natural knowing
through universals. It can shed no light on God's personal
reality which can be known only in encountering Christ's personal
reality.

Subjective and Objective Knowledge in the Act of Faith

Further, I do not think that Balthasar's approach is "a
purely subjective explanation of the nature of faith." In his
article on "Faith," T. Urdanoz says:

A purely subjective explanation of the nature of faith based
on psychological analysis and phenomenological description
of the act of believing is likely to lead, if the method is
exclusive, to antidogmatic positions such as are implied by
one or another of the following: (1) the purely affective
commitment proposed since the time of Martin Luther by many
Protestant writers who wished to dissociate themselves from
the concept of faith-assent of Catholic theology; (2) a
philosophical, rationalist concept of faith based on the
criticism of I. Kant; (3) the semirationalist theory of
faith proposed by L.E. Hermes and A. Gunther and condemned
by Vatican Council I; (4) the fideist concept of faith
proposed by L.E. Bautain, or A. Bonnetty's traditionalist
concept, both of which were also condemned by Vatican Coun-
cil I; (5) the Modernist and immanentist concepts of faith;
(6) the existentialist faith affirmed by S. Kierkegaard and Karl Barth.  

As Urdanoz says Catholic theology has stressed as primary, the objective content of Revelation (God as Formal Object and First Truth, both in dicendo and in cognoscendo) and those truths believed with divine faith on God's authority. The subjective dimension has been considered secondary and derivative. I think that Balthasar's approach says that form (Christ's life-form) and content (God in Christ and in himself as formal object) in the act of divine faith cannot really be separated. The subjective-objective dichotomy is not that helpful in understanding the nature of the act of faith. If subjective means simply that the objective is experienced and judged subjectively, it adds little to understanding. If subjective refers to the choice to believe God and God's Revelation in Christ, and to surrender and commit oneself to God (fides qua), then I don't see how that is secondary and derivative. That seems to be fundamental and essential. It might be better to say that the act of faith has two constitutive elements, fides qua and fides quae, both of which are

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34 Urdanoz, p. 798.

35 The integral object of faith "includes all that God has revealed. Everything to which the formal motive of faith extends must be embraced by the integral object. The formal reason for believing is the authority of God, and this exists equally with respect to anything and everything that God has in fact revealed. 'By divine and catholic faith, all those things must be believed which are contained in the written word of God and in tradition, and those which are proposed by the Church, either by way of solemn pronouncement or through the exercise of her ordinary and universal teaching power, to be believed as divinely revealed. (Denz 3011)'." Urdanoz, p. 799.
integral to a genuine act of divine faith. It is true that logically and formally the choice to surrender and commit oneself to God follows the judgment that God has been encountered, but one might ask whether the latter judgment is also a free choice which implicitly contains the willingness to surrender to God, and to believe what God is revealing as truth. This simply illustrates the impossibility of assigning greater importance to one of these two elements in an actual act of divine faith.

In addition there are, I believe, two types of objectivity involved in the act of faith. There is the subjective encounter with the objective reality of God in Christ through Christ’s "super-form" in the analogical manner described above. Then there is the conceptual and rational way in which that objective content is articulated and expressed. On the existential level these two types of objectivity are inseparable. Doctrines and creeds must be humanly congruent with the reality encountered and known. But, the foundation of the latter dimension of the act of divine faith is the objectivity of the encounter with Christ. That faith encounter, available in all ages, makes the identity and continuity in faith through levels of doctrinal development possible. If the objective reality of the subjective encounter with God in Christ is not the same from age to age, then continuity in doctrine and creed is not possible. Put philosophically, following Balthasar, Christ’s personal ontological reality as God

\[ \text{Balthasar's } \textit{pistis} \text{ and } \textit{gnosis}, \text{ which are part of the } \textit{fides qua.} \]
was communicated through the personal reality of his "life-form." That personal and ontological reality was self-expressed, received and transmitted in the historical-cultural forms of the context in which he communicated himself. I believe that this is the only way to explain how true historical continuity and identity of doctrine is possible, unless God communicates Christ's reality in each generation non-historically by direct inspiration. This latter view would be consistent with a more immanentist and illuminist perspective with respect to human consciousness. But it is subject to all the dangers of a subject-bound epistemology. This brings us to the hermeneutical question of the transposition of the knowledge of personal reality of Christ in different concepts and language, and the question of the dependency of truth and meaning on context. Given the restrictions of this thesis, I cannot treat this at length, but I want to comment on a few issues.

Christ in Context

Francis Schüssler Fiorenza's views, as previously noted, reflect the modern critique of "foundationalism." It holds that the search for foundations is futile. I think Balthasar, would be willing to agree to this view, if it were limited to a search for indisputable foundational tenets which would justify the knowledge we have by faith. As we have seen, Balthasar holds that fundamental theology has been stunted for the past hundred years.

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Supra, p. 60.
Instead of asking the central question, "How does God's revelation confront man in history? How is it perceived?", fundamental theology has sought verification by reason of Christ's claims. This is the kind of foundationalism against which the modern critique, epitomized by Fiorenza, has been mounted.

The idealist and rationalist approaches were but two of the consequences of the "turn to the subject." Theology sought to meet Idealism and Deism on its own ground by locating the source of certitude about Revelation within the structure of the consciousness of the human subject. As Fiorenza points out there was a radical shift to a new starting point for theology in order to provide certitude for Revelation. The new starting point was philosophical anthropology. Hermes, Gunther, Drey and others sought to find certitude for Revelation in its correlation with human consciousness.

But, Fiorenza sees the transcendental approach as also a foundationalist approach. Fiorenza contends that the transcendental approach "operates with a coherence and disclosure theory of truth. It seeks to show the correlation between present human experience and belief statements." More specifically, it seeks a critical correlation in two basic steps, between a phenomenological, transcendental or existential analysis of religious experience, and Christian faith, or Revelation. He sees David


\[3^{30}\] Fiorenza, pp. 260-62.

\[3^{31}\] Fiorenza, p. 270, and 276 ff.

\[3^{31}\] Ibid., p. 276.
Tracy's attempts to correlate the "Situation and Message" as basically part of the same attempt.

The truth of the religious tradition consists in its ability to disclose what coheres with the religious dimension of human experience. This disclosure-coherence model of truth underlies all these diverse conceptions of correlation irrespective of whether the disclosure is seen as actualization, explicitation, or intensification and manifestation. Such a model tends to view the Christian tradition primarily as specification of what is universally experienced as religious. The historical particularity of the tradition as well as the force of its conflict with experience tends to be minimized in such a model.\[311\]

In contrast to this Balthasar, I believe, sees the Christian tradition as a specification of what is uniquely experienced in the personal encounter of Christ in the act of divine faith. That experience of Christ challenges and calls for conversion and surrender to a new way of seeing and living reality, which finds its apogee in the cross of Christ. It is the encounter of the personal reality of God in Christ that is the foundation of the act of divine faith, of creed, doctrine, and theology. The reciprocal correlation to be made is between faith and revelation, which then illumines the nature of the human condition, or anthropology. The process of hermeneutics becomes one of understanding the language and concepts in which the personal and ontological reality of Christ is transmitted from age to age, so that his reality may challenge, convert and transform the present. In this Balthasar shares the pre-critical view of the patristic tradition which saw faith as a true knowledge of God,
conferred by God's grace.\(^{33}\) The foundationalism critiqued by Balthasar and Fiorenza is the fruit of the critical period in theology.

The immediate source of the search for an unshakable foundation for all human knowledge, which has been termed "Cartesian anxiety," is itself but a reflection of the search for *certitudo* in the period immediately following the Catholic-Protestant split. The whole of the critical era has been preoccupied with establishing the foundation for knowledge and has sought to place it, one way or another, within the human mind conceived as an isolated "subject." Being does not cooperate in the act by which it is known; it is rather a passive unknowable whose intelligibility is determined by the access allowed to it through the activity of the conditioned subject.\(^{34}\)

I cannot take the space to analyze Fiorenza's hermeneutical solution to foundationalism. But, his reconstructive hermeneutics with its emphasis on context-dependent truth and meaning, seems to me to so relativize ontological truth and being, and the connection between the two, that he too ends up in a subject-bound position. The only difference is that human experience, tested by communal reflective judgment, becomes the norm substituted for reason.

St. Thomas did emphasize that personal being in particular is active and dynamic in its self-communication. This thought has been developed by Balthasar to explain the manner in which God in Christ communicates his personal reality and being to us. I believe no personal being, and in particular the personal being

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34 Ibid., p. 344.
of God in Christ, can be "a passive unknowable whose intelligibility is determined by the access allowed to it through the activity of the conditioned subject." 555 We can only receive another personal being and be informed and enriched by them. I believe that post-critical thought, if it is to remain in continuity with the Tradition, will have to find its foundation on the active, dynamic and communicative nature of personal being, which can only be received. In a sense, the old paradigm transposed, will be the new paradigm. It seems fitting to conclude with a passage from St. Paul:

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done. If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer a loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire. (1 Cor. 3.11-15)

555 Ibid.
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183


