

HANS URS VON BALTHASAR CONSULTATION

Topic:	The Anatomy of Misremembering: Cyril O'Regan on Von Balthasar and Hegel
Convener:	Barbara Sain, University of St. Thomas
Moderator:	Danielle Nussberger, Marquette University
Presenters:	Rodney Howsare, DeSales University Anthony C. Sciglitano, Seton Hall University
Respondent:	Cyril O'Regan, University of Notre Dame

The von Balthasar Consultation focused its session on the recently published first volume of *The Anatomy of Misremembering: Von Balthasar's Response to Philosophical Modernity* by Cyril O'Regan. O'Regan outlines how von Balthasar's constructive response to modernity requires an ongoing, systematic engagement with Hegel. To the extent that modernity has been influenced by Hegel, the earlier Christian tradition is "misremembered" through a Hegelian lens. As von Balthasar explicates the riches of that tradition, he must simultaneously correct that misremembering. Anthony Sciglitano and Rodney Howsare presented their comments on the book, followed by a response from O'Regan.

Sciglitano's paper, "Death in Cyril O'Regan's *Anatomy of Misremembering*," investigated the theme of death as it plays out in Cyril O'Regan's remarkable text on Hans Urs von Balthasar under three rubrics: (a) Hegel's eclipse of Christian narrative grammar; (b) cross as the death of difference; (c) misremembering as legitimation of forgetting. O'Regan argues that von Balthasar recognizes the massive transformation that Hegel would enact on the Christian theological tradition, whether Catholic or Lutheran, and resists it at every stage. The paper addressed the ways in which, on O'Regan and von Balthasar's views, Hegel's system serves to eliminate divine transcendence such that forms of Christian life and practice—especially lamentation and prophetic protest—suffer erasure.

Instead of trying to offer an overview of this monumental study of von Balthasar's engagement with Hegel, Rodney Howsare's paper looked at two central issues raised in the work. First, why, given O'Regan's conclusion that Hegel does not present a legitimate retrieval of the Christian past but, rather, a Gnostic-esque false double, should von Balthasar risk such a sustained engagement in the first place? Here Howsare built on O'Regan's conclusion that for all of his Gnostic overreaches, Hegel at least serves as an ally in the face of modernity's and postmodernity's false humility with regard to reason's relationship to the whole. Second, however, he concluded (with O'Regan) that Hegel's non-Chalcedonian understanding of the God-world relationship, and therefore his rejection of the analogy of being, is a price too high to pay. For although Hegel, like von Balthasar, refuses to relegate the doctrine of the Trinity to the realm of the fideistic, he can do so only by sacrificing what it is that makes God God and world world. Here Howsare commended O'Regan's use of Bulgakov (as chastened by Maximus the Confessor) as a way of keeping some of Hegel's most fruitful insights (e.g., an intra-Trinitarian kenosis) without having to give up the classical understanding of the analogy of being.

At the beginning of his response, O'Regan described the genesis of the book from his own research. He planned a book on von Balthasar as a rememberer of the

tradition, but it became clear to him that misremembering was an equally important category for von Balthasar's project. Like others associated with the *nouvelle théologie*, von Balthasar is committed to remembering the richness of the Christian tradition; however, von Balthasar is distinctive because he is also addressing ways in which the tradition has been distorted, or misremembered. For O'Regan, the task of writing the book went beyond identifying the correction of Hegelian ideas as a key part of von Balthasar's project; it was necessary to explain why Hegel's ideas are so attractive and how von Balthasar emerges as a thinker who is apocalyptic without being Hegelian.

A wide ranging discussion followed the presentations. Issues included whether von Balthasar's choice of biblical texts was shaped by the need to counter Hegel's influence, whether art and literature are key battlegrounds for remembering or misremembering, what other sources of misremembering von Balthasar is systematically addressing, and how von Balthasar's reading of Barth compares with his reading of Hegel.

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