Consciousness in the Wilderness of Mirrors: Trinitarian Kenosis and Created Difference in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar

by
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation offers a speculative reading of Hans Urs von Balthasar’s (1905-1988) Trinitarian kenosis, which is put into conversation with Alain Badiou’s mathematical ontology.

Part I lays the groundwork for the subsequent chapters. It presents an introduction to Balthasar’s theory of Trinitarian kenosis and how he relates it to the themes of transcendence, immanence, relationship and difference by means of apophasis, polar correspondences, and analogy. This reading highlights a short survey of the most relevant primary and secondary theological sources, and identifies the philosophical challenges which emerge with key post-modern thinkers.

Balthasar sees Ur-kenosis as the way eternal love communicates in the Trinitarian life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This Divine event enters history in the incarnation, life, consciousness and mission of Jesus Christ.
Part II sets out an interpretation of Alain Badiou’s mathematical ontology. Specifically, multiplicity, subtraction, infinity and the empty set will be used to articulate Badiou’s understanding of how human identity, truth and love arise in historical events.

Part III offers a speculative synthesis of Balthasar and Badiou’s approaches. Reinterpreting consciousness in terms of transcendent kenosis allows for a positive framing of relation and even such modes of difference as polarity, in-determinacy, recursive immanence, parataxis, void and infinity favored by such postmodern thinkers as Badiou. Balthasar’s sautrocentric trinitarianism argues that the Cross is the privileged locus of God-self’s revelation, and corresponds to an authentic encounter of the human person’s relationship to immanence and difference. Seen through the lens of Trinitarian kenosis, the traditional metaphysical foci of identity, representation, relation and a nameable totalizing horizon allows for human subjectivity as free and conscious to meaningfully exist in reality with a view toward a proportionately limiting and analogous transcendental relation to the Divine. The mutual indwelling of Divine relations as eternal kenotic event offers, through the revelation of the incarnate Word, to dialogically reposition the definition of the human person as free, conscious and loving.
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Abbreviations

CCSL Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina.
CE Gregory of Nyssa, Contra Eunomium
Conf. Augustine Confessions.
CSL Balthasar, Christian State of Life.
De an et resurr Gregory of Nyssa, On the Soul and Resurrection.
De Anima Aristotle, De Anima.
De Doctr. Christi Augustine, On Christian Doctrine
De pot. Aquinas De Potentia.
De Quat. Aquinas, Quaestiones Disputatae.
De Trin. Augustine De Trinitate.
De ver. Aquinas Truth.
DS Henry Denzinger, Sources of Catholic Dogma translation of the Enchiridion Symbolorum Et Definitionum
E Epilogue.
GL Glory of the Lord, 7 volumes.
Healey The Eschatology of Hans Urs von Balthasar: Being as Communion.
In I Sen. Aquinas, Commentary on Sentences.
In Metaph. Aquinas, Commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics.
LA Balthasar, Love Alone is Credible.
Laurelle Philosophy and Non-Philosophy.
Monolog Anselm, Monologium.
MP Mysterium Paschale.
NFP       Graham Harman A New French Philosopher.
SC        Sources chrétiennes. Paris:Cerf, 1940-
SCG       Aquinas Summa Contra Gentiles.
S. Th.    Aquinas, Summa Theologiae.
Super Ioa. Aquinas, Commentary on St. John’s Gospel.
Super Sent. Aquinas, Scriptum Super Libros Sententiarum.
TD        The Theo-Drama, 5 volumes.
TL        The Theo-logic, 3 volumes.
V. de Trin. Boethius, The Trinity.

Editions and Reference Works
Jaeger    Jaeger, Werner, ed. Gregorii Nysseni Opera. Berlin and Leiden: E. J. Brill. 1921-
**Glossary**

**Absolute Transcendence**: the Divine taken as the completely Other. Only the Divine Persons have full understanding of this state, however, for Balthasar the finite being analogously participates in Absolute Transcendence through the concepts of the one, the true, the good and beauty. For Balthasar the Transcendentals are unified by the Divine and finite creatures by Love. See *transcendental*.

**Abstraction (delimiting)**: the cognitive structuring of a being centered on the formulation of its appearance as an image. This move is reductive as it removes a being from reality in terms of an interpretation of its perceived properties. Abstraction always functions in an implied polar relation with synthetic judgment.

**Anamnesis**: cognitive recollection that predominantly employs the delimiting of one’s memories to focus on a specific past event.

**Ana-mnesis**: cognitive recollection that is primarily synthetic as it draws upon all one’s memories.

**Apophasis**: is taken as a rhetorical and logical method that reasons and defines a being by elucidating what it is not. Thus, apophasis metaphorically employs subtraction or denial to set the parameters of the identity of the being under investigation. Theologically apophasis is closely aligned to the concept of remotion.

**Aporia**: linguistic indeterminacy resulting from failure to see in objective reality a corresponding Divine exemplar of truth.

**Becoming**: a non-inhering relation that paradoxically exists as an essential state that is open to the increasing of one’s interior state and one’s external connections to the world. Becoming evidences the variance of beings.

**Being**: when capitalized Being refers to the totality of all beings in reality. Being is an universal term for all beings.

**Condensation**: the gravitating of one’s essential identity in the three primitive modes of a being’s essential relationship to her *esse*, that is, in terms of: being-in-itself, being-for-itself and being-for-others. A being’s essential condensation is simultaneous with her essential reach.

**Count-as-One**: points to a being’s defining relationship to a non-existing One in Badiou’s system. As this dynamic is seen as immanent it bears some relationship to Balthasar’s own views concerning ontological difference. Further, as Badiou’s non-One is taken be a placeholder for Transcendent it can also be seen to be reflective of Jesus Christ’s state in Hell.
Creative Mimesis (Viefalt): the imaginative appropriation of an image that allows its contextualization by abstractive and synthetic judgments. The placing of an image’s meaning into a larger world of beings and symbolic formulations undergirds Balthasar’s correalational realism.

Difference: a nomological covariance that helps to establish a being’s identity. Intrinsic to difference is its non-inherence; it is this quasi-receptive property of difference that allows the mutual expansion of identity of two or more beings in a relationship (relata). Difference generates the separation of subject-object that leads to the disclosure of the identity of both terms. Identity condenses around the relational difference. The autotelic identity of difference (“its self-identity”) is evolutionary openness on the local and global levels. The relationship between subject and object is expansive and it opens the subject to the dialectical consolidation of meta-structuring in reality. Because difference relatively inheres and separates two or more terms one can speak of difference as having a quasi-existence in noetic operation. Given the love eternally generated by Trinitarian kenosis one can speak metaphorically of difference having a quasi-ontic existence in the ‘presence’ of evil. Evil negatively appropriates reality whereas Christ sacrifices his divinity to positively appropriate reality. The Absolute Difference existing between God and Creation provides an objective space in which to hierarchically value truth’s disclosure.

Dispossession (Außert): a negative or subtractive movement that is a positive feature of finite existence when motivated by the self-sacrificial love that models Trinitarian kenosis.

Divine Essence: the completely simple reality of Divine identity. Finitely different but semantically related to Divine Essence are the ontic notions of Being and substance and the noetic universalization of these under the category of ‘one.’

Equivalence: the description of Reality as a closed and transcendentally open system is intelligible given that the harmonious relationship existing between the invariance and variance of its terms and the common relational ground allow for an isomorphic link between language and being. See: Invariance and Variance, Language and Reality.

Eternal: a supra-temporal state that defines the existence of the Divine Persons. The concept of infinity analogously delimits the eternal for finite creatures.

Freedom: a state localized in a particular instantiation but transcendent in operation. Balthasar’s Theologic grounds subjectivity around one’s relationship to self, to object and to the Transcendent kenotic God. On the local level non-conscious freedom communicates in the essential disclosure of an object’s meaning in appearance. The continual disclosure and deconstruction of meaning in appearance presents the non-cognitive becoming of the object. Globally this continual disclosure can be described as an evolutionary causality that progressively evidences replication (identity) through selection (freedom). See also Human Freedom.
**Hell:** Balthasar likens Hell to a conscious state for Jesus Christ. In Hell all relations to the Divine are severed and the abandoned experiences increase alienation from one’s self and others. Lacking the means to communicate in one’s esse, essence becomes non-teleological. In a sense essence becomes a self-negating differing of one’s own ontological difference. This ‘non-essential’ state infinitely deconstructs one’s identity; difference becomes the state of one’s identity. Creation’s intrinsic evolutionary causality is in polar relation with Hell. As the Son eternally remains sovereign Lord given Godself’s kenotic identity, even in Hell’s isolation relation is paradoxically posited. Mysteriously Christ’s alienation and isolation premises and realizes the glory of divine identity.

**Hierarchic ordering:** In created reality the difference between subject and object establishes an interior subjective space. This “in-spansion” or spatializing of the subject establishes boundaries between the object and later all other objects in the world. The proximate value of any particular object is further determined and contextualized with reference to this most fundamental marking. Difference in the world allows for its hierarchic ordering with the Transcendent as its telic aim. In the Divine the distinction of Persons does not lead to a difference in the value of anyone Person at the expense of the eternal monotheistic identity of all three. However, the hierarchy of the world is made possible by the incarnate Lord whose kenosis brings to the created realm the Transcendent.

**Human freedom:** given Christ’s incarnation human freedom analogously parallels its Divine actualization. God communicates Godself’s triune identity absolutely given the simplicity of God’s Divine essence. Human freedom is expressed in and by a finite medium (created interior and exterior space and one’s particular intentions). Freedom’s finite medium is transcendentally re-created by Christ’s redemptive action: even freedom’s denial in Hell is translated as a mode of the Divine’s communication of love.

**In-determinacy:** occurs when a being’s meaning remains latent. For Balthasar ontological and noetic in-determinacy are Ur-kenotically redefined in Christ’s establishing of boundaries for difference by his redemptive work in Hell.

**Infinity:** a predication of the Eternal as finite. The determination of infinity as a mode of eternity first discloses itself discretely as temporal duration or measure. The interior-exterior difference made available in reflexive relation and the external difference(s) between subject and object are in constant flux and co-extensively related to all Reality and the Divine making their unfolding infinite.

**Convergent Infinite Series:** Includes an infinite series whose sums approach a defined limit.

**Divergent Infinite Series:** is an infinite series whose sums do not approach a limit but has a value given the sequence of the sum of its parts.

**Godself:** the term indicating the act of Divine self-reflectivity in gender-neutral language.
**Heno-triadict:** points out that the Divine essence is singular but shared among the Divine Persons.

**Immanence:** Marks the finite non-transcendent state of created beings.

**Invariance and variance:** the invariance of identity accounts for relative change (becoming) as a product of various modes of variance: self-reflexivity (recursive appropriation of one’s being in relation to an object), self-determination (freedom in the world), etc. Synchronicity or *equivalence* exists between the progressive local and global communications of invariance (identity) and variance (becoming). Subjective consciousness and determination discovers the truth of the universe and reality is configured to evolutionary increase its essential flourishing.

**Language:** is broadly understood to include any conceptualization that dialectically and *transcendentally* orders being, subject-object and transcendent relations. For our purposes language conceptually includes word, image, number and symbol.

**Liturgical life and Homo Symbolicus:** the sacramental realization of a subject’s unique identity. This existential state/representation is philosophically tied to subjective apperception and theologically to one’s free and conscious membership in the Church.

**Mereological essentialism:** the attempt to explain the relation of parts to whole in being with reference to the essential.

**Multiplicity:** for Badiou multiplicity is a fundamental characteristic of being given its composite nature. According to Balthasar, the polar relational medium of ontological difference makes immanent being multiple. However, he also holds that being’s essential nature reduces all multiplicity to existential unity (identity). This unification of esse-essence is ultimately possible as all beings share the same grounding in a reality ordered by the Transcendent in the kenotic identity of Jesus Christ.

**Non-)One:** a term employed by Badiou and Laurelle to represent the ONE or the Transcendent’s anti-thesis or opposite.

**Nothingness:** alludes to the absolute distance that separates the Transcendent and Creation. The Divine alone can fully comprehend this state although finite beings have an analogous sense of this mystery.

**ONE:** ONE is taken to be a homologous philosophical term for the transcendent God in the Christian tradition. ONE represents God as described in God-self’s unity. In reality ‘one’ attempts to appropriate this perfect unity. See: *Multiplicity and Unity.*

**One:** Badiou’s term for a non-existing Transcendent being that acts as a logical placeholder in his system.
ONE: a symbol that shows that the Transcendent exists for Balthasar as absolutely unified and simultaneously as Three Divine Persons.

1/GOD: a symbol that illustrates that Jesus Christ continues to exist Ur-kenotically even when experiencing finitude, death and the descent into Hell.

**Ontological Difference:** The relation of esse and essence in being. Because the Son chooses to live a fully human life we speculate that ontological difference was included in Christ’s human nature and further that Christ’s redemptive act allows reevaluating the parameters set on ontological difference.

**Parataxis:** the logical outcome when relation is not ultimately read transcendentally. The connection of relations in the world requires final stabilization that the Divine alone can provide and has done so through Jesus Christ.

**Polarity:** analogously related to the distinct relations of Divine hypostases in Trinitarian kenosis, polarity structures being(s) by representing them in terms of relational difference. Ubiquitous in reality, polarity conduces identity by serving as a medium for self-determination. Polarity is conspansive for the subject and object in relation. Polarity does not forward an essentialist agenda, as it does not override esse. Being refuses to be reduced to sentential operations. Polarity is taken to be the fundamental binary structure of being(s) and Creation. Similar to relational differentiation, polarity conduces identity by serving as a medium for self-determination.

**Privation:** if the subject-object relation leads to mutual disclosure, neither term predominates at the expense of the other. Space is afforded by each term for its relational partner. Metaphorically this opening of interior space or receptivity of the other is spoken of as a positive privation of one’s being. A positive reading of this self-fissure for relations with others is possible given it models the perfect giving in the Trinity’s relative hypostases. This use of the word extrapolates from Balthasar’s theory of Christ’s simultaneous continued sovereignty in heaven while being absolutely isolated in Hell. Set outside of all relations in Hell, Jesus’ Christ self-reflexivity and desire is imprisoned without means of further communication. This silencing privation ends with the Father resurrecting Jesus Christ. I speculate that no privation of being is greater than what Christ evidences in Hell, setting a definitive bound on the infinite regress of privation or the subtraction of being. In other words, even Hell remains mysteriously under the power of God.

**Reality:** a unified extensible whole with one or more “distance parameters” (polar structures) that can be infinitely separated and sub-divided given their communication in relational difference. The polar structure of reality allows for the description of beings as discrete quanta (particular beings) or as parts of reality as a whole (universal beings). The former prefers to speak of being as self-determination (freedom or recursive appropriation). The latter tends to explain the dialectical aspects of reality from the vantage of a generalized evolutionary causality whose computational operations include a necessary principle of uncertainty or freedom. See also: *Local and Global Invariance* and
Variance. The evolutionary causality or polar self-processing of the universe taken as whole is made possible given the space provided for Creation by the Divine. The global configuration of reality can be characterized by per seity and openness given that it is meta-structured by Divine kenosis.

Recursive immanence: mimics self-reflexivity but does not have access to any relation beyond its own substantial and relational properties. Each recursive return of a being to its own immanence outside of relation is isolating and non-communicative. It is a state that parallels Christ’s own abandonment and isolation in Hell.

Relation: the corresponding of two or more terms. For finite beings relations are accidental and non-inhering. For the Divine such relations are real.

Resipiscence: refers to an object’s cyclic import of its essence in phenomenal appearance and its subsequent dissipation of this appearance to make room for a new appearance. Resipiscence can also be thought of as a telic subjective reflexivity or pre-conscious appropriation of identity that inaugurates subjective interiority given one’s relation with an object(s).

subtractive: a division of being that always leads to a greater sum in being than its original state. This act is taken as a finite analogue to eternal kenosis.

Space: one’s relationship to an object in reality discloses ‘space’ to be a necessary component of the infinite. Finite space and distance analogously derives from the exemplarity of the Eternal Freedom of the Divine Persons. Because the subject-object relation establishes subjective interiority space has no ontic priority over time. However, the communication of one’s interiority demands intentional consciousness giving temporality a priority in one’s description of and future involvement with objects and the resulting relations in the world.

Supra-: As the Divine evidences the magis in its inner-communio conversations it can be described as an infinitely meta-meta-structuring reality in Balthasar’s theology. The Divine is always more. The Divine as supra-”x” (see below) does not entail making the ‘supra’ a rarefied fourth in the Trinitarian life or prove Balthasar’s system to be at heart gnostic. The positing of freedom in finite creatures finds a logical parallel to the status the ‘supra-’ is given in the life of the Divine Persons.

Supra-transcendence: a supra-tautological category that points to the mystery that divine identity is always more and ever greater. The infinitely greater state of the Divine life is also spoken of as the Magis Principle. The full enticement of subject and object demands analogous participation in the Magis Principle by means of faith, self-determination and evolutionary causality.

Supra-sacrifice: Divine kenosis that highlights the inter-personal gifting of the Divine Persons in a complete and hence simple manner. This movement is supra-causal and one of exact correspondence between Persons. Balthasar also speaks of this Transcendent
relation also as Ur-kenosis.

**Syntax:** is taken as any representation of being given the correlation existing between being, language, Reality and the Divine. Reality and being are comprehensible and symmetric as both are manifest by relations of *difference* and unity.

**Synthesis (placing):** inseparably connected to Abstraction, synthetic judgment primarily identifies being not from its component parts but from its larger relational network and teleological trajectories. See Abstraction *(delimiting).*

**Telic Objective Recursion:** continual informational feedback loop generated by an object’s essential disclosure in appearance, that is a formalization of its meaning or content in image(s).

**Temporal forth-setting (Voraus Setzung):** a finite subject’s intentional participation in eternity by interpreting created relations and difference in light of divine kenosis.

**Torsion:** refers to the inner dynamic of being’s elementary structures.

**Trace:** the presence of absence or an accent of nothingness abstractedly denominated.

**Transcendence:** a term used to express a finite creature’s apophatic experience of the Transcendent. For Balthasar the Transcendent referred to is the Trinity. A finite creature’s participation in Divine kenosis is made possible in her structuring in ontological differences *(essence-esse)* and the noetic expression of this infinite dialogue in reason’s infinite reach: *transcendence* is an ecstatic movement that defines the human person given the human being’s self-constitution and desire for God. Kenotically read, both aspects of *transcendence* highlight the differential aspects of relation. From a substantial point of view *transcendence* presupposes that being analogously participates in the Divine Transcendentals of Truth, Goodness, Beauty and Absolute Unity or One for Balthasar. These ideas cannot be enclosed in a univocal notion because a *transcendental* act also participates in Divine Love that for Balthasar makes the *transcendental* both an existential experience and noetic structure. Badiou claims that being can only exist in relationship to a non-existing “Transcendent” One. The italicized form “*transcendental*” is used to highlight the differing view on its meaning for Balthasar and Badiou.

**Tri-noesis:** refers to the absolute sharing of Truth between the Divine Persons given the Spirit’s absolute groundlessness or freedom that is Love.

**Ur-kenosis:** a “heno-triadic” movement that actualizes divine identity through the personal experience of divine simplicity and relational hypostases. This event is eternally generated by the Father’s gift of self to the Son who returns all back to the Father through the Spirit.

**Void:** acts as a being’s first grounding and thus is seen by Badiou to be the halting point of being’s infinite regress. It is the *point d’arrêt.* The void is indeterminate and exists in
dialectical relationship to being. Badiou’s void is taken to be philosophically congruent with the Nothingness existing between Creation and the Divine in Balthasar’s theological interpretation.
Introduction

In what follows I will offer a speculative reading of Hans Urs von Balthasar’s kenotic interpretation of the Triune, Incarnate God of Christian faith. This reading brings the work of Balthasar and its patristic and scholastic foundations into dialogue with the concerns and constructs of select postmodern thinkers. In so doing, my reading calls on postmodern concepts of relation and difference to elucidate traditional notions of transcendence and immanence, usefully presented in the writings of Balthasar. My intent is to provide an understanding of the Triune, Incarnate God that illuminates the metaphysical notions of transcendence, immanence, relation and difference and, therein, the vital and conscious human experience of these notions in our associations with God and one another.

I hope that this modest study in speculative metaphysics provides a new way to engage theologically those formal and often avowed agnostic or atheistic systems that underpin much of our current postmodern worldview. Although Balthasar did not offer a sustained critique of Postmodernity I take the larger corpus of his work to provide a framework in which to engage this issue. More specifically, his theory of Divine logic or Theo-logic outlines a way in which to engage postmodern developments. It will be shown that failing to center one’s metaphysics on an existing Transcendence leads to contradictions that postmodernity set out to resolve. Indeed, postmodern philosophers such as Alain Badiou and François Laurelle seem to be aware of the logical need of some “Transcendent” register in order for their philosophical system to present a coherent theory of reality. While most postmoderns reject an actual Transcendent Being they still offer some notion of the “numinous” or “Transcendent” as immanent and horizontal to
the finite. This move leads to the radicalized presentation of finite being as analogously “Transcendent”. Challenging such approaches, Balthasar’s theory of Ur-kenosis argues that the Transcendent is the complete “Other” existing in a “supra-position” to Creation and simultaneously finite to reality in the person of Jesus Christ. With the Incarnation, Balthasar will argue, the Transcendent and finite beings are in an analogous and free relationship. With the economic realization of the Ur-kenotic Divine, difference’s apparent limitless deconstructive influence on immanent reality as advocated by many postmodern thinkers is now stated in terms of finite beings’ inferred relationship with Jesus Christ. Ur-kenosis is taken to be the fundamental action between the Trinitarian Persons and it therefore communicates metaphysically the reality of Absolute love. If Balthasar’s assessment of the Divine life is correct, it can be further inferred that all of Creation is in some analogous way “kenotic” in its nature:

[T]hus this-worldly being will necessarily contain within itself traces and images of the intradivine difference, which means that it can then appropriately enter upon a union with divine unity. These traces will then explain the ground and goal of this divine world enterprise: to show that, just as God can be one with the other Divine Person in himself, he is just as capable, in his freedom, of becoming one with others outside of himself.¹

Being as a whole is considered: “in its origin…an action, an expression, a clearing, [and] a bestowal of participation.”²

This thesis will discuss the metaphysical implications Trinitarian kenosis has in Hans Urs von Balthasar’s theological reading of the themes of transcendence, immanence, relation and difference. I will contend that Balthasar’s interpretation of these themes provides him with a way to understand the relationship between subject and

¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, Epilogue, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 86. Hereafter cited as E.
² See: TL 1, 217.
object and human consciousness that is conversant with many postmodern thinkers.

To this end, the work is divided into three parts that are in turn divided into six chapters. The first part of the work, comprised of the first three chapters, contains in Chapter One a general introduction of the themes of the present work, in Chapter Two Balthasar’s account of the Transcendent immanent Trinity, and in Chapter Three his explanation of the Incarnate economic Trinity. The second part of the work, submitted in Chapter Four contains a postmodern reading of the metaphysical concepts of Transcendence, immanence, relation and difference discussed in Chapter Two and Three with reference to the French thinker Alain Badiou. The third part of the work Chapters Five and Six, is a speculative synthesis of the first two parts. Central to this negotiation of Balthasar’s account of the Transcendent immanent Trinity/Incarnate economic Trinity, and the postmodern reading of the metaphysical concepts of transcendence, immanence, relation and difference, will be a re-evaluation of how human consciousness can best be understood through a “kenotic” lens.

Chapter One, “Setting the Stage”, will provide an interpretation of the five themes/terms that are of greatest import in the work: kenosis, Transcendence, immanence, relation and difference, and further illuminate how the work is methodologically situated in relation to four fundamental polarities: analogy and apophasis, transcendence and immanence, relation and difference, and Transcendence and “transcendence”. Given the interdependence of these themes, polarity is never a matter of simple binary opposition. Finite beings are in a “transcendent” relationship to the Transcendent without moving beyond the limitations of created reality. Finite beings

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3 Where “transcendence” defines the human experience of transcendence and Transcendence refers to the actual existing absolute Divine Being.
exist in horizontal and vertical relationship to their situations. Badiou speaks of trans-being or what we term *transcendence* and not transcendence proper. By proper transcendence we refer to its traditional use in theology where the Divine is taken to be an actual Transcendent Being in relationship to finite beings. The word *transcendent* is used to reference this paradoxical relationship. Denying an actual Transcendent most postmoderns argue, as in Meillassoux: “we are content to explore the two faces of something that remains a face-to-face.” Consequently, in *The New French Philosophy*, Ian James states that such thinkers have rejected “the Great Outside” (*Le Grand Dehors*).

In the ongoing economy of finite beings’ rapport with the Divine, Balthasar argues, all *transcendent* movements are called into a *transcendent*-Transcendent sphere by the Incarnation—not an aim shared by most postmoderns who believe the world exists in-itself—but only for us. Balthasar’s theological vision employs a methodological realism that attempts to correlate subjective consciousness and an object’s disclosure in the world. In this way, while every subject-object relation is defined by finitude, it is also the case for Balthasar that relational correspondences are analogous to the Transcendent Divine Persons as Ur-kenotically ordered. Simply stated, this approach argues that reality is a dialectically structured polarity that finds its ultimate grounding in Trinitarian kenosis. For Balthasar, then, Trinitarian kenosis guarantees that Creation and human

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4 See: Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, (trans.) by Oliver Feltham. (New York: Continuum, 2010), 81, 84-85 and 87. Hereafter cited as *BE*.


nature is neither explained by utilitarian calculus (as argued by empiricists) nor is the product of isolated and totalizing subjective acts of consciousness (as favored by idealists). Rather, given the ordering of Creation as a polarity that analogously mirrors Trinitarian kenosis, Balthasar argues for a created order and a human person that is both free and conscious.  

Chapter Two, “An Ur-kenotic Theology of the Trinity”\(^8\), will describe Balthasar’s kenotic interpretation of the Triune God, where the Transcendent immanent Trinity, Father, Son and Spirit, is most fundamentally expressed in terms of self-sacrificial love. Here, the kenotic identity of the Triune God reveals the inner life of God, the relative hypostases and the essence common to the Divine Persons. The distinction, drama and tension of the Father, Son and Spirit generate the “sacrificial” giving of the Father to the Son, and the Son’s perfect return of this kenotic gifting back to the Father through the Spirit.  

Chapter Three, “Divine Kenosis: The Logic of Divine Subtraction”, will further expound on Balthasar’s kenotic interpretation of the Triune God, where the Incarnate

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\(^8\) Although there has been no work that attempts what this project intends, scholars such as Lucy Gardner, Ben Quash, John O’Donnell, S.J., Graham Ward, Thomas G. Weinandy, O.F.M., Cap., Rowan Williams, Alyssa Lyra Pitstick, Angelo Cardinal Scola, G.F. O’Hanlon, S.J, Mark A. McIntosh, Aidan Nichols, O.P., and Nicholas J. Healey have offered studies on Balthasar’s understanding of kenosis. Likewise David C. Schindler, Rodney Howsare, Christophe Potworonski, Adrian Walker, Juan M. Sara, Matthew Levering and Fergus Kerr have done much to illuminate elements of Balthasar’s complex metaphysical vision. Each of these writers is transparent to the role faith plays in their own worldview, and each finds foil in many atheistic and anti-realistic postmodern philosophies.

\(^9\) The suffix “Ur” combines with “kenosis” to refer to the most primordial expression of the Trinitarian act. This term reflects the active state of God’s existence over more static designations such as “causa sui” or “First Principle”.

\(^10\) The Father’s generation of the Son, and the Son’s perfect offering back of Godself to the Father, is beyond our comprehension insofar as finite beings necessarily reduce this eternal event to its sequentially ordered divisive and unified moments.
economic Trinity, with Jesus Christ as fully divine and fully human, lives the truth of Ur-kenosis in person and mission. Here, the kenotic identity of the Triune God reveals a Christocentric hermeneutic, a privileged locus of the revelation of the fully human Jesus Christ, through which one can arrive at a fuller understanding of both the redemptive nature of the Creation/Incarnation/Passion and of conscious human identity. The Trinitarian exchange of Father, Son and Spirit models the restoration of the Creation/Incarnation/Passion in and through Christ and, by analogy, dialectically structures our authentic subjective experience of freely and faithfully following Jesus Christ.

Chapter Four, “Postmodern Immanence”, is the second part of the work. This chapter will provide a discussion of select postmodern thinkers on the metaphysical concepts of transcendence, immanence, relation and difference presented by the speculative reading of Balthasar’s kenotic interpretation of the Triune God in Chapters Two and Three. In the view of many postmoderns, the importance of subjective consciousness in relation or experience, when independent of epistemic activity, is downplayed or rejected. In such theories, reality becomes a self-defining system that reduces all conscious experience to the measure of one’s own subjective appropriations of immanent experience. For many postmoderns, it is the subjective frame of reference that alone grounds identity in the face of the ceaseless becoming of one’s thoughts and perceptions. As such, notions of difference and ongoing change do not threaten to undermine a coherent sense of self, truth and love as they would for believers.

The third and final part of the work, in Chapters Five and Six, offers a speculative synthesis of Part One and Two. Chapter Five “Transcendence and Finite Consciousness” will posit how immanent human consciousness, viewed through a “kenotic” lens, can constructively and positively engage the postmodern world’s tendency to consider relation and difference solely in terms of a non-transcendent deconstruction.\(^{12}\) The intersection of Balthasar’s kenotic interpretation of the Triune/Incarnate God and postmodern thought shows a way forward for the flourishing of human consciousness.

Chapter Six “Absolute Difference and Consciousness” presents a speculative reading of Jesus Christ’s conscious awareness of his Passion, Hell and Absolute Difference. As Christ’s understanding of these events actualizes his relationship to the Father they also can be taken as a way for the subject to understand how relative differences in the world, nothingness and non-being also manifest a way for her to relate to the Transcendent.

\(^{12}\) The relative opposition of Divine relations and simple essence reveal the self-sufficiency of the Divine both in the immanent Trinity and in the economic order as revealed by Jesus Christ. The mutual indwelling of the Divine relations as eternal kenotic events offers, through the revelation of the incarnate Word, the means to dialogically reposition the human person as free, conscious, and loving in light of her primitive grounding in immanent (ontological) difference and her relationships.
Part One: Trinitarian Kenosis

Chapter One: Setting the Stage

To understand the kenotic underpinning of Divine and human identity, and its metaphysical implications, in the work of the Swiss Catholic theologian and philosopher Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-88), special attention must be given to how he adapts ancient, patristic and scholastic terminology to his own theological formulations. Likewise, in this work we will draw out the most significant of his ideas and terminology in conversation with postmodern thought. In our interpretation of Balthasar’s theology five leitmotifs are of greatest import: (1) kenosis (2) transcendence, (3) immanence, (4) relation and (5) difference. An introduction to our interpretation and use of each of these terms follows.

(1) Kenosis

Presupposing knowledge of several other studies that detail kenosis’ larger scriptural, systematic and theological significances, our purposes here are more limited. In no way can speculative metaphysics replace the living testimony of Divine revelation found in sacred Scripture or experienced in a faith-filled response to the Spirit’s movements.  

Briefly stated, in ancient literature, two literal senses for the word kenosis (kenos)

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13 See: David Coffey, Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 30. John F. Wippel remarks that thinkers such as Aquinas were sensitive to the fact that one’s philosophical notions will play out in one’s theological vision. Reason serves theology by determining how the three modes of Divine disclosure—first truth (Veritas Prima), to articles of faith (articuli fidei) and the canonical Scriptures—are mediated as a single constellating revelation, for which see: John F. Wippel, The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Infinite Being, (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 23-62 and Matthew Levering, Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 32.
predominate and each of these meanings is further elaborated in their figurative uses. The literal meaning of kenosis gives “content” to its metaphoric use, and its metaphoric use contextualizes its customary significance. Kenosis is defined as: (1) “empty” or “void” in a literal sense, and figuratively as “fruitless”, “vain”, or “empty-headed” activities; (2) it can also refer to a destitute or bereft state that emblematically means being “empty-handed”. The literal sense of kenosis as “empty” or “void” appears in Genesis 37:24 where it describes the empty cistern or pit that Joseph is lowered into when he is abandoned by his brothers and left to die of exposure, hunger and thirst.

The understanding of kenosis as “empty-handed”, as a destitute or in a bereft state of kenotic relation, finds expression in canonical literature in the idea of being deprived of a marriage partner. Here, the kenotic nature of mission and personal identity are presented: “[t]hese twenty years I have been in your house; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been on my side, surely you would have sent me away empty-handed” (Gen. 31:41-42)

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14 See: TL 2, 248.
16 Here, kenosis refers to the negative physical, legal, metaphoric and spatial associations applicable to the idea of emptiness.
The figurative sense of kenosis as “fruitless”, “vain”, or “empty-headed”\(^\text{17}\) finds sustained consideration in the *Book of Job* (e.g., 2:3; 6:6 & 15:3)\(^\text{18}\) where “empty” words and actions are given a moral and spiritual dimension and judged to be “useless” or “unproductive” in that they attempt to sway the righteous man to unjustly prosecute the Lord.

This idea of the kenotic or vacant word and/or deed further advances in the prophetic writings. For the prophets, “kenotic” emptiness has an eschatological import. In the *Book of Isaiah* empty pangs of hunger and thirst are seen as images of all that wages conflict against God’s People. The prophet Isaiah states: “[a]s when the hungry man dreams he is eating and awakes with his hunger not satisfied, or as when a thirsty man dreams he is drinking and awakes faint, with his thirst not quenched, so shall the multitude of all the nations be that fight against Mount Zion” (*Is*. 29:8). The prophet Jeremiah further takes up the idea of the relationship between suffering and kenosis. Jeremiah proclaims that empty, vain, kenotic thoughts and actions are not simply frustrated fantasy but a perversion of truth that demands ongoing moral evaluation. For Jeremiah, kenotic or empty actions are to be purified metaphorically like lead’s refinement: “[t]he bellows blow fiercely, the lead is consumed in the fire; in vain the

\[^{17}\text{For the ancient Greeks, an “empty-headed” person or a “witless” act was a development of their material understanding of kenosis as “empty-handedness”. As such, they considered such words divorced from the full force of truth, and more often than not an act of imaginative fabrication. As such, the “kenotic” or “empty-headed” thought or action was less a moral problem than an exuberance that distanced the speaker from reality.}\]

\[^{18}\text{For the Torah writers, marriage orientates one’s physical, spiritual, and kenotic experiences of relation and difference in daily living to one’s understanding of the Divine.}\]
refining goes on, for the wicked are not removed” (Jer. 6:29).

In the New Testament, and in particular with the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, a new way to understand kenotic relation with the Triune God, Creation, death and evil is actualized and enters into human experience. For New Testament authors, truth has practical applications for daily life—to promote living life in a certain way (Jn. 8:31-32). Thus, the concept of kenosis brings to the fore the personal, relational and expansive nature of emptiness. Perhaps the most exceptional occurrence of this interpretation of kenosis is found in St. Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: “Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but he emptied himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:5-9). When applied to the Divine the concept of kenosis thereby implies an emptying that remains eternally full, indeed, “supra-full”.19 As such, kenosis provides a foundation on which to explicitly frame the transcendental functions of difference and relation in a finite created world and it brings into relief how Jesus Christ immanently transforms all relationships into a final transcendent orientation.20 The transcendental relationship is simultaneously expansive in reality and mysteriously in the life of the Transcendent.21 The transcendentals are not

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19 The idea of Divine “emptying” is paradoxical, something our finite concept of quantified emptying only comprehends by means of apophesis, where apophesis is taken as a rhetorical and logical method that reasons and defines a being by elucidating what it is not. Thus, while the creative tension between Divine and human emptying cannot be resolved, apophesis metaphorically employs subtraction or denial to set the parameters of the identity of the being under investigation.

20 The polarity, or the fundamental binary structure of being(s) and Creation, between our finite understanding of emptying, and the emptying of what remains plenum, is irreducible. Similar to relational differentiation, polarity conduces identity by serving as a medium for self-determination.

conceptual categories as such categories are determined by their content. The transcendentals are irreducible principles that “transcend every species and belong to every existent as such.” According to Balthasar, the transcendentals are the perceptive means by which the subject perceives the world and reflects the capacity of finite things to show themselves (beauty), give of themselves (goodness), and express themselves (truth), and are not a matter of need but of ongoing perfection. Paradoxically, when subjective truth becomes so certain as to totally eliminate free interpretation, it takes on a metaphorical “corpse-like” quality for Balthasar.

(2) Transcendence

Belief in the scriptural account of Creation inspired Christian thinkers to re-evaluate the philosophical relationship existing between the One and created Being. If one sees Being as having been derived from the Transcendent creative act, a new distinction is introduced—that of being qua being compared with its source in Divine operation. While an ‘uncanny alienation’ exists between Being and beings within the Christian tradition, this chasm between the created and Transcendent leads to an inexhaustible wealth of meaning. The conceptual signification of Being and Creation begins to focus Christian metaphysics. Briefly stated, Transcendence is the state of the Divine’s absolute distance from Creation and the created. As such, the Transcendent is beyond the physical and cognitive reach of finite beings and can be known only through

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22 See: _TL_ 1, 15.
23 _GL_ 4, 372.
24 See: _E_, 66. Balthasar looks to Nyssa’s belief that: “[n]ever will the soul reach its final perfection, for it will never encounter a limit…it will always be transformed into a better thing,” Nyssa, _CE_ I, II, 340 D see: Minge, _Patrologia Graeca_ 44-46, _Gregorii Nysseni Opera_. Hereafter cited: (PG).
analogy and apophasis, for “God is called incomprehensible not because anything of Him is not seen; but because He is not seen perfectly as He is capable of being seen.”

Most postmodern thinkers reject a Transcendent being because even this concept denies a finite being’s rational capacities and her grounding in the physical world. With view to this consideration, the work presented here will employ the term “transcendence” to denote a finite experience of the Transcendent only as a conceptual marker which includes a rejection or denial of the factual existence of the Divine. The postmodern’s position is seen mirrored in the relationship between non-Euclidean and Euclidean geometry. Non-Euclidean geometry is seen to rationally quantify topological shape by establishing axiomatically the coherent relationship between what is logically necessary but super-sensible, without reference to the parallel postulate and the physically contingent models of shapes. In this way, super-sensible existence that is, the formal and logical character of geometric shapes can be separated entirely from concrete geometrical objects and therefore be deemed logically valid but “physically” absent from reality beyond material estimations. Even the physical representation of shapes is approximate to its constitutive logical definitions given the limitations of material sciences: there is no perfect sphere or triangle that can be engineered and produced in the world. One may say that the definitional and axiomatic truth of such objects only analogously actualizes through a physical medium. At the methodological level such mathematical development is seen as equivalent to traditional theology’s conviction that a Transcendent Creator can be determined from finite existence.

The human experience of transcendence, then, remains firmly grounded in the

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27 S. Th. I a, q.12, a.7, ad. 2.
immediacy of the finite state while simultaneously and continuously expanding that state beyond the limitations of conscious observation. However, for Balthasar, Divine goodness diffuses through Creation by actualizing the real as free, that is, as a “principle of plenitude”. In this way, *transcendence* closely aligns with the attempt of the finite being to take a full measure of the whole of Creation. The concept of totality establishes a limit to the finite being’s immediate experience of an infinite Creation that points to a Transcendent God. The thinking subject is able to take account of Creation given her preexisting measuring by the Transcendent that while immeasurable “measures all the rest.”

The *transcendent* relation thus offers a way to momentarily decentralize the tautological and limiting factors of finitude and immediacy, while at the same time allowing for a *transcendent* experience of the Divine in Creation:

The divine is not present in creation in the form of ‘hints of transcendence’, points in the created order where finitude and creatureliness appear to thin out or open up to a mysterious infinity, but in creation being itself—which includes, paradigmatically, creation being itself un-finished-ness, time-taking, pain and death. Finitude is a positive limit not simply a mediation of origin and end, but also a productive albeit negative appropriation of the infinite. The crucified Jesus is, in this context, the ground and manifestation of what analogy means.

(3) **Immanence**

Briefly stated, immanence is the finite non-*transcendent* state of created beings. Where *transcendence* can be seen as an impassible limit that challenges the autonomy of created beings, the fully human Jesus Christ can be seen to escort finite beings *transcendentally* beyond their natural constraints by opening them to his fully divine

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28 See: *TL* 1, 45.
nature and mission. In this way, *transcendence* neither denies a finite being’s creation nor demands that one accept the existence of pure immanence. The Spirit communicates to the believer an experience of *transcendence* by enlivening Christ’s kenotic witness in the world. Identity manifests in the world by means of distance as Ur-kenosis analogously manifests difference throughout Creation: “[t]he distance between the Persons, within the dynamic process of the divine essence, is infinite, to such an extent that everything that unfolds on the plane of finitude can take place only within this all-embracing dynamic process.” The created manifests the non-local presence of what has already been an intra-Trinitarian event of the Father’s generation of the Son.

(4) Relation

Briefly stated, relation is the correspondence or “disposition” (*dispositio*) existing between two or more terms. Relation does not indicate substantial inherence in something, but a reference toward something. Therefore, relation can be conceived as a sort of “interval” (*intervallum*). The Divine alone subsists in existence as simple. For finite beings, relations are accidental and non-inhering. For the Divine, such relations are absolute and real. In finite relations, two or more beings are joined by a common

30 See: Ghislain Lafont, *God, Time and Being* (Massachusetts: St. Bede’s Publications, 1992), 107, 272-74 for the transcendent as boundary, narrative nexus and analogy, as well as, *GL* 7, 534-40 where Balthasar highlights how the transcendent is an invitation and means to re-read finitude as a wayward station to resurrection.

31 Immanence is a predominant theme for postmodernity and will be engaged with specifically in *Chapter Four*.

32 *TD* 5, 245. See also: *TD* 4, 333, *GL* 7, 213-24, 249, n.5 and 268.


spatiotemporal medium that grants each a certain amount of exterior freedom. Further, the idea of relation also allows for an interior freedom that guarantees that relationships do not finally segregate a being from its interiority or define them only from the vantage of contingency, positioning and repositioning. Insofar as finite relations are distinct from the subject incorporating them, they can be thought to have a “real” existence whereby they are not merely logical or formal.\(^{35}\)

(5) Difference

Difference articulates in the real as a co-generation, co-belonging, and co-penetration among beings. Thus, difference works against univocal pattern or final definition: “[d]ifference, then, is always plural, is always more; it is always opening to more. Difference is always the differing of difference. Difference is never only two, even when it is ‘a’ difference between two things, because that difference will make a difference.”\(^{36}\) Paradoxically, difference can also be understood to be analogously substantial as in Balthasar’s theory of Ur-kenosis and the hierarchical ordering of differences within sub-multiples of mathematical sets as Badiou argues. We will respectively develop each of these models of difference in chapters four and five.

Briefly stated difference is, like finite relations, accidental and non-inhering. These very characteristics allow difference to serve in distancing two or more beings or ideas. As such, difference allows us to plot a relational course between the part and the whole, the categorical and the unknown. For example, insofar as truth is universal/whole and does not retreat into the mind of any one person/part, immanent difference allows for

\(^{35}\) See: S. Th. I, q.28, a.1.
\(^{36}\) End of Modernity, 127.
a sharing of truth without sacrificing personal freedom or relation.\textsuperscript{37}

The fact that difference and relation metaphysically ground human freedom suggests that all created beings are defined by these properties. Consequently, when relational difference corresponds to a transcendent experience of the Divine, finite consciousness achieves a deeper hold of truth’s universal measure.\textsuperscript{38} Difference for the faithful never leads to absurdity, deconstructing oblivion or ultimately abstraction.\textsuperscript{39} We are able to enter into transcendent relations because the Divine offers us a share of the Godself’s Ur-kenotic communion and will, for as Barth writes: “the freedom of God’s will, too, denotes the absolute superiority of God in relation to every possible or real power distinct from His power; His dignity as the Creator of being and also the Lord and master of non-being. The place of each of these—in all their difference—is the place that He chooses to give them, controlling or permitting, and really controlling even in His permission.”\textsuperscript{40} Modalities of difference communicate a being’s presence by advancing personal “anabatic” expansion that presupposes a pre-existing relation to the Divine: “[t]he paradox of the spiritual creature that is ordained beyond itself by the innermost reality of its nature to a goal that is unreachable for it and that can only be given as a gift

\textsuperscript{37} Relation and difference initiates a disjunction into being without eradicating a being’s relative independence or finally determining a being’s identity and context.

\textsuperscript{38} In that difference is metaphysically structured to pass on truth’s varying permutations, the relation of created beings and difference is diurnal and fosters truth’s inexhaustible wealth.


of grace.”

Created non-inhering difference or differends are indivisibly related to the ONE. A syntactical definition of difference is always provisional given the ascendant nature of polarity in reality. Each difference found in a being is reflexive to its finite relations but is also in telic relationship to the Ur-kenotic Divine. The ONE is Transcendent and Ur-kenotic and this opens up the economy of the real to a variety of horizontal and vertical modulations of difference including difference within a creature.

(6) Methodological Polarity

Hans Urs von Balthasar’s kenotic interpretation of the Trinitarian and Incarnate God was advanced through the lens of patristic and scholastic thought, and further developed in a modern context, employing a methodology that systematically expounded on the themes of analogy, apophasis and polarity. All three of these methods fail if they eliminate the tension between the Transcendent and immanent. This occurs when one terminus is seen as a simple variant of the other or when essential ordering is seen to be

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41 Hans Urs von Balthasar, Theology of Henri De Lubac (trans.) Susan Clements (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 13. See also: TL 2, 181, S. Th. I-II, q. 5, aa.5-7 and S. Th. I, q. 43, a. 3: “By the gift of sanctifying grace the rational creature is perfected so that it can freely use not only the created gift itself, but also enjoy the Divine person Himself; and so the invisible mission takes place according to the gift of sanctifying grace; and yet the divine person Himself is given.”

an epiphenomenon. Actual existence co-exists with the essential and never simply
trumps its ongoing influence within the created being. Balthasar’s correlationist
approach avoids becoming subjective idealism by holding to the actual reality of other
beings. This dissertation will offer a speculative reading of Balthasar’s work advanced
through the lens of modern thought, and further developed in a postmodern context,
while applying the logical methodology of a dialectical approach.

We take to heart Balthasar’s admonition that the choice of methodology must
reflect the subject matter under investigation.\textsuperscript{43} Given that the subject matter is the
Trinitarian and Incarnate God, and two fundamental categories through which one might
investigate the Godhead are “mission” and “person”, for Balthasar and this author the
methodology exercised in the comprehension of the immanent and economic God
develops in history and imitates an experience of God’s human form:

There can be no doubt that the faith of the first Christians applied ideas, concepts,
and titles, in varying degrees, to the phenomenon of Jesus in order to
communicate it to themselves and others. The decisive question, therefore, is:
Has this process articulated an original “form”, identified its significance and
revealed its true outlines—or has it taken what was originally a relatively form-
less core and clothed it in successive garments, which ultimately yield a plausible
“form”?\textsuperscript{44}

Similarly, Christian thinkers are called to interpret the Christian message with a view to
current scientific and mathematical advances.

In contrast with earlier systems that were more static or substantially ordered, a

\textsuperscript{43} See: \textit{GL} 1, 39.

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{TD} 3, 64. In the \textit{New Testament}, ‘\textit{pisitis}’ correlates to the verb ‘\textit{pisteuô}’,
whose etymological origin relates to ‘love’, ‘beloved’, the Latin ‘\textit{libet}’ (‘it pleases’),
‘libido’ (‘pleasure/desire’), and the German ‘\textit{belieben}’ (‘to prize’ or to ‘hold dear’); see:
Andrew Shanks, \textit{God and Modernity: A New and Better Way to do Theology} (London:
Routledge, 2000), 54 and Wilfred Cantwell Smith, \textit{Faith and Belief} (Princeton, NJ:
Princeton University of Press, 1979), 106.
kenotic-centered approach to the Triune God and metaphysics imparts a dynamic understanding of Divine and created being. Balthasar’s kenotic development of traditional metaphysics then is not merely academic. Rather, it offers a way to better understand the individual and corporate relation one has with the living God. Balthasar’s theological trajectory looks toward a mysteriously alive and open-ended relation to the Imago Dei. It is a drama that demands an irreducibly personal response while at the same time maintaining a relation whose distance infinitely separates, even as the conscious experience of difference invokes awe. In this way, the relation and the Divine Image when analogously or apophatically grasped encourage one to experience difference in a positive manner. In the end, the immanent hold of an absolutely transcendent and ultimately ungraspable God compels the faithful person to trust in God, to proceed by faith. It is hoped that the metaphysical speculations that follow will be shown to conceptually root the personal experience of religious faith.

The methodological theme of analogy thus progresses in a logical manner: the Trinitarian and Incarnate God entered history through the mission of the Son and in the form of the fully divine and fully human person Jesus Christ who shares in the history

46 See: TL 2, 159-70 and TD 5, 67-75.
48 Here, the paradigmatic encounter between God and Jacob is instructive. After a night of wrestling (and being renamed Israel), Jacob refuses to release his grip on his mysterious adversary. Jacob asks for the stranger’s name, but is met with silence. To be in conscious relation with the Divine demands one have the humility to recognize the difference existing between God and the human person. Preeminent, the difference is one of God’s absolute righteousness compared to the fallen person who devises evil (e.g. Micah 2).
and form of all human persons. An analogy can exist between finite beings and the Transcendent revealed in Jesus Christ because contraries can be associated, for: “[n]othing prevents contraries being found in the same thing as long as they are present in the same respect.”49 This mystery concisely expresses the heart of the Christian faith for, as Aquinas argues: “[i]n a Christian view, nothing in any height or depth of contemplation surpasses the limits of simple Christian faith: the faith that God and man are one person in Christ, the faith that the Persons of the Father, Son and Spirit are not three gods but a single God.”50

Just as any explication of the Trinitarian and Incarnate God will always be incomplete, so every analogy infers the existence of difference. Difference or apophasis is a necessary hermeneutical principle for our comprehension of divine relation given the unbridgeable chasm between God and Creation.51 In this way, a methodology that utilizes themes of both analogy and apophasis provides for an additive (analogy) and \( \text{subtractive} \) (apophasis) approach to a kenotic interpretation of the Trinitarian and Incarnate God.52 Transcendent Ur-kenosis, or eternal “in-division”, is never “additive” nor \( \text{subtractive} \) as it neither increases nor reduces the Divine Persons. Given the symmetry within the immanent and economic Trinity, Christ’s Incarnation brings into relief the manner in which this mysterious \( \text{perichoresis} \) affords an ideal of finite identity. More specifically,

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49 On how the holding of contraries is possible in light of Christ’s Passion, see: \( S. \ Th. \) III, q.46, a.1 and a.8.
51 Traditionally, the concept of \( \text{diastema} \) \( (\text{διάστημα}) \) qualified how early theologians brought together these themes into a narrative. For an overview, see: John Panteleimon Manoussakis, \( \text{God After Metaphysics: A Theological Aesthetic} \) (Indianapolis and Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 96-101.
52 The term “\( \text{subtractive} \)” underscores that a negatively derived identity, or apophasis, is always exponentially greater than the sum of its parts.
Balthasarian kenosis develops a more traditional metaphysics of substance and property in light of a *subtractive* or apophatic process. The *subtractive* event develops Aquinas’ insight that potency approaches all being in some way. Apophasis and privation, like our concept of the *subtractive*, conceptualize a being’s negation in relationship to its proper form—for a finite being this is non-being and for the Divine it is Godself as Ur-kenotic in Jesus Christ’s death and descent to Hell. The *subtractive* and privation can be seen as a differing relationship that keeps the contraries from “meeting” in a being.\textsuperscript{53} It is possible for these relationships and the potential contradictions they hold in tension to be in a hierarchy based on an analogy of difference.\textsuperscript{54}

With the predictive power of the analogous and the differentiating scope of the apophatic, Balthasar argues, a person has the means to arrive at an interpretation of the Trinitarian and Incarnate God and the unlimited capacity to enter into finite relationships:

The image of God means, first of all, that the human being cannot be closed in on himself. If he attempts this he betrays himself. To be the image of God implies a relation. It is the dynamic that sets the human being in motion toward the totally Other. Hence it means the capacity for relationship; it is the human capacity for God. The human being is, as a consequence, most profoundly human when he steps out of himself and becomes capable of addressing God on familiar terms… He is most profoundly himself when he discovers his relation to his Creator.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{53} In Christ’s loving judgment the last traces of all contrary to human nature, that of sin and evil is cleansed, see: *S. Th.* III, q. 75, a.8.

\textsuperscript{54} On the philosophical foundations of the hierarchical ordering of judgments about identity and their negation through contradiction or diminishment, see: *S. Th.* II-II, q.1, a.7.

\textsuperscript{55} Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, ‘*In the Beginning*: A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall,’ *Dei Verbum*, points to how sacred Scripture unifies the move towards the Other and totality: “But since sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted with its divine authorship in mind, no less attention must be devoted to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture, taking into account the Tradition of the entire Church and the analogy of faith, if we are to derive their true meaning from the sacred texts,” *Dei Verbum*, no. 12. See also: *De pot.*, q.7, a.2, ad. 9 and *S. Th.* I, q. 13, a. 5.
Postmodern critics argue that correlational thought such as that advocated by Balthasar lacks a sophisticated understanding of the rapport between the subject and the world looking to the “shapeless beyond, unfettered by even the barest logical constraints.” Many postmodern thinkers posit that the correlational strategy fails to see how difference ultimately gravitates and translates subjective cognition into a variety of solipsistic gestures, sequential power plays or contradictory co-dependent relations that reduce authentic action to the ephemeral: “…inasmuch as relation…cannot emerge except through a gesture that is, itself, straightway contingent and ‘finite’ to the extent that nothing could ever sublate or idealize this contingency in any ‘transcendental necessity.” Balthasar’s use of the analogical and apophatic would most likely be seen to naïvely confuse one’s direct access to things-in-themselves with a solipsistic dogmatism that conflates onto-theological representation with true transience. The Fourth Lateran Council stressed the asymmetrical nature (maior dissimilitudo) that ineluctably exists between God and finite creatures. The divide between Creator and created introduces a disjunctive quality that undermines our best efforts to speak literally about God. The Divine remains for finite beings an “ever deeper experience” of “the fundamental structure of analogy” for if: “biblical’ revelation rests on the basis of the primal God-world distinction, and thus on metaphysics, and radiates from this point, then metaphysics correspondingly attains fulfillment in the event of revelation.”

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56 NFP, 108.
57 Ibid., 105.
58 NFP, 105. See also: After Finitude, 23.
59 See: Sacramentum Mundi, vol. 1. (ed. et al) Karl Rahner (London: Burns & Oates, 1993) and GL 5, 628. The import and proper use of analogia entis is critical to how we understand the mystery of divine relations. Denying that our epistemological
statement concerning God’s identity infers greater mystery. As Augustine makes clear, it is easier to articulate what God is not (non quid non est), than what the Divine is (quia est). Commonly, theologians employ analogies of attribution that surmise a continuum existing between God and Creation, a range which moves logically from an effect back to its a cause. Analogies of attribution take a finite being’s limited and composite properties back to their transcendent and perfectly divine expression. Analogies of proportion further embellish how divine simplicity differs from the composite nature of created beings. Analogous approximations of God respect the Divine’s Transcendence and concede the tendency towards an idolatrous “androcentricism” in our finite limitations. These conjectures are invaluable to this work. Sarah Coakley further notes that our understanding of God must not move from “the matrix of human transformations that is the Trinity’s very point of intersection with our lives.”

endeavors are analogous to the path of ‘pure’ logic leads to a natural collapsing of the Spirit with the Divine and, by extension, with the world as outlined by Hegel, see: GL 5, 588-89 and 613-27. Balthasar reads this modern idea of the relation existing between the Divine and Reality in terms of Pseudo-Dionysius’ influential view. Pseudo-Dionysius Aeropagita designates three ways in which the Divine can be negatively limited to Creation: (1) the proportions between Reality and the Divine (convenientia proportionis) (2) by the differences stressed in composition (via negationis) and, (3) by inferring divine omnipotence through comparing cause with effect. In the following, we will show how Balthasar develops the idea of convenientia proportionis with a view to the idea of relational difference, and via negationis locally in terms of apophatic subtraction of Reality taken as a whole, and finally in his conversion of cause and effect with a reciprocal receptivity between the Father in the Trinity and in Jesus Christ. See also: TD 2, 411.

See Augustine: “Ac per hoc ne ineffabilis quidem dicendus est Deus quia et hoc cum dicitur, aliquid dicitur,” De Doctr. Christi, I, 6, (PL 34), 21. See also: NPNF, 524.


kenotic truth in conversation with Jesus Christ’s experience of finitude and the divine offers a way to ground our own understanding of relation and difference.

The human person’s relation to Jesus Christ must remain proportionate because human beings lack the divine nature of the Son—while remaining the *Imago Dei.* Taking the divine Transcendence as a given, our approach to Jesus Christ and God demands an apophatic method. Apophasis proceeds by understanding God negatively, that is, by knowing what the divine is not. Apophasis is a necessary part of a sound theological methodology for it reminds one of God’s Transcendence and the fact that as the philosopher Giorgio Agamben writes “[c]ontrary to common opinion, method shares with logic its inability to separate itself completely from its context. There is not method valid for every domain, just as there is no logic that can set aside its objects.”

Apophasis can thus be understood as a methodological parallel to kenosis.

The apparently contradictory methodological advances of analogy and apophasis are in fact a fundamental way to characterize all finite non-subsistent relations. A being or object is a singular, concrete reality for Balthasar and its presence in the subjective perceptive and cognitive field of vision begins a process of mutual respect. The mutuality of the dialectical relation is further attested to in its ability to be described with reference to integrated but distinct concepts such as time, space, substance, quantity, quality, causality, infinity, etc.

The subject mentally organizes an object into a distinct shape given the patterns

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Block, Jr. (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), 32.

63 The soul is the image (*imago trinitatis*) of the Divine, although an imperfect image, see: Augustine, *De Trinitate,* IX, 3. See also: *NPNF,* 127.

generated by the object’s changing appearance. The subject’s perception of an object’s ongoing development point to the role the essential plays in the grounding of human consciousness beyond the mere inherence of a subject-object relation based on physical properties. Subjective interiority awakens in the difference that arises by comparing a subject to an object. *Difference* here has a quasi-real status reflective of its source and the posited relation it shares with the Ur-kenotic Creator.\(^6^5\) All beings analogously participate in the Divine’s real and simple essence insofar as they are created.

The concretization of the object simultaneously differentiates the pre-conscious subject as a reflexive individual. Relation mediates the non-inhering difference existing between two or more terms. Finite relations between a subject and an object highlight the substantial and accidental differences between the compared. The relationship between the subject and object is only meaningful if some *transcendent* vantage is offered that encompasses both the differences existing between the two and the separate identities this comparison introduces. The most primitive predication of the perceptual field finds stabilization in the subject-object difference. This demands for Balthasar the hierarchic ordering of objects in the world relative to their divine source. For Balthasar, the pre-conscious immediate sensory intuition of an object reflects finite being’s *transcendent* ordering in a variety of bivalent matrixes: universal-particular, passive-active, exterior-interior.\(^6^6\) Indeed, all reality relates *transcendentally* to the eternal and Ur-kenotic God. As a result of Christ’s presence in the created order, Ur-kenosis models how distinction between the Divine Persons allows for the predication of all lesser non-inhering

\(^6^5\) Balthasar sees the Ur-kenotic space within the Divine, the “insurmountable” distance between Creator and Creation and the infinite “space” within Creation allowing for independent action as related, see: *S. Th.* I, q.6, a.4 and I, q.7, a.2.

\(^6^6\) See: *TL* 1, 180-85 and *TD* 3, 532-35.
differences. The event of perception is a non-invasive process that highlights the metaphysical principles of subjective and objective existence. Divine kenotic relation provides a way to explain the development of human perception and subjectivity as freely engaged, that is, without recourse to pre-existing innate ideas or mereological essentialism. An object’s essential recrudescence is inseparable from its continual concealment in new appearances.

Given Balthasar’s unique methodology, a reevaluation of the role that relation plays in refracting the most primitive cognitive metaphysical principles is warranted. Subjective awareness is a process that develops through reciprocal relationships with other beings in the created order. Through this engagement a person remembers/learns, and is thereby enabled to render more expansive and in-depth relationships with others. Unlike anti-realistic theories of consciousness, Balthasar posits that an object’s disclosure is free of \textit{a priori} mental categorization. Finite relations within the world’s closed system suggest to many postmoderns the infinite regress of interpretation, meta-structuring, meta-meta-structuring, etc. If the \\textit{subtractive} or different is nomothetic to human consciousness, the very operation of reason and its confirmation of truth risks unfolding into meaninglessness. Accidental qualities, perception and thought change over time and each renovation create a new and different relation that needs clarifying. Lacking a realization of difference and change, one would be erroneously forced to equate the “real” and “absolute” meaning with a single static example of a being’s ongoing development.

\footnote{Merelogical essentialism argues that an object cannot undergo any change without changing identity, see: Roderick M. Chisholm, “Mereological Essentialism”, in \textit{Person and Object: A Metaphysical Study} (London: George Allen and Unwin Press, 1976), Chapter Three and Appendix B.}
A particular relation is definitive for the individual but it is not consummative insofar as all relations and properties are transitive in comparison to the Divine. The possible infinite regress implied in the continual application of the dialectical finds transcedent resolution in Jesus Christ’s redemptive stand against difference qua difference in Hell. Eternal kenosis analogously corresponds with and transcends Creation’s innumerable relations and human consciousness’s infinite reach. On the one hand, a Transcendent-transcendent-immanent pairing seems to only complicate every relation by adding an immaterial or spiritual component to our lived experience. On the other hand, Jesus Christ is perceived as the “concrete universal”, the archetype for all reality where, as fully human, he brings transcedent meaning to the immanent created order.  

Christ is the new Adam (Rom. 5:14ff) who makes known the invisible God (Jn. 1:18). Christ does not actualize the general in his particular existence—Christ is the totality (das Ganze) in the concrete and as such is completely unique (einmalig).

Christ as a finite creature manifests transcendence in his subjective capacities of absolute Transcendence as Son. Christ allows all relation and difference to be inclusive to his intransitive becoming (identity). As such, the stabilization of relations among beings is made meaningful through their openness to the Father—even those dark corners of non-identity and paradox that shadow the “real”. Because the apprehension of the subjective and objective identity is isomorphic to Trinitarian relations as manifested in

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69 On the Divine’ relationship to genus, see: S. Th. I, q.3, a.5.

Jesus Christ, the subtractive dimensions of finite existence negatively appropriate Divine truth. Without sacrificing divine impassibility, the divine hypostases allow for all difference, including the birth and death of the Son, Jesus Christ. This is possible given the fixed correspondence of divine relation and essence under a different mode of intelligibility: as a causal relation, dialectic, etc. Jesus Christ, the Verbum Mentis, reveals in his Incarnation and Passion that the transendent and immanent order of meaning is made possible even in the context of created differences.

The boundaries of existence reflect the appearance of the object’s essence in the sensual realm. This cyclic movement that Balthasar avers reveals a truth that inevitably fragments prior to its habitual reintegration and constellating ‘resurrection’ in ever-greater meaning. The relation of difference provides the basis for the infinite rhythm of an object’s dispossession (außert) or the offering of its essential meaning to the subject and its retraction back into obscurity. Difference momentarily inheres in individual beings as privation and in relations between them highlighting their identities. This conscious structuring of reality through difference (of one’s interior state and in terms of other beings in the world) opens one to immaterial and existential relations employed by the imagination and memory that are ultimately perfected as expressions of love.

In the first instance, the imagination takes hold of an object as image. The image is then analytically and synthetically judged and invested with meaning. Human “indifference” or receptivity lets one step back from a particular object’s global context and

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71 Following Aquinas, essence or form is taken by Balthasar to be expansive and dynamic. Aquinas does categorize the essential in two ways, it is a: (1) species form that determines the nature of a being and (2) the accidental form which determines a being in some other way. Balthasar’s development of this question will be taken up at some length in Chapter Five.
analytically investigate its intrinsic meaning. Subjective receptivity always involves a privation and a welcoming of the “other”.\textsuperscript{72} This delimiting “abstracts” an individual object’s image from the total network of relations in which it is enmeshed.\textsuperscript{73} Synthetic Judgments function oppositely by taking the abstracted image and repositioning it as part of a larger whole. Balthasar claims that one can never intentionally exhaust the meaning of a being given its impenetrable depths and corresponding placement in a dynamically changing world. A subject’s intentional abstraction (delimiting) and synthesis (placing) of an object indicate that meaning is \textit{subtractive} and vicarious, liminal, situational and infinitely deep.\textsuperscript{74} According to Balthasar, just as self-conscious reflection arises with an object’s disclosure the totality of all such revelations is countless.

The apparent absolute “negation” of the Divine on the Cross and in Hell alone sets limits to finite differentiation. However, Jesus Christ’s experiences in Hell remove from Creation any trace of hard determinism: self-possession increases in proportion to one’s surrendering to the needs of the other. It is only in this language of difference, sacrifice, atonement and personal relation that the human person finds a voice that speaks an infinite love.\textsuperscript{75} Self-renunciation and a finite being’s inherent privation in relationship

\textsuperscript{72} See: \textit{TL} 1, 48 and on his reading of active potency’s operation of passive potency in the receptive act towards its own perfection, see: \textit{De pot}, q.1, a.1, q.7, a.9, ad. 9, \textit{S. Th. I-II}, q. 55, a.2 and I-II, q.27, a.3.

\textsuperscript{73} Finite receptivity and cognitive abstraction are limited, see: Norris Clarke, \textit{Explorations in Metaphysics: God-Being-Person} (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 65-88.

\textsuperscript{74} Balthasar’s understanding of ontological and noetic space, distance and difference, as \textit{transcendent} kenotic markers in reality allows for a comprehensive reading of the continual becoming of beings evidenced in the world. Such a reading of difference seems suitable to the conscious structuring of reality and the opening up of a being to the immaterial relation of love.

\textsuperscript{75} Personal relations of love are, with faith, now related to the love of the Christ who gave his all for each person and for all of Creation. In Christ’s redemptive sacrifice
to the threat of non-being (*non ens*) and the subject’s promised growth, given the essential potentiality (*ens in potentia*) of all reality, are now read in light of Christ’s own death and descent into Hell. The non-subistence of finite relations and the “dispossession” of one’s innermost heart in willingly opening to another’s idiosyncrasy is finally meaningful for the Christian as all such *subtractions* allow one a greater participation in the Logos’ self-renunciation.\(^7^6\)

Divine exemplarity in Creation points to Christ’s disclosure of divine identity in finite kenotic “becoming”, a life that leads to the glorification of the Cross. With Christ’s descent into Hell a hermeneutic is made available in which to frame absolute difference as non-identity, dispersed infinity, parataxis, meaningless *subtracting* and nothingness in light of Divine love. All metaphysical principles, even relational difference, are positive as their teleological orientation always points to the eternal. In the Passion the ultimate disclosure of Christ as the gestalt of God’s glory is revealed.\(^7^7\) Christ’s complete identification with humanity in Hell does not sacrifice his eternal Trinitarian Ur-kenotic relations and this eternal constant has direct ramifications for the structure of consciousness.

(7) Postmodern Advancements

The term postmodern is not without controversy as it announces the end of

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\(^{76}\) Dispossession is an expansive term that recommends noetically the circular and yet developing nature of self-reflexivity: primitive notions of self are jettisoned for more complex understandings of one’s subjective identity. On the ontic level, dispossession speaks to the death of the body and its resurrection in Christ.

\(^{77}\) See: *GL* 1, 118-19.
modernity’s claim to an all-embracing context while continuing its critique of being. Postmodernity’s metaphoric eulogy and funeral dirge mark the end of overarching “grand narratives,” replacing them with uncertainty, irony and self-referencing. The particular postmodern thinkers chosen for the present project all offer profound insights on the four themes that Balthasar’s understanding of kenosis involves namely transcendence, immanence, relation and difference.

Although the postmodern concept of “One” seems to share little with the Christian God, we take the two to be analogous and homologous. Aiming at the certainty that the transcendent alone provides, Alain Badiou attempts to break with all that is sensible and immediate. In order to explain the “multiples of multiples” or the excessiveness of Reality, Badiou wants to look solely towards the Divine. According to Badiou, whenever the binary immanent-transcendent relationship threatens to synthesize, a confusion of the quantitative and qualitative results, harkening the arrival of the virtual evil of representation. The meeting of transcendence and immanence is for Badiou an

Footnotes:


79 The methodologies, themes and disciplines in which postmodern thinkers are concerned are expansive, demanding a careful and detailed study that moves beyond the limits of our present study. However, parody, exhaustion, etc. are commonly associated with postmodernity, see: Jean-François, Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, & forward by Frederic Jameson (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

80 We will touch upon the works of François Laruelle, Alain Badiou, Graham Harman and Quentin Meillassoux in the present study.

81 The relationship between transcendence, immanence and evil will be of import in Chapter Two but will primarily be taken up in Chapter Five. Badiou’s success in
indiscernible event that only properly takes place outside of ontology (e.g. finite being) and hence the world.

The chasm between the *transcendent* and immanent seems impassable for Badiou. As nothing touches the Transcendent the One’s self-reflectivity involves entering into a relationship with the void or empty set. Difference universalizes throughout Reality aligning, for Badiou immanence’s relationship to the One. Badiou grounds ontology on the finite’s grasp of the *transcendent* One in the existential experiences of the void and the noetic confines of the empty set.

The void or empty set will be taken as analogous to Balthasar’s use of the concepts of *diastema* and absolute difference. The former mathematical concepts and the later theological terms both attempt to categorize and predicate that which remains elusive, infinite nothingness. Balthasar does not structure his arguments around the concept of the void or empty set like Badiou, but his interpretation of Nyssa’s views on space and distance suggest a possible fruitful conversation. Nyssa states that: “[w]e may picture to ourselves this nonidentity of the creature, for it is in this way we find the meaning of this concept of spacing, conceiving of it as a kind of exterior limit, which would envelop finite being with nonbeing from both the front and rear, as two periods of night envelop a day on either side or better still, as a circle, which would enclose the creature on every side…”\(^{82}\) We return to how Nyssa’s proposal of the relationship between non-being and the spatiotemporal carry over in Balthasar’s thought in Chapter Five.

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\(^{82}\) See also: *CE.*, 9, 11, 820 C.
Badiou’s interpretation of the void and empty set gives us a mechanism for emphasizing how the difference existing between the immanent and *transcendent* creates a metaphysical space for finite freedom and interpretation. Badiou’s strict separation of the two (e.g. the *transcendent*-immanent relation and its inverse) distances him from Balthasar’s endorsement of the Transcendent’s kenotic divine and human existence in Jesus Christ and the invitation to the shared sacramental life this inspires. For Badiou difference registers universally but remains *transcendent* and indiscernible: “The One is that which inscribes no difference in the subject to which it addresses itself. The One is only insofar as it is for all; such is the maximum of universality when it has its root in the event.”

For both Balthasar and Badiou difference functions in their systems given the manner each thinker conceives of difference’s “transcendence”. In Chapter Five we will further explore if Badiou’s theory of the empty set and void can be profitably seen as a suspended moment of difference that harmonizes with our own understanding of the intimations Ur-kenosis has for finite experiences of relational difference.

Unlike Badiou, François Laruelle’s non-philosophy urges that immanence rather than *transcendence* should delineate our highest purposes. He takes the Real as sovereign

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83 Interpretative freedom is founded on Badiou’s developmental of Cantor and axiomatic foundations. Badiou writes: “[a] set in Cantor’s sense of the word, has no essence besides that of being a multiplicity; it is without external determination because there is nothing to restrict its apprehension with reference to something else; and it is without internal determination because what it gathers as multiple is indifferent…[in] Zermelo and Fraenkel, there is no other undefined primitive term or possible value for the variables besides that of sets. Thus every element of a set is itself a set. This is the realization of the idea that every multiple is a multiple of multiples, without reference to unities of any kind,” Alain Badiou, *Theoretical Writings: Alain Badiou* (ed. and trans.), Ray Brassier and Alberto Toscano (New York: Continuum, 2004), 46. Hereafter cited as *Theoretical Writings*.

and suggests that an unreflective and immanent experience of finitude provides the best “mathesis transcendentalis” in human thought. Laruelle advocates the purest possible experience of immanence as the universal and specifying experience of the human person.

Laruelle attempts to offer a new way of looking at the world that depends neither on some sense of transcendental reach nor the relational as commonly understood—language and human consciousness are detached from their critical role in interpreting and representing immanent experience. Passivity has greater claim on the subject for Laruelle than any transcendental reaching—an effort doomed to terminate in the meaninglessness of the dyad: “[t]he tragedy of Difference is that it is condemned either to fall into Idealism and to affirm the final primacy of reversibility and of Being; or to combat Idealism by resorting to the quasi-philistine platitude of a Greco-Occidental ‘fact’, or rather a finitude that it presupposes, the foundation and necessity of which it is unable to perceive.”

Laruelle rejects all earlier formulations of being and the securing of the transcendent by means of some mode of difference (diastema, etc.). The person, Laruelle argues, is called to be passive and open to an immediate experience of the Real—to think is to manipulate and supplement an experience of immanence that should be exhaustive.

Even though the transcendent is not in a polar relationship with the immanent and

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86 See: François Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy* (trans.), Taylor Adkins (Minneapolis, MN: Univocal, 2013), 71 and 173-75. Hereafter cited as *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*. Configuring the person in this way suggests isolation that Balthasar’s more active sense of reception details. This will be outlined in Chapter Five.
is not to be taken as a hermeneutical principle in Laruelle’s thought, he does justify its efficacy. The ONE is in relationship with itself, or perhaps more accurately stated, with a conscious image of itself. Recognition of the virtual quality of this transcendent self-reflection leads Laruelle to qualify it as (non-)ONE. The ONE’s self-conscious differentiation results in the antithetical (non-)ONE. In the first instance, the ONE’s self-reflectivity is a qualitative generation and not a quantifiable act. The act of the Transcendent’s self-reflection (ONE-(non-)ONE) makes room for Reality by its absolute indifference to the immanent. The ONE’s self-reflectivity renders as a “force-(of)-thought” that leads to Being without sacrificing absolute Transcendent. Lack of transcendent-immanent relation suggests for Laruelle what Balthasar believes can only

87 The term ONE refers to Laruelle’s concept of a non-existing Transcendent, as Laruelle writes: “I lay claim to the abstract—the Real or One—rather than an abstraction, The One is an abstract—without-an-operation of abstraction,” Philosophy of Difference, 188. As the transcendent act infers an abstraction or apophatic calculus, Laruelle’s philosophy places an actual Transcendent being outside of her perceptive reach. Although the ONE serves the subject’s appraisals of reality, it escapes her as an image for ultimately “[t]he One is radical immanence, identity-without-transcendence, not associated with a transcendence or a division,” François Laruelle and collaborators, Dictionary of Non-Philosophy, (trans.) Taylor-Adkins (Minneapolis, MN. : Univocal, 2013), 166.

88 The ONE’s positing as (non-)ONE undermines a traditional explanation of the monotheistic God and seems to suggest an unorthodox characterization of the Divine. Philosophy takes on the transcendence and unity characteristic of the Divine for Laruelle, see: François Laruelle, Principles of Non-Philosophy (trans.) Nicola Rubczak and Anthony Paul Smith (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 26-28. We return to this question in Chapter Five.

89 Likewise, the Father’s generation of the Son is taken to be without limitation. See: TD 5, 93-94 and 98.

90 François Laruelle’s understanding of the transcendent ONE’s “self-reflective” relation with its virtual image or antithesis {(non-) ONE}, provides an interesting foil to Balthasar’s theology of Ur-kenosis where Jesus’ self-consciousness actualizes in Hell. These points will be taken up in Chapter Three and Four.

91 The ONE’s relationship with itself as (non-)One is of course only metaphorically similar to Ur-kenotic relationships and Christ’s conscious state in Hell. There is no antithesis for the Divine according to Balthasar. God’s relationships within the Trinity and the world are personal.
be explained by the incarnation of Ur-kenosis and analogy.\textsuperscript{92}

For Laruelle, the ONE’s \textit{transcendent} self-reflection makes possible Reality in a manner reminiscent of a theology of divine exemplarity. However, the relationship between the immanent and \textit{transcendent} is not dialectical for Laruelle, as the ONE’s \textit{transcendence} demands its specification as a “Unilateral Duality”. With this concept Meillasoux also attempts to avoid postmodern criticisms of polar structures: “where the weak model of correlationalism de-absolutized the principle of sufficient reason by disqualifying every proof of unconditional necessity, the strong model pushes this disqualification of the principle of non-contradiction by re-inscribing every representation within the bounds of a correlationalist circle.”\textsuperscript{93} Badiou also rejects any intuition of the unthinkable grounded in a polar structure and yet his own theory recognizes the logical necessity of binary relationships.\textsuperscript{94}

Balthasar’s theory of Creation’s relationship to the Divine Ur-kenotic act differs from Laruelle’s understanding of the One’s self-antithetical measure’s (non-) relationship

\textsuperscript{92} Radical immanence for Laruelle is a tool that allows philosophical thought, seen as, Laruelle tirelessly repeats, not to abandon philosophy in favor of a thought of immanence, but to use immanence to think philosophy. It is the consequences of thinking philosophy immanently that are interesting, not thinking immanence philosophically. As Ray Brassier notes “[t]hus, unlike philosophies of absolute immanence such as those of Spinoza, Deleuze or Michel Henry, nonphilosophy has nothing to say about radical immanence ‘in itself’. What it does have something to say about is how immanence provides a new basis for practicing philosophy,” Ray Brassier, “Axiomatic Heresy: The Non-Philosophy of François Laruelle”, \textit{Radical Philosophy} 121 (Sept/Oct 2003): 33.

\textsuperscript{93} After \textit{Finitude}, 42. On how the principle of non-contradiction is known through sensations and perceptions of being, see: “first principles become known through the natural light of the agent intellect, and they are not acquired by any process of reasoning but by having their terms become known. This comes about by reason of the fact that memory is derived from sensible things…” Aquinas, \textit{In IV Metaph.} lect. 6, 599 in \textit{Commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics} (trans. and intro.) John P. Rowan and (preface) Ralph McInerny (Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox Books, 1961), 221.

\textsuperscript{94} See: Peter Hallward, ‘Ethics without Others: A Reply to Critchley on Badiou Ethics,’ in \textit{Radical Philosophy} 102 (July/August, 2000), 28.
to Reality. For Laruelle, the “ONE-(non-)ONE” relationship is open to Being, but in a manner that stresses Being’s destabilization and lateralization:

If it may thus “sidestep” both the empirically given and the “horizontal” ideality, it is because the (non-)ONE totally escapes objectification—it is a non-objectivizing or non-positional transcendence—and it implies the unilateralization, without recourse or return, of Difference, Being, etc. It is a radical de-positioning of Being by the ONE.\(^{95}\)

Laruelle asserts that difference’s “pervasiveness” not only continually unseats Being but also equalizes it. Laruelle’s purposing of difference and Balthasar’s analysis of kenosis leads to incongruent conclusions concerning how transcendence and immanence play out in the world. For Balthasar, God’s kenotic existence in Jesus Christ enters into Creation and history not to deprive the human person of apophatic reach, or cause metaphysical de-stabilization. Rather, the Son’s kenotic consent gifts each person with a new way to individually image Christ and hence the Transcendent. Kenosis arbitrates a finite transcendental relation to the Divine through experiences of quantified difference in the world. With the unique divine-human union of Jesus Christ a creative transcendental-immanent tension introduces into Creation without the need to metaphysically “flatten out” either the Divine or the human.\(^{96}\)

Believing that immanent Reality is devoid of the Transcendent’s presence or indication, difference universally applies, making the hierarchic impossible, enduring relationships improbable and the non-reflective and intuitive the pinnacle of human experience. This is not to say that Laruelle considers Reality on route to a unanimous state of paralysis, stasis and impotency. He replaces the essential’s motivations of the

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\(^{95}\) Philosophy of Difference, 202.

\(^{96}\) These concerns will be taken up in greater detail in Chapter Four.
internal architecture of being with various modes of endogenous reduction. When created beings en masse institute his religion of immediacy and immanence together they would summon the New Messiah. Laruelle’s philosophy is not about renewal, purification or integration, but revolution and revision. For Laruelle “philosophical heterodoxy” becomes a necessary tool to re-think immanence.

Distancing them from a post-Kantian epistemology that favors extra-mental reality and the logical dependency on subjectivity that results, postmodern Speculative Realists such as Graham Harman and Quentin Meillassoux are rediscovering metaphysics by embracing realism in startling new ways. Speculative realists maintain that being’s continuous contact with a material nature defines finitude in a way that always favors the ontological over the epistemological. Developing this idea they question if being’s universal grounding leaves any room for hierarchic systems or if the “conscious” and “free” person should have a higher metaphysical status than an inanimate rock or any other non-sentient being.

The universal horizon of being for the Speculative Realist intimates an egalitarianism of causal efficacy that revises the sense of immanence and relation

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98 On the relationship between apophasis and philosophical deconstruction see: Philosophy and Non-Philosophy, 201-210.
99 Generally speaking, postmodern thinkers share in the conviction that Kant is misled in believing that all phenomena depend upon the mind to exist, see: Lee Braver, A Thing of This World: A History of Continental Anti-Realism (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 39ff and Meillassoux: “He [Kant] leaves us with a cosmos of utterly isolated entities none capable of exerting determinative forces against the others,” NFP, 116.
100 See: Graham Harman, Guerilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things (Chicago: Open Court Press, 2005), 17-22 and 42.
Balthasar prefers. The leveling of relationships among beings in the world inevitably expands freedom at the cost of introducing what can only be seen as an eclectic isolation of every being in metaphoric kingdom(s) of one(s). Where Balthasar makes a case for relation and transcendence, Harman’s avant-garde concept of extreme immanence leads to a liberty born from the de-centering and segregation of the subject. The universal actualization of freedom, Harman states, requires this sequestering of the subject for: “receding from all relations, always having an existence that perception or sheer causation can never adequately measure…[but leads to] a universe packed full of elusive substances stuffed into mutually exclusive vacuums.” Pure immanence is thus taken to be evidence of universal freedom and hence the means towards the postmodern dream of a truly democratic world.

Harman hopes that by valuing all relations as equal, an egalitarian view of the person will follow. A closer reading is demanded to clarify how the Speculative Realists see boundless liberty as necessitating the fortressing of individuals in immanence or how distinctions are possible in their system given its apparent lack of hierarchy or transcendence. Most postmoderns do not believe in hierarchies, as all such systems demand an essential force they disavow that sets all created beings within some relational boundary. In Chapter Five we will take up these considerations by setting the Speculative Realist’s observations in dialogue with an interpretation of Balthasar’s views on Ur-kenosis.  

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101 Philosophy and Non-Philosophy, 11, and 179-212.
102 See: Graham Harman, Guerilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things (Chicago: Open Court Press, 2005), 75-76.
103 Appraising Balthasar’s thoughts on Ur-kenosis with view to the Speculative Realists’ discoveries will profit us with guidelines of how transcendent relation and
If the creative tension of an existential experience of *transcendence* is lost, Balthasar’s understanding of relational difference quickly devolves into a meaninglessness that can only impoverish one’s faith in a living God. The relationship between the immanent and the *transcendent* is kenotic insofar as this tension demands investment from both persons. The unity between the Divine and human is accidental to her free and conscious choice: grace never annihilates nature but perfects it: “*gratia non destruit, sed elevat et perficit naturam.*” In this way, kenotic relational difference for Balthasar does not promote interior or exterior division of coming from being the senseless multiplication of excessive solipsism or a tyrannical sense of the Transcendent.

Postmodern critics reject Balthasar’s contention that it is possible to know the inner workings of being, the “thing-in-itself” by means of a polar or dialectical methodology. The belief that it is possible to have access to the inner meaning of a being is seen as a vestige of modernity’s naïve faith in human objectivity and consciousness. Quentin Meillassoux argues that the central thesis of any strong correllational model, such as the one advocated by Balthasar, misleads one into believing that one can *transcend* her immanent condition and rewrite Reality within a binary horizon. Meillassoux seems to agrees on this point with Laurelle who writes that:

> The One is vision-in-One. The latter manifests the One alone and manifests it according to the mode of the One. Thus, it is not a mode of perception, its phenomenal-being falls neither within the purview of perception nor that of the phenomenological phenomenon. It is without intuitivity in general, neither an objective nor an intellectual intuition; and without thought or concept, it does not

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think but it ‘gives’ ... without-givenness. Its radical non-intuitivity allows philosophical terms to be used according to a mode of axiomatic abstraction, but one which is transcendental.105

Postmoderns also take exception to the dyad system’s perceived conflation of immanent reconfiguring and repetition with transcendence. How Balthasar’s exposition of relational difference, apophasis and analogy answers critics of correlational thought will be taken up in Chapter Five.

Although transcendence and relational difference appear to predicate in every human act and cognitive construct, this claim in itself neither proves the validity of Balthasar’s kenotic and polar structuring of Creation nor confirms his critics’ allegations that such a methodology is inconsistent and poorly suited to his perceived ends. Postmoderns are correct in stating that Creation’s inherent dialectic ordering guarantees that finite being’s full meaning is elusive and a pure experience of the Transcendent is impossible.106 For Balthasar, analogy always implies apophasis and the kenotic immanent incarnate life of Jesus Christ infers His eternal transcendent existence. A dialectical approach is axiomatic for Balthasar’s method and our own speculative interpretation and

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106 This inverts what theology has taken to be a nomological relationship where created (esse) is judged true to the degree it participates in the Transcendent Son, see: Saint Anselm, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/anselm/basic_works.html and Monolog. 34 (PL 158), 184 and 189. See also: “But how can objects so different as the creative and the created being be expressed by one Word, especially since that Word itself is coeternal with him who expresses them, while the created world is not coeternal with him? Perhaps, because he himself is supreme Wisdom and supreme Reason, in which are all things that have been created; just as a work which is made after one of the arts, not only when it is made, but before it is made, and after it is destroyed, is always in respect of the art itself nothing else than what that art is,” Anselm, Monologion 34, in http://www.logoslibrary.org/anselm/monologion/34.html, (trans.) Sidney Norton Deane. Accessed May 29, 2015.
development of his work. Polar structuring offers a way to bring together in a single
dynamic principle what is entailed, in large part, by the analogical and apophatic modes
of interpreting. Creation’s inherent dialectic ordering insures that neither being nor truth
can be fully observed or known. Unlike the postmoderns Balthasar sees in the inability to
fully grasp the infinite complexity of being and truth’s disclosure proof of the
transcendent as: “[w]e never outgrow something which we acknowledge to stand above
us by its very nature.”

For Balthasar, some problems do not exist to be solved but are
meant to draw one deeper into the mysteries of existence.

Polarity points to the “fact” that the dramatic tension between the transcendent
Divine in Jesus Christ and the immanently finite human existence must be lived, in part,
as a question.

Such a formulation to many postmoderns shows that the concept of
polarity licenses arbitrary claims.

Certainly, it is the case with Balthasar that the polar
tension of subject-object relation and the infinite characterization of this fundamental
relationship are now structured analogically with reference to being, image and faith in an
absolutely loving God. The fragmentary nature of knowledge, the predominance of sin,
cognitive indeterminacy and deterministic immanence all threaten to deconstruct the
Transcendent-transcendent analogy. However, the antithetical aspects of every analogy
are paradoxically synthesized, Balthasar infers, with reference to transcendental kenotic
difference. Human truth, Balthasar observes, is broken, realigned and reset given that
essential movement and subjective desire unfold as one with God’s own revelation in the

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107 GL 1, 186. See also: Hans Urs von Balthasar, The Grain of Wheat: Aphorisms,
108 See: TL 1, 110.
109 See: Graham Harman, Guerrilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the
Carpentry of Things (Chicago: Open Court Books, 2005).
Finite freedom on its own cannot meet the end it desires.\textsuperscript{111} Difference for Balthasar does not end in antinomy but leads to the Cross. Given identity is rooted immanently and \textit{transcendentally} for Balthasar, he sees all modalities of difference as a medium for infinite meaning. The immanence-\textit{transcendence} polarity is not finally an abyss, but ultimately the stage the Divine bridged kenotically. Kenosis gives us substantive insights into how divine emptying of the ever-full, never-diminished plenum organizes. Ur-kenosis is an eternal act in the immanent Trinity and time-specific in the Incarnation. Our apprehension of divine kenosis must accord finite polarity its proper scope, making any resulting statements at best partially true that is, subordinate to faith.

\textsuperscript{110} See: \textit{Theology of Karl Barth}, 204 and also Gregory of Nyssa: “...by the use of analogy of a measurable surface, he leads the hearer to the unlimited and infinite” reality, Nyssa, \textit{De vita Mosis}, in (PG XLV), 405B. See also: Gregory of Nyssa, \textit{The Life of Moses} (trans.) Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson, (preface) John Meyendorff (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 117.

\textsuperscript{111} See: \textit{TD 2}, 226-27.
Chapter Two: An Ur-kenotic Theology of the Trinity

Introduction

Given Jesus Christ’s *transcendence* and nature, it is impossible for a human person to contemplate the Trinitarian God outside of Divine revelation. In the section *The Trinity* we will call on Balthasar’s account to offer a speculative reading of how kenosis functions in the immanent and economic Trinity. Balthasar’s theory of kenosis also provides a way to interpret the three vital concepts of person, essence and relation (hypostasis) as traditionally applied to God. Indeed, if kenosis is the most fundamental way the Father, Son and Spirit interact, it must as Balthasar argues, conceptually preamble all other approaches to the Trinity.

In the section *Divine Subtraction* a speculative reading of Balthasar’s theory of Ur-kenosis is offered. We see Ur-kenosis as an emptying or *subtractive* movement that is also always generative. To focus attention on a purposely-kenotic understanding of apophasis we employ the term *subtractive*. Here the Greek sigma signifies that the kenotic act is never simply negative but also creative and productive.

In the section *The Son* we focus on Balthasar’s interpretation of the Son’s generation from the Father as an Ur-kenotic act. In this pure and eternal Divine act the Father generates the Son in a self-emptying act that always realizes something greater.

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than the original “subtraction”.

The Spirit mediates the substantial and essential aspects of the Trinity. In the section *The Spirit* we show how kenotic Trinitarian “in-division” is possible given the Spirit’s role in maintaining God’s supra-unity. The Spirit is the bond between the Father and the Son.¹¹³

In the section *The Divine Ratio: Absolute Love* we show that the Three Divine Persons are ONE given the Absolute Love they share.¹¹⁴ God is an absolutely simple and *transcendent* Trinitarian community of Father, Son and Spirit that reveals itself immanently in the Divine-person Jesus Christ. In *The Eternal Word* it will be shown how Divine Love unifies the three Divine Persons in an Ur-kenotic or Divine *Subtraction* in Balthasar’s system. Divine Love is taken to be the archetype for all finite differences.

In *Divine Groundlessness* the metaphysical implications of the relationship between the Divine Persons is explored. The Father creates a space for the Son and Spirit to freely act. This Divine ‘determinationalization’ is metaphorically termed “Divine Nothingness”. Divine Nothingness does not mean to connote that there is any real separation between the Divine Persons, however, it does allow us to speak about the Divine’s own thoughts concerning the abyss existing between the Divine and Creation.

Kenosis is the central process that Balthasar uses to explicate this mystery of the immanent and economic Trinity—and by extension the inner workings of Creation.¹¹⁵ We detail Balthasar’s theory of this mystery in the section *Incarnation and Creation.* The fecund characteristics of Ur-kenosis are especially evident in the four metaphysical

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¹¹³ See: *GL* 7, 391.
¹¹⁴ See: *TD* 3, 518-19.
¹¹⁵ See: *GL* 1, 241-257. Ur-kenosis is the most primal act of self-emptying upon which all other kenotic and subtractive acts derive.
principles of relation, difference, transcendence and immanence. These themes are both subtractive and productive as they present polar correspondences that invite a more expansive sense of finite being. In this way, Creation, given its Trinitarian source, comes to share analogously in God’s kenotic structuring of the four previously mentioned kenotic metaphysical principles. These principles are seen to stitch Creation together (Ps. 139). These principles further make it possible to understand how immanence and transcendence, the relational and the finitely differentiated, are known through the revelation of Jesus Christ’s person and mission. In turn, Divine Ur-kenosis, as lived by Jesus Christ, revises our understanding of these four key concepts.

Our interpretation of kenosis in God involves the application of two pivotal concepts, namely apophasis and analogy. More specifically, apophasis and analogy are methodological tools that allows us to look at Jesus Christ’s kenotic revelation of divine and human nature. The use of analogy is required here, of course, for God remains mysterious. We are able to participate in transcendent divinity by virtue of the Incarnation, which is to say, the humiliation of God in the assuming of human flesh an act the Son makes willingly as an act of love. In the section Divine Consciousness and Jesus Christ we develop how Christ’s kenosis provides a way to understand finite consciousness in a radically new way.

\[116\] Traditionally kenosis, the self-emptying of God, has been approached by theologians to describe the divine under the four themes of: (1) the cultic (Jesus as the Passover Lamb), (2) Legal (Jesus as the Suffering Servant), (3) the metaphysical repercussion of Jesus’ person for the human community and Eucharistic corporeality, (4) the moral effects of Jesus’ obedience for Creation, see: Rodney A. Howsare, Balthasar: A Guide for the Perplexed (London: T & T Clark International, 2009), 115 and Graham Ward, “Kenosis: Death, Discourse and Resurrection,” in End of Modernity, 20. Our approach looks to the metaphysical principles of transcendence, immanence, relation and difference as these themes support traditional theological approaches and open us up to our current postmodern context.
We then turn to how a kenotically defined Spirit has profound implications for one’s understanding in the section *Absolute Groundlessness and Creation*. The Spirit acts as a mediator for the Father and Son and as such can be seen to be defined in terms of Absolute Groundlessness or freedom. In the Person and mission of the Spirit all that is indeterminate is afforded a Transcendent measure as the Divine Persons are seen to be the prolongation of the eternal coming forth (*processio*) from the Father. As Balthasar states: By the same token, this endeavor can never go beyond a convergence between two Trinitarian models whose common feature is to point upward toward an integration that cannot be achieved from within the horizon of the world. The interpersonal model cannot attain the substantial unity of God, whereas the intrapersonal model cannot give an adequate picture of the real and abiding face-to-face encounter of the hypostases. The fact that Jesus Christ is taken as the meeting point of the Father and Spirit in the Trinity and the finite and the Transcendent is broached in the section *Transcendence, Jesus Christ and Immanence*. Jesus Christ as Divine and human holds in dramatic tension the eternal and finite and through his person and mission offer all a share in the Transcendent life. The perfect example of human participation in the Transcendent is found in Jesus Christ for He is the One: “…in whom we live and move and have our being” (*Acts* 17:28).

In His obedience to the Father, Jesus Christ’s freedom perfectly manifests Divine Love. In the section *Love: Immanent and Transcendent* we look at how Jesus Christ models how a finite being can analogously participate in Divine Freedom and Love.

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117 See: *TD* 1, 636.
118 *TL* 2, 38.
Jesus’ obedience gives the Father the space for self-communication. Obedience is taken as a philosophical category of correspondence (Entsprechung) that points to how one freely accepts one’s vocational mission in the world.

(1) The Trinity

God is undivided (ONE), an unlimited, tri-personal union of Father, Son and Spirit. God’s identity is simple (simplicitus Dei) as it never entails the collective or abstractive nor conflates the distinct identity of any of the three Divine Persons. The Divine (ONE) is Pure Act (ipsum esse subsistens) without potential or composition, immediate and without limitation or need of verification by external relations, as Augustine writes: “He is no doubt substantial, or if one prefers, he is the essential which the Greeks called ousia…essentia comes from esse. And who ‘is’ more than He who said to his servant Moses: ‘I am that I am’…other things are called essences or substances that admit accidents, whereby a change…But there can be no accident of this kind in respect to God; and therefore He who is God is the only unchangeable substance or essence, to whom certainly Being itself…most truly belongs” By contrast with more traditionally static Trinitarian models that look to elucidate the substantial nature of the Divine essence in terms of a predominately material analogy, Ur-kenosis offers a more energetic concept of Divine identity.

Expounding on Actus Purus in intra-Trinitarian relationships does not introduce the accidental into divine simplicity, as the kenotic engagement among the Divine

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119 See: GL 1, 479, 613, GL 7, 208-09, 211, 223 and 290-91.
120 On the Trinitarian correspondence of freedom, obedience and love, see: TD 2/2, 175, 485, TD 3, 58, 210, 460 and TD 4, 77.
121 ONE is taken to be a postmodern equivalent to the idea conveyed in the concept of Actus Purus.
122 Augustine, De Trinitate, V, 2 (PL 42), 3. See also: NPNF, 88.
Persons is total and communal, involving all of the Divine essence, which is equally shared. Thus, Ur-kenosis creates an equilibrium that ballasts God’s monotheistic identity as the three Persons of Father, Son and Spirit. Ur-Kenosis enables us to conceive of each Divine Person’s essential grounding and relations as free, yet does not thereby eradicate Trinitarian unity. Ur-kenosis is not a non-inhering relationship shared among the Divine Persons, as is the case with finite negations or deconstructive operations. Rather, Ur-kenosis inaugurates personal identity in the Trinity, without becoming a rarefied fourth of Divine Being. Transparency and self-emptying or gifting are characteristics of the Divine’s nature. Divine immanence for the transcendent Trinity is an act of openness. Traditionally theologians have conceptually divided Divine nature into the two component parts or different modes (diakrisis) of Divine essence and relations. Stressing the relational attributes of the Trinity contextualizes how one must understand Divine immutability. Transcendence and Divine immutability do not, for Balthasar signify a lack of change in the Divine essence, but, rather, reflect the Divine Persons’ continual movement in their eternal relationships. Balthasar displays here his atypical preference for a notion of Divine supra-mutability by contrast with more common and traditional formulations of immutability. This choice increases not only our interpretative freedom given the mysterious nature of the subject matter, but also, more

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123 Balthasar is aware that any descriptions of the social magnitude of the Trinity reflect the limitation of our own experiences of relatedness. On a feminist approach to these issues see Karen Kilby, Perichoresis and Projection: “Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity”, New Blackfriars (October 2000): 433-38. On the eternal motion of the Actus Purus see: S. Th. I, q.3, a. 4.
124 On the Christian’s and Church’s call to participate in Ur-kenosis’ surpassing of all subtractive movements or differences, see: Elucidations, 270ff and TL 2, 296-99.
125 Metaphors such as distance, alienation, abyss, separation, difference and diastasis do not argue for an ontological separation in the Trinity for Balthasar, see: TD 4, 345 and TL 2, 81-85.
specifically, leads to a predisposition to stress the positivity of the Divine over, beyond, and supra all change. Balthasar argues that traditional proposals for purely unchanging Divine immutability have a more negative connotation than his own formulations.126

Divine immutability and monotheistic unity appear in the Trinity through the metaphysical structuring of the Divine essence in triune, self-subsisting and kenotic relations among the Divine Persons.127 The descriptors for the ONE such as Fatherhood, filiation and procession are transposed into terms of reflective ‘opposition’ according to origin. Trinitarian kenosis thus offers a hermeneutic to better understand our analogous concepts of relation and difference. The idea of personhood unifies and subordinates the metaphysical concepts of Divine essence and hypostases (relations). Our understanding of relation implies some level of inherence and hence the conditioning of a subject. This analogous notion of divine relation is necessary for us to recognize the pre-existing Trinitarian nature and, thus, how the personal distinction of Father, Son and Spirit participate in Divine essence.128

The Divine essence lets us refer to the intensification of the Divine Person, whereas the Divine hypostases focus one’s attention on the relationships present in the Divine Persons at the most fundamental level. The Divine Persons are free because their

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126 See: TL 2, 87-95.
127 The use of the term person is problematic given its expansive meaning. However, as Rahner states about this difficult concept: “there is really no better word, which can be understood by all and would give rise to fewer misunderstandings,” Karl Rahner, Trinity, 56-57.
differing relations comply with the predication of the Divine essence. The idea of personhood substantiates the Divine essence in a single divinity whose simplicity puts no limits on the ability of the Trinitarian Persons to relate:

The definition of *person* includes *substance*, not as meaning the essence, but the *supposition*, which is made clear by the addition of the term *individual*. To signify the substance thus understood, the Greeks use the name *hypostasis*. So, as we say *Three persons*, they say *Three hypostases*. We are not, however, accustomed to say Three substances, lest we be understood to mean three essences or natures, by reason of the equivocal signification of the term.

It is of course, impossible to fully comprehend the Divine’s attributes or how change is possible in a Divine who is radical simplicity. God’s monotheistic identity is unchanged by the internal and external relations the Divine Persons experience. The hypostases are not in a static relation with each other in the “circumincessio” giving and receiving Divine unity attains. The unending interchange of *transcendent* and eternal relations advances Divine identity through supra-change. Divine immutability continues under kenotic relations that are *subtractive* but eternally lead to ever-greater (*das immer Grössere*) meaning and value that abides in the Divine Persons. Consequently, the consummation of Divine relations in unaltered essence actualizes the Divine substantiality from the viewpoint of a kenotic lens. Balthasar’s position on this matter leans on the earlier work of Aquinas:

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129 Supra-unity argues that the unity shared among the Trinitarian Persons is eternal and only analogous to finite instances of unity. See: *S. Th.*, I, q.28, a. 2.
130 *S. Th.* I, q. 30, a.1. See also: *TL* 2, 129.
131 See: *TD* 5, 69-78. In Chapter Three, it will be shown how the Trinitarian life’s absolute unity and freedom among the Divine Persons sacramentally actualizes in the Church through the sacrament of the Eucharist. On the Son’s actualization of the Eucharist in his gratitude to the Father in the Trinity, see: *TD* 4, 324-26 and *TD* 5, 245.
It is beyond the limits of any created nature to see God’s substance: because it is proper to every created intellectual nature to understand according to the mode of its substance: whereas the divine substance cannot be understood thus, as we proved above therefore no created intellect can possibly attain to a vision of the divine substance except by the agency of God who surpasses all creatures.  

Lacking all complication, Divine Being remains simple, instantaneous and distinct as the three persons of Father, Son and Spirit. As the relational and essential harmonize in all three Divine partners, an inclusive monotheistic divinity results.

Each of the Divine Person’s relations are mutually beneficial to the other Divine partners as Aquinas notes: “[o]ne does not exclude multitude, but division, which logically precedes one or multitude. Multitude does not remove unity, but division from each of the individuals which compose the multitude…” For the Christian the “Count-as-One” resolves in Trinitarian multiplicity, in the relationship between the Divine Persons. The fact that each of the Divine Persons includes the Persons of the other two brings to focus the inclusivity of Trinitarian reach. Ur-konotic Divine communion takes place without abrogating the idiosyncratic nature of the Divine essence or constituting an impediment to the freedom of the Trinitarian Persons. While Divine freedom comes from the initiates of each of the Divine Persons, these individual acts are accepted and influence the whole Trinitarian community. The Divine essence is figuratively porous

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133 SCG, 3, 52.
insofar as it, as noted, stabilizes each new Divine liaison. Divine essence is infinitely open to all intra and extra relations of each of the Divine Persons. The freedom of the Divine essence and its relations are simultaneously contained as they always terminate in one of the three Trinitarian Persons: Divine personhood involves both substantial identity and relational goal.

The unique hypostases of each of the Divine Persons do not impede the interactions of any of the other Trinitarian members. Although the simultaneous priority of each Divine Person’s relations (hypostases) seems logically impossible, such a proposition is theologically necessary in order to defend a shared sense of freedom among the Divine Persons and offer a plausible way for the Trinity to encounter finite Creation. Ur-kenosis attempts to address this apparent absurdity by promoting a relational sense of substantial Divine identity. The Trinitarian relations are free and real, yet wedded to a common essence in kenotic or \textit{subtractive} arrangements and rearrangements. Divine relations equally and simultaneously distinguish and unite each of the Divine Persons in infinite malleable association.

\textbf{(2) Divine Subtraction}

As the Divine relations are transparent, \textit{subtractive} and open they do not add to the Divine essence but freely reconfigure it in an immeasurable manner.\textsuperscript{135} The flexibility accorded to each of the Divine Persons is specific and self-designating among the Father, Son and Spirit. The Divine hypostases translate the totality of the personal action of any one of the Divine Persons as iterations in the common essential dominion.

\textsuperscript{135} Although a distinction is made between the essential grounding of a Divine Person this “differentiation” does not introduce finite difference into God, but rather is a metaphoric convenience.
Each Divine Person’s hypostasis thus amplifies the Trinity’s underlying quiddity. At the level of the Divine anatomy, relationship, essence and the subtractive become, one and all, exemplary for the free correspondence of the Divine Persons and, therewith, vehicles of their absolute power.

Ur-kenotic in-division of the Divine essence and hypostases causally connects the Divine Persons without subsumption (Aufhebung) or sublimation of their nature or freedom. The ineffable communion (koinonia) apportioned among the Divine Persons is rooted in a simple sui generis act that is at once self-subsistent and kenotically open. The subtractive relationships allow the Divine Person to invest the totality of who they are in every action. Trinitarian relations are neither formal nor ambiguous but equally undeniably personal and completely communicated. The freedom and inviolable unity of the Divine Persons manifests their Absolute Being in the Divine hypostases and the simplicity of their essence.

The Divine Persons are not dispossessed by the alterity created by their own individual hypostases or that of the other Divine Persons because all Divine relations are eternal, simple, mutual (circumincessio), real and subsisting in the Divine essence. God’s impassible identity communicates in the free or differing hypostatic relations of the Divine Persons without departmentalizing the Trinity or trivializing individual action.

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136 In a real relation some [a] really inheres in some [b] if a change in one results in a change in both. In comparison, in finite beings relations are relative and non-inhering. In finite relations when the positing of a relational [a] is associated with some [b] a relative change results in both. For an overview of a theological understanding of the nature of relation see: Mark G. Henninger, S.J., Relations Medieval Theories 1250-1325 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

Rather, differing Divine relations are as the scholastic adage teaches: “ubi non obviat relationis oppositio”[where the opposition of relation does not stand in the way]. On the personal level an isomorphism between the Divine Persons and their “supra-different” or relative “subtractive” hypostatic relations obtains.138

The Persons of the Trinity are in a deathless and transparent relationship (Col. 1:3) from which the peerless voices of the Divine Persons emerge in the Spirit as an endless conversation that is without genealogy or arbitrariness. The Divine Persons are passable in the Divine essence without the discounting of the separate relations of the Divine Persons. The internal relations existing between the Divine Persons binds them without exhaustion of their freedom or the diminishment or immobilization of their divine essence. Unlike finite division or difference, kenotic subtraction leads to a remainder greater than the sums of the terms reduced. As Augustine explains, Trinitarian distinctions highlight something of what remains unattainable and enhanced, namely, God:

For, in truth, since the Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Father, and the Holy Spirit, who is called the Gift of God, is neither the Father nor the Son, then certainly there are three. Therefore, it was said in plural number: ‘I and my Father are One’ (Jn. 10:30). But when it is asked ‘Three what?’ then the great poverty from which our language suffers becomes apparent. But the formula ‘three persons’ has been coined, not in order to give a complete explanation by means of it, but in order that we might not be obliged to remain silent.139

Relational subtraction is not a relational appendage as the Trinity is already Ur-kenotically full and eternal.140 The Father’s begetter of the Son and the Spirit is the primal discarnate coordination of the Divine essence and relations in substantial

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138 See also: TL 2, 291 and TD 3, 517.
139 Augustine, De Trinitate, V (PL 42), 9. See also: NPNF, 92.
simplicity and the subtractive relationship. Divine existence actualizes tripartite personhood by directing and fulfilling each Divine Person’s being in eternal relationship with the other divine partners: “by definition relationship is a respect of one to another so that one is relatively opposed to the other.” The relative oppositions between the Divine Persons are first defined by the substantial permanence of the subtractive event. In this way, the subtraction qua subtraction of the Ur-kenotic event holds the Divine Persons in eternal dramatic relationship.

(3) The Son

The Father is the eternal Trinitarian font that begets identically in the Son—the fons et origo totius divinitatis. The eternal birth of the Son is the foundational Ur-kenotic event of the Father’s self-emptying generation. The Father imparts the Godhead to the Son as testified in scripture—“all that is mine is thine” (Jn. 7:10). In communicating the Divine’s essence the Father brings forth consubstantially the Son. The Father’s giving of self (Selbstaufgabe) to the Son is free, complete, infinitely available and reckless in its magnanimity. The Father’s renunciation (ein absoluter Verzicht) of self for the Son is in a word: absolute. The Father’s bestowal to the Son is total but not “self-cancelling” for the Father. In this procreant kenotic act the Father gives the Son “substance” without division of Trinitarian simplicity.

142 Some critics see Balthasar’s position to be incongruent with the more traditional approach as outlined, for example, in S. Th 1, q. 39, a. 4. Certainly a more detailed approach to how Balthasar’s view conciliates with such a view is required beyond what can be offered in this work.
143 On the specific role of the Son’s generation on this Trinitarian act, see: TD 4, 323, DS 490, 525 and 568.
144 Balthasar’s understanding of kenosis follows from his expansive reading of the
perplexing is the fact that Divine simplicity allows the Father to give the Son an allotment in the divine ordering: “[w]hat the Father gives the Son in generating him is the perfect, indivisible godhead, which he, the Father, possesses.” The Father gives the entirety of Godself’s nature and its eternal simplicity to the Son holding only to his distinction as origin. Simplicity in the Trinity survives the division of the Divine Persons and their eternal ordering.

Inasmuch as the Divine essence is common to the Divine Persons, it is possible to affirm an intractable taxis between the Father and Son on the substantial level. Urkenotic relations qualify the Son’s receptivity of the Father. However, the Son does not simply let things happen to him (Geschehenlassen), as his docility to the Father is not an indifferent consent. The Son’s “supra-receptivity” for Balthasar finds temporal equivalence in Jesus’ obedience to the Father. Jesus’ obedience to the Father is part of the Son’s eternal choice to redeem Creation and return it whole to the Father (1 Pet. 1:19). In Jesus Christ divine freedom and the human person’s call to obedience by God are brought together. Jesus Christ’s humility presents us with an example of how a finite being’s dependence on God does not exclude an innate autonomous ordering of theological tradition; however, Aquinas, Bonaventure and Augustine are key reference points for him. On how the action of the Divine intellect makes intelligent human action, see: S. Th., I, q.41, a.1, and a. 2 and Fourth Lateran Council (1215), DS 568.


Divine “receptivity” actualizes love within the Trinity: “Ab utroque permixtus” (“on either mixed”), that is, as a love that both receives and gives, see: Bonaventure, I “Sententiarium,” d. 2, q. 4, d. 9, q. 1, and d. 10, a.1, q. 1, see: The Works of Bonaventure: Cardinal Seraphic Doctor and Saint: II The Breviloquim, (trans.) José de Vinck (Paterson, N.J.: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1963). Hereafter cited as: “Sententiarium.”
one’s being or their ability to act freely. Jesus Christ’s humility freely illustrates his being in terms of Trinitarian kenosis. The Son’s eternal birth in the generative causality of the Father continues as the inner compass of Jesus’ life. Consequently, Jesus’ freedom is infinite as it is grounded in the absolute simplicity of the Son in the Divine communion.\(^{148}\) The pure simplicity of Divine essence and the fathomless depths of God’s eternal divine processions continue in the circumscription and freedom of Jesus’ finitude.\(^{149}\) God reveals the Trinitarian event in the variance of becoming and finitude in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Without the revelation of Jesus Christ the Trinitarian relations would remain recondite.

The eternal kenotic act of the Father’s generation of the Son includes the Son’s returning all back to the Father through the Spirit. This ordering is possible because the Son’s reception of the Father is without calculation.\(^{150}\) Each Divine Person is \textit{a priori} given and the “other’s” inheritance.\(^{151}\) The eternal giving back to the Father is also \textit{subtractive} insofar as this event distinguishes the Divine Persons: “[i]t must be said that


\(^{149}\) See: \textit{De Pot}, q. 10, a.3.

\(^{150}\) Early understandings of this mystery were often heretical and an early example can be found in the teachings of Monothelitism. Monothelitism (from Greek μονοθελητισμός “doctrine of one will”) emerges in Armenia and Syria around 629 and argues that while Jesus has two natures, he has only one will. This contrasts with the view that Jesus has both divine and human wills held together in his person on earth as one can by the analogy with the Son’s hypostasis in the Trinity. An ecumenical council in Constantinople judged the doctrine of Monothelitism heretical in 681. Much of the theological groundwork for the case against Monothelitism is found in the theological discourses of Maximus the Confessor. The council asserted the doctrine of Dyothelitism that held Christ possessed two natural wills and two natural energies without division, separation, confusion or alteration. See: \textit{TD} 4, 325-28 and 331.

\(^{151}\) See: \textit{TL} 2, 40.
the Holy Spirit is from the Son. For if He were not from Him, He could in no wise be distinguished from Him.\textsuperscript{152} The pure “groundlessness” or “infinite relationality” of the Spirit is the personal realization of this Ur-kenotic exchange of Father and Son. The Spirit structures the Son’s recapitulation of Divine identity back to the Father.\textsuperscript{153}

(4) The Spirit

The unique identity of the Son and Spirit is qualified in terms of the bringing forth by the Father. The elimination of Trinitarian taxis would destroy the interwoven identity of the Trinity by denying the Divine Persons’ teleological corolling of their relations in one Divine Being. Non-inhering finite relations presuppose accidental change that becomes characteristic of one’s person. However, Divine relations are implicit and bring about an actual distinction in the Divine essence reflected in the Divine Persons.\textsuperscript{154} The coalition of the Divine Persons in the immanent Trinity is intricate as it involves both an extraordinary experience for each Divine Person and a communal one that always looks to the Father as axis. The Father is locus of the eternal Trinitarian order of the Son and Spirit’s origin. Balthasar’s kenotic understanding of Trinitarian generation is indebted to Aquinas’ earlier work:

For God the Father is said to give \textit{[dare]} the Holy Spirit without measure to Christ as God, because he gives to Christ the power and might to spirate the Holy Spirit,

\textsuperscript{152} \textit{S. Th.} I, q. 36, a.2. See also: \textit{TL} 3, 167, 1 \textit{Cor.} 15:28, \textit{TD} 5, 93, \textit{TL} 2, 126-28 and \textit{TD} 4, 333.


\textsuperscript{154} \textit{S. Th.} I, q. 40, a. 2 and ad. 4. On the dangers of viewing divine relations anthropomorphically see: Yves Congar, O.P. \textit{I Believe in the Holy Spirit} (trans.) David Smith (New York: Crossroads, 1997), 155-64 and \textit{TD} 2, 257.
who, since he is infinite, was infinitely given him by the Father: for the Father
gives it just as he himself has it, so that the Holy Spirit proceeds from him as
much as from the Son. And he gave him this by everlasting generation.\textsuperscript{155}

The distinctions of the different Divine Persons are unified by a common inception.

The Divine essence is never simply an inert Trinitarian medium as the Spirit
freely communicates the Father and Son’s relationship. The idea of Divine sacrifice or
supra-sacrifice (\textit{Vor-opfer}) points to the unconditional nature of a Divine love that calls
each Divine Person and a “fallen” Creation into a coinciding Ur-kenotic relationship.\textsuperscript{156}

Trinitarian self-surrender attempts to speak to the complete investment the Divine
Persons have in each other’s lives without stretching the concept of immutability to the
point of absurdity. The Ur-kenotic sacrificial event warrants the personal identity of the
Divine Persons in the Trinity without desiccating their divine bond. The Spirit lovingly
participates in and “observes” the unending sacrifice of the Divine Persons. Balthasar’s
understanding of the Spirit’s Person provides an alternative to Trinitarian theologies that
feature extreme views of Trinitarian essentialism or immutability. The Spirit’s Person

\textsuperscript{155} Aquinas, \textit{Super Ioa.} 3, lect. 6, no. 543 in: \textit{St. Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on
the Gospel of Saint John}, part 2, chp. 14, lect. 3, no. 1906, (trans.) James A. Weisheipl
and Fabian R. Larcher (Petersham, MA: St. Bede’s Publications, 1999), 221. On Christ’s
passivity and the Father’s generation, see: \textit{TD} 3, 183-84, John D. Zizoulas, \textit{Being as
Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church} (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s
Seminary Press, 1997), 16-19 and 41-46. On the giving of self (\textit{Selbstübergabe}) in the
Son and Holy Spirit as a mode of return, see: Augustine, \textit{De Trinitate}, XV, 17 (PL 42),
Mary Frances McCarthy (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 186. Hereafter cited as
\textit{CSL}. For the Orthodox perspectives on this point see: John D. Zizoulas, \textit{Being as
Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church} (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s
Seminary Press, 1997), 41-46 and for a Reformed Protestant take on this issue, see: Karl
Barth, \textit{Church Dogmatics} 2/1, (eds.) Rev. G.W. Bromiley and Rev. Prof. T. F. Torrance,
(New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1995), 270-278.

\textsuperscript{156} Balthasar argues that the supplemental nominations of “\textit{Ur}”, “supra” (\textit{Über}) or
“supra-ordering” (\textit{Überordnung}) serve to describe the Spirit’s mysterious role and
existence in the Ur-kenotic orchestrations.
mediates both the essential and the substantial in the Trinity. The Spirit communicates kenotic Trinitarian “in-division” without scission of God’s supra-unity.\(^{157}\) In this dynamic unfolding the Transcendent offers in Godself something formal systems such as mathematics can only infer and notionally circumscribe.

(5) The Divine Ratio: Absolute Love

The relative separation of the Divine Persons make possible the infinite interior possibilities of Divine love.\(^{158}\) The Father imparts the Son’s identity relationally out of Godself (*ein Loslassen des Gottseins*) prior to any thought by the Father, because the Trinity does not consciously derive unity in Godself’s relational capacities.\(^{159}\) Ur-kenosis is an eternal process (*unvordenklich*) that leads to a purely reflective identity for the Divine Persons. Conscious deliberation is not required in the Father’s engenderment of the Son as ontologically and noetically Trinitarian relations are imperishable. Nonetheless, Trinitarian consciousness is tri-noetic, that is, perpetually shared among the Divine Persons. Balthasar looks to Maximus the Confessor for one of the most eloquent theological expositions of how Divine essence, relation and personhood are eternally unified in the self-consciousness of each of the Divine Persons:

> Nor in the Divinity is one thing derived from the other: the Trinity does not derive from Unity, since it is in-generated and self-manifested. On the contrary, the Unity and the Trinity are both affirmed and conceived as truly one and the same,


\(^{158}\) See: *CSL*, 189.

\(^{159}\) The self-reflectivity of the Divine Person within the Trinity resonates with the Divine sense of Godself. The term Godself is used to adopt how divine self-reflectivity sites in the Trinity without recourse or need for a gender specific language. We can only partly apprehend the Trinitarian event analogously in personally “triangulated” relationship.
the first denoting the principle of essence, the second in the mode of existence. The whole is single Unity, not divided by the Persons; and whole is the single Trinity, the Persons of which are not confused by the Unity.  

Because divine action is free but in unison we can infer that the essential substratum of the Divine Persons are also in unanimous and harmonious self-reflective ratio. The Father’s conveyance to the Son reverberates with and forms an integral part of the Father’s own self-awareness: “[f]or what the Father is, he is not in relation to himself, but to the Son.” The Divine mind is not limited to the ruminations of any one of the Divine Persons. Thought is independent for the Father, Son and Spirit while simultaneously in indestructible consensus. The intent and thought of each Divine Person does not signal division in the Trinity:

The Son and Spirit’s equality of rank with the Father gives them an equal share in the properties and modes of conduct of the one God; the hypostases determine in their circuminessio what God is and wills and does. In saying this, let us not forget there can be no genus to subsume a univocal concept of person or that the application of “three” to him has nothing to do with what can be counted quantitatively, since it signifies a fullness that befits the one eternal being of God.

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161 See in DS 528: “quod enim Pater est, non ad se, sed Filium est” and: “plentudo fontalis” (fontal plentitude as part of love as foundational), see: Bonaventure, I “Sententarium,” d. 27, p. 1, q.2 and d. 28, q. 1ff and Bonaventure, Breviloquium, 5.2.4 in “Sententiarum.” On the Father alone speaking the Word as Son, see: S. Th. I, q. 34, a. 2. Here we look at the Son in the Trinitarian community and not incarnate within finite context. The Father recognizes the Son as Eternal Word and Image, see also: S. Th. I, q. 35, a. 2.

162 See: TL 2, 177. All works of the Divine Persons ad extra are accomplished in common. Although each Person has proper mode of acting due to His existence as subsisting relationship (i.e. the Father acts through the Son in the Holy Spirit, the Son acts from the Father in the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit acts from the Father and the Son), Divine acts are not multiple as is proper to individual person, but are one single act common to all three Divine Persons.
in its “transcendence.”

Divine consciousness respects the deeds and thoughts of the individual persons of the Trinity. The Spirit safeguards the intellectual bond between the Father and Son and hence the unity of Divine cognition and intention. One can further speculate that the Spirit’s own thoughts include the thinking of the unique thoughts of the Father and Son. Augustine portrays the Divine cognition and intent in terms of the three eternally unified activities of knowing, memory and love of self. In knowing, God wills what he knows and, thereby, eternally realizes divine existence as love (Col. 1:17). Divine kenosis offers us a way to categorize how the Divine Persons eternally know, remember and love. For one thing, we can see how Divine love presupposes a supra-unity and supra-change that invalidates all impediments to God’s ability to relate. Love outstrips all other acts or states for the Divine Persons because it promotes unity and freedom among the Divine Persons and, thereby, a perfect simulacrum for kenotic relationship.

Divine self-consciousness relates the Divine Persons qualitatively and personally, not quantitatively and reductively. Divine truth is the relational principle of divine self-reflectivity and love for: “the revelation of God, in which man’s fulfillment of the true knowledge of God takes place, is the disposition of God in which He acts toward us as the same triune God that He is in Himself, and in such a way that, although we are men and not God, we receive a share in the truth of His knowledge of Himself.”

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163 S Th. I, q. 30, a. 3 and ad I. See also: TL 2, 131.
164 Augustine, De Trinitate, IX, 4, 4 (PL, 42), 963. See also: NPNF, 126-27.
reflectivity is a singular act for the Divine, but one that accounts for individual modes with respect to Persons of the Trinity and their identities.

The Trinitarian intellect incorporates the intra-mental lives of the Divine Persons not as accidental, but as metaphysically unified. The resulting indissolubility of the Divine will does not, however, mean that the Father commands the Son or the Spirit. The Father’s role as the provenience of Divine causality reinforces the Son and Spirit’s own conscious and intentional acts. Divine consciousness is supported in its metaphysical and intentional structuring for: “[w]e must refer back to the one freedom of the divine essence that is possessed by each of the hypostases in its own specific way; this means that the unity of the divine will is also the result of an integration of the intention of the hypostases.”

The desires of the Son and Spirit have an intrinsic substantial bond to the Father as common point of origin.

While perceived by us as episodic moments, the Divine’s intellect and will at a deeper level are unbroken, configured together under Divine love. The Father personally initiates the Son (per modum intellectus) and the Spirit's procession (per modum voluntatis). The Son and Spirit’s response to this eternal gifting defines the truth of thanksgiving: “[w]hatever the nature of the ‘generatio per modum intellectus’ [generation by way of understanding] may be, it is the result of an unfathomable gratuity behind

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167 See: TL 2, 164, GL 1, 613-14, TD 5, 66, 94, 258, GL 7, 262. Given the mutuality of love, Aquinas reasons about the divine act that: “sed non oportet praetangere eam (personam) act distinctam,” [But we must not think of the person as preexisting distinctly in act] as this telic framing defines the finite person, see: On Love and Charity: Readings from the Commentary of the Sentences of Peter Lombard, (trans.) Peter Kwasniewski, Thomas Bolin, O.S.B, and Joseph Bolin (Introduction and Commentary) A. Kwasniewski (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 2008), 166 and I Sent. , q. 3 a. 4, d. 27.

168 TD 5, 485.

169 See: TL 2, 134.
which no thought can probe, a gratuity that, as such, is the primal ground of the mystery of God.”\textsuperscript{170}

The wellspring of the Divine Persons in the Father curtails any cognitive disharmony in the Trinity. The Spirit and Son are the intellectual terminus or final thought in the Father’s mind. The specification of the Divine Persons in common essence further eliminates the possibility of any difference or distance among them leading to three competing divine wills or centers of consciousness.

The Spirit interminably relays and clarifies the Father’s will and the Son’s response that is already based in love. Love unifies the Divine’s intellectual and volitional acts.\textsuperscript{171}

Divine Personhood sustains a simple nature and distinctive free relations, unified in Divine consciousness and love:

[b]ecause in God what is, are one, if any one of the things which are attributed to God in the abstract is considered in itself, abstracted from all else, it will still be something subsisting, and consequently a Person, since it is an intellectual nature. Hence just as we now say three Persons, on account of holding three personal properties, so likewise if we mentally exclude the personal properties there will still remain in our thought the Divine Nature as subsisting and a Person.\textsuperscript{172}

Each Divine Person is absolutely free but in uninterrupted relationship with the Father. The Son and Spirit are passive only insofar as they eternally accept a relationship with the Father and, hence, their receptivity is an ongoing activity. The mystery of Trinitarian reciprocity upholds the Son and Spirit’s portrayal as two different projections

\textsuperscript{170} \textit{TL} 2, 140. See also: Bonaventure, I \textit{Sent.} d.18, a.u., q.4, resp. (I, 328) in “\textit{Sentientiarum.”}

\textsuperscript{171} Aquinas, \textit{Commentary on the Gospel of John.} 17n, lect. 1, see: http://dhspriory.org/thomas/SSJohn.htm. See also: \textit{TD} 4, 444, \textit{TL} 2, 54-57 and \textit{TL} 1, 246-55. The perfect transparency of the Divine will, knowledge and being are transcendentally predicated as necessary in God and according to Balthasar this state avoids some of the dangers he associates with medieval nominalism.

\textsuperscript{172} \textit{S. Th.} 3, q. 3, a. 3.
or apportionments from a common source in the Father. Christ’s obedience to the Father is not simple indifference or the excoriation of his human will as Monothelitism argues, but rather, a free surrendering that unites divine and human wills in his person. Each Divine Person’s mode of intelligibility is distinct, yet unified, given their invariant roles within the larger Trinity, their common intellectual purposes and their economic relations.\textsuperscript{173} Balthasar’s viewpoint is consistent with Aquinas’ earlier formulations when he writes:

In God there is no real distinction apart from the reciprocal distinction of the Persons…The processions, however, are not really distinct from the relations in God, but only notionally so. Thus Augustine says, that the property of the Father is to have generated the Son, which means that the generation of the Son is the characteristic of the Father; he has no characteristic other than paternity; it characterizes him as a person. There is no need, then, to seek a real order between processions and the relations in God, but only a notional one…But the relation, while really one, is nevertheless notionally multiple.\textsuperscript{174}

Because nothing is held back in Trinitarian love the personhood and idiosyncrasy of each Divine Person is maintained in their kenotic relationship.

(6) The Eternal Word

Divine kenosis renders a way to conceptualize how the Divine Persons exist as eternal love for the Eternal Word never ceases to be thought and spoken by the Father, actualized by the Son and echoed by the Spirit (Jn. 1:1-14).\textsuperscript{175} The eternal propagation of the Word (“epanadiplosis”) is not properly an actualization of divine potency but rather a captured moment of kenotic equilibrium in God’s perpetual, flawless self-determination

\textsuperscript{173} See: TL 3, 167-170 where Trinitarian relationships are employed to explain the nature of Christ’s obedience.

\textsuperscript{174} De Pot., q. 10, a. 3. Aquinas explanation of the Divine in the quoted passage is critical for Balthasar’s own formulations of Trinitarian kenosis. On further development of the theme of relational correspondence see also: S. Th. I, q. 28, a. 3.

\textsuperscript{175} See also: TL 1, 167 and S. Th. I, q. 42, a. 4, ad. 2.
The Second Person’s denomination as Eternal Word serves in Balthasar’s theology to secure Trinitarian identity without nullifying the Son’s relational qualities (Verbum mentis). The conceptual and syncategorematic conjunction between divine “thought” and “word”, the Supra-word (Überwort) is free of any trace of subordination on the part of the Divine Persons (Matt. 11:27). The synthesis of thought and word, image and radiance come together without metaphysical parataxis in the concept of Eternal Word.\(^{176}\) When we want to stress the Eternal Word’s consubstantiality with the Father we employ the term “Son”, accenting the co-eternal nature that favors “radiance” (Heb. 1:3). The Son’s concurrence to Creation suggests an “Image” and the intellectual characteristics of the Second Trinitarian Person supports the nomination “Word”. These various designations describe different perspectives on the Son’s personal relationship with the Father.

The Son is spoken of in history as the Incarnation of Jesus. This Divine emptying is made without loss of perpendicular veridical affiliation to the Father. Christ can be seen as a universal transducer and concrete universal for all Reality. The Eternal Word is the concrete universal because: “Christus medium tenens in omnibus,” [Christ holding the middle in all things]. The Trinitarian communion is an interminable overflowing

dialogue that seamlessly echoes in Creation with Christ’s incarnation. The Ur-kenotic relations must not be thought to exist prior to the Son in some version of re-worked Arianism. The personhood of the Father is only notionally prior to the Son and Spirit. The identity of each of the Divine Persons is eternally confirmed by a pure kenotic act. The Father posits the Son who is identical with the Godhead. In this self-gifting of the Trinitarian Persons the basis for all other sacrificial, donative or differing acts finds its archetype. In other words, the Father’s generative self-utterance of the Son is the “initial” act that underlines all recondite structures of the Trinity and by extension Creation as a whole. The distinction among the Divine Persons does not upset their pre-existing unity, but points to the Father’s asserting an infinite distance that contains and enfolds all other possible gaps in a finite Creation.

The Divine Persons proclaim more than the sum of their constituent metaphysical “parts” (hypostases) or the event of their kenotic flourishing. Trinitarian kenosis allies Divine freedom and love in ever increasing relationships. There are no disjunctives in this expansion as the Spirit advocates the Trinitarian union and personal integrity of the Divine Persons. The Spirit’s Person buttresses the Divine essence, hypostases and taxis, suggesting to Balthasar an argument against the contentious claim that his theological vision introduces a rarefied fourth member of the Trinity:

[w]ith that, does not the last shadow of the lingering objection of a divine quaternitas [quaternity] finally vanish? Do we not at last eliminate any suggestion of an essence that perishes un-movingly alongside the processions? And if we rightly assume that the taxis (sequential order) of the processions, while invertible, is absolutely a-temporal—so much so that we can and must think of

\[\footnotesize\]
\[\text{177 On the difference between divine generation and becoming, see: TD 5, 512, 515, GL 7, 397 and De pot., q. 10, a.3.}\]
\[\text{178 See: TL 1, 220-21.}\]
\[\text{179 See: TD 5, 98, 245 and TD 2, 257-58.}\]
Persons who proceed, the Son and Holy Spirit, as “letting themselves be brought forth”—does not the divine essence become something that is as much “in motion” as the event of the processions themselves.\footnote{TL 2, 136.}

Given their Ur-kenotic nature the Divine Persons exist in an eternally dynamic relationship.

(7) Divine Groundlessness

We can speak of the Spirit’s emblematical groundlessness because the relational defines the Spirit’s Person and role. The Spirit’s parabolic movement between Son and Father delineates the Persons of Father and Son as two moving termini that are in an equally expansive exchange. Consequently, in broad terms, the Father embodies the substantial characteristics of the Divine essence whereas the Spirit typifies the relational and intentional correspondences of the Trinity. The Spirit is the eternally moving center of reciprocity and transmission of the Father and Son’s desires: “as for the Holy Spirit whose specific part it is to choose and decide in all freedom (since the Holy Spirit is absolute divine will), one might say that the Spirit embodies the reciprocal ‘mode of granting requests’ which is an invention of the whole Trinity…”\footnote{TD 5, 89. On the essential predication of the Divine see also: S. Th. I, q. 39, a. 3.}

Personifying the mystery of Divine concord, the Spirit accepts the interpersonal differences of the Divine Persons without the multiplication of Divine beings. The Spirit’s tractable nature grounds the supra-ordination of Trinitarian relations in unanimity.\footnote{While it is beyond our purposes here, it must be noted that the Spirit’s eternal groundlessness in no way suggests to Balthasar that the Spirit is not personal, but a divine principle or operation. Balthasar criticizes theologies and philosophies such as Hegel’s} Therefore, the Spirit viaducts the distances between the Father and Son and
frames the eternal groundlessness (*etwas unvorstellbar Über-Grundloses*) of the relational capacities of the Divine Being. The Spirit stages the propinquity between the Divine essence and its relations in absolute freedom:

God grounds himself and this self-grounding is an expression of his essence and of the fact that he is an absolute person. His personal freedom does not rest, as in the case of creatures, upon the natural foundation that in one way or another precedes his free spirituality.\(^{183}\)

Claiming the equally subjective and objective perspectives of the Father and Son, the Spirit has an unlimited circumspection of the Trinity. The Spirit’s observations do not de-personalize the Father or Son, who also share in the Divine essence. Love motivates and encompasses the different heuristic positions the Spirit adopts relative to the Father and Son. Thus, a finite perception to highlight particular beings by isolating them from their global context or environment is not required of the Spirit. The Spirit’s vision of the Father and Son is eternal and, as such, takes in the full extent of their free Being—including their interior movements. The Spirit regards the Father and Son without changing them. The Spirit’s apprehension of the Father and Son is more properly thought of as a free response to the Father’s invitation.\(^{184}\)

The Spirit’s role in facilitating the kenotic relationships between the relational and substantial characteristics of the Divine Persons broadens one’s perspective on the Spirit. By not focusing solely on the Spirit’s dependence on the Son’s generation, a more

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\(^{183}\) *TL* 3, 140.

\(^{184}\) *TD* 3, 522. See also: *TD* 3, 199. Modalism and Polytheism are rejected, in part, for their failure to keep this mystery of divine unity and incarnate God in proper tension. Faith alone, Balthasar contends, can perceive the truth that without the multiplication of divine beings, the Spirit personifies the interpersonal unity and mutuality of Absolute Truth.
encompassing view of the Spirit is available, leading Balthasar to ask whether: “[a]t this point, it becomes an idle debate whether we say that the Father produces the Spirit with the Son (filioque) or through the Son (dia hyiou), but it is also idle to attempt to define this joint action [Miteinander] once again (restrictively) as a single principle of spiration.”  

The Spirit sees the veil around the intent of the Father and Son as diaphanous. The Spirit’s love is a creative envisioning of reality that rejects all sterile, probabilistic or reductive measures of the world of being. Divine love is infinitely exponential, creating a sense in which the Divine Persons meet each other in wonder and surprise. The “supra” or magis principle of Divine love is in statu nascendi, ‘in a state of birth’, a lived totality that spontaneously surmounts even the perception of limitation or enclosure by horizon. Therefore, the Divine Persons cannot ultimately be known in terms of Divine will, power or any one of the Divine Person’s thoughts, even by the limitless witness of the Spirit. For Balthasar, any understanding of God that does not hold as primary the Divine’s eternal and Ur-kenotic declaration of love is wanting.

Depictions of the Trinity that prioritize a monolithic understanding of God’s self-preservation fail to appreciate the radical nature of Divine love. Ur-kenosis offers a way to show the corporate costs and relationally (circuminessio) subtractive nature of Divine love.

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185 TL 2, 153.
186 See: TD 4, 450-51.
187 See: TL 3, 20. See also: TL 1, 242 where Balthasar states that love is the “worshipful kernel of all things.”
188 See: TL 2, 176.
189 The ecstatic and intentional characteristics of the Holy Spirit’s self-reflectivity are subsumed under the idea of spiration, see: TD 4, 324, 467-71, TL 2, 151-54, Barth Church Dogmatics, 2/1, 493, 496, 490-512 and Gregory of Nyssa, Commentary on the Song of Songs, (trans.) Casmir McCambley (Brookline, Mass: College Press, 1987), 208.
love. The internal relations of the Divine Persons and their free actions are taken as expressions of divine love.\(^{190}\) Ur-kenotic “separations” can be seen to certify outside of the individual person.

Utterly free, the Divine Person’s thoughts, purposes, essence and hypostases are predisposed to the unity that is love. This Divine equalization is possible because the Father clears “space” for the Son and Spirit to interact in the Trinity in self-emptying kenotic acts. Trinitarian selflessness (Selbstlosigkeit) is an active mode of Divine receptivity that inducts God’s indwelling love as simple, unlimited, eternal and personal.\(^{191}\) Supremely, the Father’s generation of the Son demonstrates how love unifies by creating “space” or means for the freedom of the loved ones.\(^{192}\)

The Son’s unconditional and “active” receptivity of the Father’s beneficence makes possible the unconfined “sphere” where the Spirit circumnavigates.\(^{193}\) The Spirit is not a Divine instrument but a Person whose infinite openness leavens the free reach of the Father. The Father ratifies for the Son and Spirit a “dramatic space,” a euphemistic “playing room” (der Spielraum) for their omnipotent and supra-abundant intercourse.\(^{194}\) The granting of space (Geschehenlassen) allows for the realization of personal liberty.

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\(^{191}\) See: Hans Urs von Balthasar Love Alone is Credible, (trans.) by David C. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 83 (Hereafter cited as LA). This does not imply a logical contradiction see: S. Th. I, q. 17, a. 4, but rather a relationship of personal love, see: S. Th. I, q. 27, a. 1 and q. 37, a. 1.

\(^{192}\) See: TD 3, 185 and ibid., 54-55.

\(^{193}\) For Balthasar the Father’s generation of the Son does not limit the Father’s knowledge as the Son and the Holy Spirit harmonize in love, see: TL 2, 177.

\(^{194}\) See: TD 2, 257-58.
the sacrificial giving of the Divine Persons, reciprocal and self-reflective actions occur. Divine freedom is enunciated in the lacuna allotted by the Father’s Ur-kenotic ordering of the Trinity. Trinitarian space is equally seen as interminable and causally moored to the Father by Balthasar. The Trinitarian “playing room” is a metaphor for the interior arena of the Divine Persons’ freedom and all that follows from their liberty. The spaces between the real relationships of the Divine Persons do not add anything to God, but furnish a way for Divine intimacy to flourish. Consequently, the spatial analogy offers a way to speak about Trinitarian “Nothingness”.

The identity of a specific Divine Person and the Trinity as a whole include the deployment of space or more accurately a positive absence, or Nothingness, as part of their metaphysical co-ordination. Trinitarian spatial “groundlessness” can be seen as a positive “Nothingness” as it distinguishes the proportionate relationship between the Divine hypostases and attends to the personal freedom of the Father, Son and Spirit. The correspondence of the Divine Persons manifests a privileged spatial topology where the “negative” or subtractive spaces confirm the positive transcendental horizon of Divine freedom from all restriction. The ambit of a Divine Person’s hypostatic relations with the Divine essence also permits the Divine Persons “privacy”. Metaphysical clearance in the Trinity is personalized by each of the Divine Persons and, hence, grants them the “ontological and relational leave” to simply “be”.

The spatial domain between the Divine Persons remains a cipher that may be profitably explored analogically and metaphysically. To that end, we hypothesize that

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195 See: *TL* 2, 53. On the transcendent receptivity in his earthly mission, see: *TD* 4, 106-7 and *TD* 5, 304.  
196 *E*, 89-90.
the area between Divine relations and essence is analogous to the manner in which zero functions in numeric equations involving addition and subtraction. In such mathematical statements zero is provisional to the other terms without determining finally their individual values. A model of this counter-intuitive theory presents if we presuppose that all energy in the cosmos existed prior to its emergence in the Big Bang and the Law of the Conservation of Energy is valid. Quantum Theory provides us with a probability calculus to explain the state of the universe prior to its birth. In this state the primal substance or what the ancients termed Prime Matter, existed in immaterial fluid form outside of any time metric. So configured the universe spins continuously providing zero points (e.g., without spatial-temporal actualization) throughout the total potential “space” of the universe. According to Quantum Theory, this state is grounded in a state of Zero Point Energy or Vacuum Energy that yields infinite positive and negative values. This fluctuating or indeterminate state as the Law of Conservation of Energy exists dialectically with the Second Law of Thermodynamics—the universe holds in balance the actualization of the difference between order and entropy.

Zero, like spatial Nothingness in the Ur-kenotic Trinity, presumes that associative identities are non-contradictory. If Trinitarian identity realizes absolute truth and Jesus Christ is the Incarnate God, some transcendence of formal logic, or faith, seems necessary if we are to accept this formulation.

While it is beyond the scope of our present purposes here, the central issue of the conceptual register of the Incarnate God redirects us to the larger question of the logos
asarkos. Karl Barth raises this issue as significant in writing of the Son: “He is the content of a necessary and important concept in Trinitarian doctrine when we have to understand the revelation and dealings of God in light of their free basis in the inner being and essence of God.” Rejecting analogy’s ability to account for the inner life of the Trinity and embracing salvation history’s completion in a faithful relationship of personal communion in the person and work of Jesus Christ, Barth looks to the relationship between grace and predestination for a theological framing of the question of logos asarkos. In light of a Barthian concept of election, theologians such as Robert W. Jenson deny the logos asarkos, claiming that the pre-existing One is none other than Jesus Christ. Here the distinction between the Incarnate Lord and the Son resolves fully only in a doctrine of predestination that takes the logic of Jesus’ economic immanence in terms of God’s plan of the eternal election of Creation.

Jenson acknowledges the need to conceptualize the existence of Jesus Christ prior to the Incarnation and believes that the repetitions in the narrative patterns in the Old and

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197 Logos asarkos (“Word without Flesh”) here refers to the Eternal Word in Trinitarian life prior to the Incarnation. The underlining question here is what status does one give to the “idea” the Trinity had in mind concerning the Incarnation of the Son as Jesus Christ?

198 Church Dogmatics IV/I, 52.

199 On a Barthian interpretation of this theory see: Bruce McCormack, “Grace and Beauty: The Role of God’s Grace: Election in Karl Barth’s Theological Ontology,” in The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth (ed.) John Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 100. See also: “[w]e have to take care to avoid any ‘Christological restriction’ that would want to ground the reality of creation in some ‘prior’ reality of redemption or grace; there is no ‘before’ or ‘after’, and even if the goal is the first thing intended by the agent, in ordine executionis we must first posit a natural (non-divine) subject as the possible recipient of grace,” TD 3, 257.
New Testaments answers this concern in the story of Jesus’ birth from Mary. As Barth explicates: “YHWH does not stand above the covenant, but in it, yet He is also not under it.” While Balthasar would whole-heartedly agree with this assessment, his work suggests that abstract concepts such as salvation history, story, logic and drama can only be understood by attempting to intellectually bridge how these are equally Transcendent and immanent points of reference.

Barth and Jenson share with Balthasar and the larger theological tradition that the Son and Jesus’ identity are self-reflective of the Trinitarian life. God remains Trinitarian with the Incarnation and hence Barth reasons that: “He is the Son or Word of God for us because He is so antecedently in Himself.” Recognizing the aseity of the Divine, all three thinkers take the Incarnation to be a free act or decision that eternally verifies God’s Trinitarian constitution. Unlike the two former approaches that argue that the logos asarkos is ontologically or epistemologically known outside of revelation, we hold that Balthasar’s Theo-logic approach and his insistence on Creation’s analogous relationship to the Divine provide a way to move beyond a simple abstract notion of the Son. Indeed, the Son is known in his person and mission, however, these historical events are inseparable from the logic of the Deus pro nobis and the very grace of our predestination to participate in Jesus Christ opens up the greater mystery of its source in the Trinitarian life. God’s essential self-determination in Jesus Christ reveals not only God’s loving...

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201 Church Dogmatics, IV/I, 25.
202 Church Dogmatics, I/I, 416.
203 This question is made coherent with establishing a personal relationship with Christ, see: Church Dogmatics, IV/I, 52.
commitment to Creation in the redemptive life of Jesus Christ, but also, something of its eternally mysterious source and theo-logical actualization. Formal and abstract formulations of the life of faith do not necessarily deny one a personal communion with Jesus Christ as evident in the written nature of the Church’s teachings, councils and creedal statements. The conceptualization of the faith, especially concerning the *logos asarkos*, allows us greater participation in God’s revelation in Jesus Christ.\(^{204}\) Balthasar reasons that one can both respect the principle of sufficient reason and expand the bounds of its logic without leading to contradictory statements.\(^{205}\) Balthasar accepts this paradox as a way to delve deeper into mystery without leading to irresoluble contradiction. More useful for our purposes is how Balthasar’s project allows for the imprecisions of finite knowledge of the economic disclosure of the Son in history, but also sees in the differential, relational and immanent a way to “\(\text{subtractively}\)” appropriate the mystery of Ur-kenosis.\(^{206}\) Truth is a mystery of actuality (ground) and seeming groundlessness and as such a natural conversation partner with an Ur-kenotic God and the person of Jesus Christ.

The appellation of Trinitarian Nothingness can also help contextualize the absence of empirical beings prior to Creation. The concept of Nothingness does not exist

\(^{204}\) For an opposing view see: *Church Dogmatics*, I/I, 172 and the danger of such formulations in making of the living God an analytic God see; *Church Dogmatics*, I/I, 341.

\(^{205}\) See: *TL* 3, 307-309.

\(^{206}\) Subjective truth is not seen as bifurcated or atrophied from universal truth. Truth is taken to be spontaneous and free in its particular communication in being. It is this “indifferent” manner of actualizing Truth that allows for the constellating work of subjective reflection and free objects in the world. For Balthasar, the sensory imagination and higher cognitive functions ceaselessly draw meaning from what appears in the world as a separation of the signifier and signified, the essential and surface meaning. We will look at this issue in greater detail in Chapter Five.
in dualistic relationship with the Divine. It is neither an addendum to Divine Being nor conceptually sufficient in itself to explain the act of Creation. The non-necessity of created being advocates for the indispensability and freedom of the Divine.\textsuperscript{207} Creation requires that God’s infinite self-giving somehow yields the completely other of finite and complex beings. The eternal meaning of God’s thoughts avails in creating stability for created being: “[t]he Divine Persons according to the nature of their processions have a causality respecting the creation of things…God the Father made the creature through the Word, which is his Son, and through his love, which is the Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{208}

The Divine thought of Nothingness and its analogous kenotic presence in the space between Divine relationships and essence germinates the absolute other of immanent and finite Creation. The Father freely “begets” Creation as a shared thought of Nothingness among the Divine Persons. No created being or concept, including that of Nothingness, can vanquish Divine freedom. Holding the idea of Nothingness as a trilateral thought, a Divine directive for the birth of Creation is issued.

\textbf{(8) Incarnation and Creation}

The Son is co-creator (1 Cor. 8:6) with a name above all others (Phil. 2:9-11).\textsuperscript{209} The cooperation between the \textit{transcendent} and created precludes for Balthasar any

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{207} See: TL 1, 106.
\item \textsuperscript{208} \textit{S. Th.} I, q. 45, a. 6.
\item \textsuperscript{209} See: TL 3, 35-36, \textit{TD} 4, 325-26 and \textit{TD} 3, 530. Biblical authors aligned descriptions of the Messiah and Jesus’ characteristics in these early attempts to understand more faithfully his salvific mission. Gordon D. Fee sees, for example, in Paul’s kenotic account of Jesus’ identity in Phil. 2: 10-11 a recollection of Isaiah 45:23. The homage owed Jesus’ name in that ‘every knee should bow’ finds authority in his fulfilling of Isaiah’s oracle concerning on whom YHWH’s divine authority will come to rest. See: Gordon D. Fee, ‘Paul and Trinity’ in \textit{The Trinity}, (eds.) Stephan T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, S.J. and Gerald O’ Collins, S.J., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 61.
\end{itemize}
qualification of Creation as purely “neutral” or “pure”. Creation is ordered by its Divine cause without a loss of autonomy. Creation’s call to perfection in divine grace coincides with pre-existing proclivities inherent in created matter.  

Jesus’ full humanity requires that he be subjected to the dictates of created nature, but without the same need for Divine grace; here the Spirit acts as an interior principle and transcendent point of reference for the historical Jesus.

According to Chalcedon, Jesus’ Divine and human natures are brought together without confusion as the union of Jesus’ distinct natures preserves the character proper to each in one person and one hypostasis.  

It is within this dramatic framework of Jesus’ person that relational differences and transcendence are given their confirmation. Divine and finite natures are perfectly consistent with the transcendent scope of Jesus’ interior life. The Father’s relationship to the Son through the Spirit creates a perfect union that in the person of Jesus Christ extends to include finite modes of interior and exterior giving.

Jesus’ being sanctions the autonomy of nature and an interior ordaining that is free and transcendent (Col. 1:16). Adrienne von Speyr’s understanding of this relationship is propaedeutic to Balthasar’s own theories. For both, Jesus Christ is the point where transcendence and immanence exist completely in a human person: “[n]ot only things are

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A parting of ways between Balthasar and Hegel is found here. Hegel seems to sacrifice a deeper sense of phenomenal Reality and hence its necessary relationship to the Divine by arguing: “Thus the distinctions are made immediately resolved as soon as they are made, and are made as soon as they are resolved, and what is true and actual is precisely this immanent circular movement,” see: G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, (trans.) A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 465. Hereafter cited as *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Balthasar makes room for human freedom in his understanding of God’s redemptive plan, a move that necessitates a metaphysical aporia in Reality and divine mediation that finds an Ur-kenotic guarantee. Further attention must be given to how these perceived distinctions are present in Balthasar and Hegel’s views than is possible here.

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See: *S. Th. I*, q. 30, 2, ad 3 and *TD 5*, 93-94.
created but relations too…also things that are inaccessible to us, for which we have no
sense, which have reality for us only in faith whether conscious or not: all of that is in the
Son, belongs to him, but always inasmuch as he is the Son of the Father.212 Indeed, the
Incarnation evidences the concurrence of the Divine processions, and a free Creation in
Jesus looks to the transcendent Father as point of final integration.213

The Ur-kenotic intra-Trinitarian relations defend the Son’s Incarnation against all
“gnostic” or supra-essentialist orchestrations. With the Son’s taking on flesh the
Trinitarian processions are extended into the non-Divine cosmos.214 The consubstantial
communion among the Divine Persons is an interminable overflowing Trinitarian
dialogue that seamlessly echoes in Creation with Christ’s Incarnation. The immanent
Trinity grounds and supports the economic Trinity.215 The Son’s predication as Eternal
Word in the immanent Trinity by the Father anticipates the Spirit’s extension of this
intra-Trinitarian communication to Creation with the Incarnation.

Everything takes place in relation to the Trinity that is source and final end point
of Creation (Rev. 5:9).216 The Father’s will is unconstrained by any obstacles, distances,
negations or absences set in play by material reality. All negative and finite constructs
are lesser deconstructive and synthetic forces than the integrity of the Ur-kenotic space

212 Adrienne Von Speyr, Colossians, (trans.) Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius
213 TD 3, 518.
215 See: TD 3, 508.
216 See: Rev. 13:8, Job 34:15, Ps. 104:29, Eccl. 12:7, Vladimir Lossky, Mystical
Theology in the Eastern Church (London: James Clarke, 1957), 60 and Hans Urs von
Hereafter cited as: Life Out of Death.
where Divine love eternally annunciates.\textsuperscript{217} The Divine-human union of Jesus Christ is a hermeneutic for all analogies and causal predications in Creation. By bringing to finite love a developed sense of its own interior \textit{transcendent} reach, the true relationship of Creation to the Divine is revealed by Jesus.

Jesus Christ does not countermand the Son’s union with the Father and Spirit as he always elects the Father’s will, a will that always already decides for love. The Spirit works in concert with Jesus Christ to fulfill the Father’s designs. The divine-human Jesus Christ places Creation in fruitful relation with its original imaging in the Son:

The divine can thus irradiate and transfigure creaturely reality only because what God created, as such—which is utterly and absolutely not God—is an image of God that can never be totally destroyed, even by sin. Being, in its hierarchical stages and degrees of interiority (existence, life, feeling, thinking and loving) simply cannot be anything but a trace, an image, of eternal triune Being; and the more vibrant, communicative and fruitful it is, the more clearly it manifests this relation.\textsuperscript{218}

The kenotic spanning of the unassailable orbit between the Divine and Creation becomes an internal principle of Jesus’ knowledge of the Father.\textsuperscript{219} The Spirit witnesses the absolute simplicity of the Divine life and the Son’s encounter of concrete situations in Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{220} In embodying human nature the Son perfects the substantial, material, immaterial and relational features of Creation. The incarnate Son reveals in a particular finite existence the boundless and eternal truth of the Trinity for: “[w]hen the Word of God becomes flesh...He both showed forth the image truly, since He became Himself what was His Image; and He re-established the similitude after a sure manner, by assimilating [the human person] to the invisible Father through means of the visible

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{217} \textit{TD} 3, 529 and \textit{E}, 69.
\item \textsuperscript{218} \textit{TD} 3, 525.
\item \textsuperscript{219} See: \textit{TL} 2, 289-329.
\item \textsuperscript{220} \textit{TL} 1, 230.
\end{itemize}
Word.”

(9) Divine Consciousness and Jesus Christ

The Trinity’s ingress into finitude neither contravenes divine unity nor the human being’s natural *transcendence*. Jesus Christ is the eternal Son whose human supereminence unlocks the way for all other human beings. The inscrutability of the Divine-human union persists beyond all attempted explanations. Balthasar’s approach to the mystery of the Incarnation champions equating the theological categories of person and mission. Christ’s divine-human person corresponds perfectly to the mission the Father has given him. Consequently, one’s mission provides a way for the person to be *transcendentally* unified with the Divine. The Son exemplifies how all persons are called to live in their relation to the Divine in one’s mission:

The analogy…[between begetting and creating] enables the Son too, without abolishing the *analogia entis*, simultaneously to do two things: he represents God to the world—but in the mode of the Son who regards the Father as ‘greater’ and to whom he eternally owes all that he is—and he represents the world to God, by being as man [or rather God-man], ‘humbly, lowly, modest, docile of heart’ (*Mt.* 11:29). It is on the basis of these two aspects, united in an abiding analogy that the Son can take up his one, unitary mission.

Jesus’ finite knowledge of the Father logically depends on his experience of non-inhering relations and a *subtractive* or apophatic approach, whereas his divine nature untiringly knows the eternal real relations of the Father, Son and Spirit. While the states of divine and finite consciousness are distinct given the absolute differences separating

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221 Ireneaus of Lyon, *Contra haereses*, 5.16, 2. See also: *NPNF*, 544.
223 On the *communicatio idiomatum*, Balthasar writes: “…it is only possible to apply qualities and attributes of the one nature to the other because both are united in the one person of the logos—not by way of nature, but by way of person, certainly, the natures are “undivided”, but, however, close the union, they are “unconfused”, the properties of each remain unimpaired [sozōmenes],” *TD* 3, 222.
224 *TD* 3, 230. See especially: footnote number 68 starting on page 228.
them, they are paradoxically and flawlessly united in the Trinity and Jesus’ person.\textsuperscript{225} Jesus lives out his mission interiorly in his conscious state.\textsuperscript{226}

As Jesus Christ never ceases to look to the Father or recall his incarnate source in the Son through the Spirit, his human self-awareness can be said to determine itself tri-relationally.\textsuperscript{227} The Spirit makes Jesus’ “heno-tradic” experiences of the Father possible.\textsuperscript{228} The Spirit creates a link that stretches from the Transcendent Trinity’s innermost depths to the surface margins of their revealed being in the person of Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{229} The Divine’s historical revelation is grounded in the Trinitarian life. Balthasar reasons that:

The exteriorization of God (in the Incarnation) has its ontic condition of possibility in the eternal exteriorization of God—that is, in his tripersonal self-gift. With that departure point, the created person, too, should no longer be described chiefly as subsisting in itself, but more profoundly (supposing that person to be actually created in God’s image and likeness) as a ‘returning (\textit{reflexio completa}) from exteriority to oneself’ and an ‘emergence from oneself as an interiority that gives itself in self-expression.’\textsuperscript{230}

Tasked with extending the Son’s desire to kenotically empty himself of Divinity and protracting Jesus’ apperception of his self and his relationship to the world and Father, the Spirit universalizes Christ’s work. Tied to material existence through Jesus

\textsuperscript{225} The Council of Chalcedon (451) teaches that Jesus Christ’s union of the divine and human represents the assumption but not absorption of human nature. It is in the dramatic integration of the divine and human that Balthasar gives his argument against Nestorianism. With the resurrection, the fully human Jesus Christ enters fully into the Trinity. See also: \textit{TD5}, 394-401.
\textsuperscript{226} See: \textit{TD 3}, 505.
\textsuperscript{227} On the necessity of a triune Creator, see: \textit{TD 5}, 66-109, \textit{S. Th.}, I, q. 45, a. 6 and Augustine, \textit{In Joannis Evangelium Tractatus}, 20, 9. See also: \textit{NPNF}, 135-36.
\textsuperscript{228} The term “heno-triad” from the Greek word \textit{henos} for one and “tri” for three from the Latin, offers a shorthand way to talk about divine nature and action that remains Trinitarian and simple.
\textsuperscript{229} See: \textit{TL 3}, 177-184.
\textsuperscript{230} \textit{MP}, 28.
Christ, the Spirit spiritually invigorates all Creation:

The Son accomplishes all of this in what is also his own Spirit (who proceeds through and for him) who pervades his entire spiritual and physical reality as Son and so exposits it without abstraction. Indeed, we can add that the Spirit, who also, and principaliter, proceeds from the Father, pervades the entire event of the Son’s origination from the Father. Since through this event the Son becomes the archetype and the locus of the existence of all created reality (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3), we can also say that the Holy Spirit animates the entire cosmos, moving it dynamically toward its full liberation in the Kingdom of Christ, and, finally, of God the Father. (Rom. 8:18-27).\textsuperscript{231}

The Transcendent freedom of the Trinity stands behind the Son’s eternal decision to subtend the eternal kenotic relations temporally in the person Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{232} The redemptive event (\textit{Heilsgeschichte}) for Balthasar need not concede to theoretic or mythic explanations, for its human protagonist Jesus Christ is a finite nexus of the eternal relations that terminate in the Second Person of the Trinity.

Jesus is the gateway between pure Trinitarian love and Creation’s innermost yearnings. The Son and Spirit respect the Father as the focus of their abiding commencement in the Trinity while Jesus contemplates this mystery in Creation. The kenotic difference between the Son, Spirit and Jesus Christ is surveyed in the love the Father estates them. With Jesus Christ the chasm between the Divine and Creation sets out how Ur-kenotic relationships have their parameters in finite freedom and integrative acts of love. The offer of Divine love is made in an infinite variety of ways but always circles around the finite, yet \textit{transcendent} revelations of the Divine: “[t]he basis of the biblical religion is the \textit{diastasis}, the distance between God and the creature that is the elementary presupposition that makes it possible for man to understand and appreciate

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{231} \textit{TL} 2, 156.
\item \textsuperscript{232} See: \textit{GL} 7, 147-161.
\end{itemize}
the unity that grace brings about.”

According to Balthasar, distance and difference are indispensable for a finite being’s advancement into the Transcendent.

The Spirit draws out the eternal implications of Jesus’ finite actions for the Trinity and future generations (see: Prov. 16:4). This work on the Spirit’s part is not only possible but also requisite given that Christ’s mission is tethered to the Spirit’s own sense of self. Ideally the finite person’s reach for the Transcendent precipitates in humility when one models this act on Christ who has the Spirit in him “without measure” and yet declares that the Spirit is above him. Christ’s humiliation (status exinanitionis) is possible because he renounced His form of equality with God even to the point of being “obedient unto death” (Phil. 2:8).

(10) Absolute Groundlessness and Creation

In the Spirit’s nonpareil perspective the boundless freedom of the Son is eternally known in the simplicity of the Trinity and in the finitude and complexity of Jesus’ life. In the Spirit’s synchronous “quantum” view of Jesus and the Son the originality of Balthasar’s angle on Divine immutability and kenosis becomes more apparent. The Spirit’s dual frame of reference provides one way of understanding how the Divine experiences change in Jesus Christ without depreciation of Divine immutability. Balthasar conceptualizes this “Theo-drama” as follows:

It is not that God, in himself, changes but that unchangeable God enters into a

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233 ExT. 3, 173. Divine surpassing in the idea of a *magis* principle attempts to highlight how Balthasar’s interpretation of the transition from concrete being to grace-filled sojourner towards Divine Glory is rooted in a particular Ignatian theological vision. In scholastic theologies the dynamics of the Ignatian *magis* usually center on a clarification of the relationship between grace and nature.

234 See: TL 3, 310-318.

235 See: TL 3, 184-85 and TL 2, 78.

236 TD 3, 521.
relationship with creaturely reality, and this relationship imports a new look to his internal relations. This is not something purely external, as if this relationship *ad extra* did not really affect him: rather, the new relationship to worldly nature, which is hypostatically united to the Son, highlights one of the infinite possibilities that lie in God’s eternal life.\(^{237}\)

The Spirit objectively views and subjectively seizes the eternal dialogue between the Father and Son and their finite revelation in the life of Jesus Christ (*opera trinitatis ad extra communia*).\(^{238}\) Likewise the Father and Son look to the Spirit.

Ur-kenosis resonates in the Son’s experiences of the lacunae and non-inhering relations in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Jesus Christ substantiates in a concrete manner the Father’s imaging of the Son in Creation: “[t]he Father creates the world after the primordial image of the Son; that being not enough, however, he creates the world in the Son as well, by locating its continuance in him.”\(^{239}\) Because Jesus is the Incarnation of

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\(^{238}\) Heresy intimidates when one’s understanding of divine personhood comes from a deficient grasp of the person Jesus Christ. Because Jesus is fully divine the improper aligning of his person to the Father leads to an erroneous critique of his conscious state and a mutation of the intra-Trinitarian relations: “Sabellius, like Arius, thought the Son less than the Father. Rather than concluding that the Son was less than God, however, Sabellius conflated “Father” and “Son” (falling into a perfect essentialism), so that “Son” is simply a descriptive term for the Father in the Father’s outward acts as incarnate,” Matthew Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 153. For both Arius and Sabellius the source of the Divine processions are seen as exterior to God, see: ibid, p. 154. The Council of Rheims in 1148 set out that in the immanent Trinity the relations are real against contrary readings forwarded by such theological schools as Sabellius’ Christology. On a theological response to these issues see also: *S. Th. 1*, q. 28, a. 1, *De pot.*, q. 8, a. 1, *TD 5*, 81, 100, 516 and St. Maximus the Confessor, “On the Lord’s Prayer,” in *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, (compiled by) St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, (eds. and trans.) G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, & Kallistos Ware (Boston: Faber & Faber, 1981), 287.

\(^{239}\) *Colossians*, 32. In *Chapter Three* we will show how this idea also influences Balthasar’s understanding of Hell and the virtual nature of sin.
the Son, he presents an image of Creation in his particular phenomenal and free
existence—Jesus is head of Creation (Eph. 1:10). Not only does the man Jesus actualize
the Son’s presence in the material realm, he conduits the Transcendent relations to bear
on Creation.

Returning Creation back to the Father occasions a retracing of the Son, giving all
that was received back to the Father. Jesus Christ freely recreates Creation by
rewriting it in the eternal redemptive plan of divine love (Jn. 18:26). The Son does not
eradicate the distance that separates the Divine from the Created but rather gives it
meaning. This distance safeguards God’s Transcendence and gives the Son the means to
actualize the infinite Divine life in the embodied human person of Jesus Christ. The
Father’s “supra-freedom” and “supra-love” includes the Son’s incarnate mission and the
Creation that is a platform for it. The existence of Trinitarian intent in Jesus’ person
and mission makes it possible for Him to bring about the redemption, reconciliation and
reunion of all.

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240 In Chapter Three, we will return to how Nothingness, Creation and divine
relations are present to Jesus Christ in Hell. Balthasar proposes that an expansive reading
of the nature of the beatific vision thematically unifies these themes for Jesus Christ in
Hell. Suffice it to say that for our purposes here, Jesus Christ’s perception of the Father
in Hell filters through all that opposes the Father. In return the Father gives Jesus Christ
insights into the mysterious nature of Nothingness’s relationship to evil and human
freedom as concrete instantiations of a relationship to evil and sin in Creation. Again,
Balthasar stresses that this mystery in no way rejects the Son’s omniscience or
omnipotence but argues that Jesus Christ’s mission demands that his previous pre-
cognitive divine knowledge of this truth must be confirmed in Hell.

241 See: GL 5, 631.

242 The union of Jesus’ freedom and the Father’s desires infers Balthasar’s
working hypothesis against all wrongly understood interpretations of Jesus’ volitional
 capacities (e.g., Monothelitism). Further, as Balthasar holds that Jesus physically suffers
in bringing forward the Father’s redemptive love to an unwelcoming world, he disputes
all who would deny Christ’s human nature (e.g., Monophysitism, Julianistism, etc.). For a
more lengthy discussion of Balthasar’s rejection of Monophysitism, that is the belief that
Jesus’ manifestation of the eternal in the temporal and limited is neither illusionary nor virtual as Christ’s relationship to the Transcendent Father is real although finite. Jesus Christ’s participation in the Divine life is both a self-reflective movement and a series of freely entered into associations in the world. The *transcendent* gesture by the finite person is configured internally and externally as response to the Divine’s *a priori* protrusions into Creation. Relational kenosis or “difference” enacts union in the Trinity and vouchsafes the Transcendent Son’s entrance into the fragility of human existence.

Finite limitations of this human life are eclipsed by partaking in the grace of God’s interior life, kenotically revealed in Jesus Christ living the Trinitarian grammar of love. Jesus understands that the Father’s redemptive desires for Creation are not at odds with his or any other created freedom. Trinitarian kenosis embraces created being while remaining open to the divine proposition of grace. The choice to orientate oneself to the Divine is never forced upon the human person:

[W]e have to take care to avoid any ‘Christological restriction’ that would want to ground the reality of creation on some ‘prior’ reality of redemption or grace; there is no ‘before’ or ‘after’ and, even if the goal is the first thing intended by the agent, in *ordine executionis* we must first posit a natural (non-divine) subject as the possible recipient of grace.\(^{243}\)

Jesus Christ does not subvert the Divine interior life but brings about in his person and actions the union of Creation’s infinitely differing immanence and the kenotic inner life of the Trinity. Trinitarian kenosis and Jesus’ sacrificial acts in Creation align finite being from its inexplicable beginnings in *creatio ex nihilo* to evil’s last desperate

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Jesus Christ has a singular nature, see: *TD* 3, 221.

\(^{243}\) *TD* 3, 257.
attempts in Hell to overthrow the Father’s intentions for Creation. Jesus Christ’s experiences of destabilization, angst, evil, non-being and Nothingness are purposely ordered to his person and mission and hence to the Divine. Jesus experiences the extreme distances between the Divine, Creation and evil:

In short, creation and salvation are not two discrete events diachronically ordered, but rather the event in which Christ as the representative gathers to himself and through himself the diastasis of creation riven by sin; that is, the event of Christ. Creation and salvation belong together and it is precisely this that inaugurates a radical exchange; or, indeed, is the icon of exchange—the coincidence of God and creature—which demands a new telling of time and space.

(11) Transcendence, Jesus Christ and Immanence

The Son respects finitude, aligning it to the Divine’s aspirations in the human person Jesus Christ. The empirical “separation” of Jesus from the Trinitarian persons is partly spanned by his transformative works. The good works Jesus performs draw Creation closer to the Transcendent Father because such actions “re-gift” the grace they

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244 On the atemporal nature and totality of Christ’s mission, see: MP, 173.
245 The exact nature of Creation’s relationship to the Divine is beyond our comprehension, in part because it is grounded in Trinitarian kenosis and finally disclosed in the eschaton. However, if a continuum exists between effects and causes we can retroactively trace events back from changes in Creation to their hypothetical original source in the Divine act. A relationship between finite relations and difference and the absolute freedom of divine relations can be posited. Divine relations apophatically understood furnish us with a way to theorize how finite relationships correspond to the Divine Creation given the dyadic points of Nothingness and Eternity. As Aquinas writes: “[a] thing is compared to God in two ways: first, according to a common measurement, and then a creature, when compared with God, is found to be almost nothing at all; second, according to its dependence on God, from whom it receives its act of existing,” De ver., q.2, a.3, resp. 18, taken from: Thomas Aquinas, Truth. vol. 1: Questions I-IX, (trans.) Robert W. Mulligan, S.J. (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), 76.
247 On the theme of time and eternity (opera trinitatis ad extra communia), see Augustine: “Time did not exist before heaven and earth” [ante caelum et terram nullum erat tempus], Conf. 11.13, 125. See also: NPNF, 168. See also: TD 5, 91-95, TL 2, 37-43 and TL 1, 234.
manifest back to the Father. Upright action gives testimony to the inner state of Jesus’ prayer life, that core of his being where the transcendent Spirit dwells.\textsuperscript{248} Jesus is the point where the transcendent exists in Reality and the point of departure from which Creation anchors its reach toward the Transcendent. Jesus’ contemplative stand dovetails into the Son’s eternal reception of the Father’s will.\textsuperscript{249} The Father’s self-gifting to the Son perfectly corresponds to Jesus Christ’s relationship to the Father as well as to his making present the Transcendent in his person.

Jesus’ obedience to the Father and his own nature opens him up to all that Divine love hopes for Creation. Jesus is limited and challenged by material conditions, alterity and differences as necessitated by his human nature. However, freedom, love and reason undergird the Trinitarian community and denominate every human person. God clears interior space so that a free Creation is possible, for: “[i]n God there are things that exist only to provide love with every opportunity for development, to give it the room which it would lack if everything were stale foreknowledge—room which it needs, for it cannot exist without self-surrender, movement and flight.”\textsuperscript{250}

The Incarnation brings into play the perfect interrelating of the Divine and human. The veil shrouding the Trinitarian mind is pulled to the side and Mary is given a glimpse into the mystery of a God who is wholly other, yet also one of us.\textsuperscript{251} With Mary’s

\textsuperscript{248} See also Bulgakov: Du Verbe incarné: Agnus Dei (Paris, 1943), 306.
\textsuperscript{251} See: TD 2, 175.
consent the Eternal Word is begotten in her womb. Because Mary chooses to comply with the Divine’s plan and offering of grace, it does not broach her autonomy, nor does the finite difference dislocate the immanent Trinity.

Created freedom is equal to the Divine initiative as Mary’s “yes” to the Divine attests. Collaboration with the Divine’s redemptive strategy involves the totality of a person as authentic human action calls the sum of one’s being to a divinely appointed mission. It is incorrect, however, to conjecture that Mary’s fiat introduces a fourth hypostasis in the Trinity or that any human person’s mission completes God. Making the Divine dependent on any part of Creation results in a heretical “Gnosticizing sophology” that promises among other things, to destroy the identities of both the Divine and finite creatures by eliminating the boundaries separating them. Mary’s joining in the Trinitarian kenotic act or any vocational path never abridges God’s Being, freedom or love.

The tension between the Divine and created is bridged only by the Divine’s Ur-kenotic reach into immanence. This Trinitarian event is prior to any attributive or proportionate action that finds its [subtractive] analogy in created nature. The Divine alone is so great as to empty Godself completely into finitude: “God-given Being is both fullness and poverty at the same time: fullness as Being without limit, poverty modeled ultimately [urbildlich] on God Himself because He knows no holding on to Himself, poverty in the act of Being which is given out, which as gift delivers itself without

252 While it is beyond the scope of this essay, for continued research into Balthasar’s understanding of the role of gender specification, freedom and the Divine, see: Janet Martin Soskice, “Trinity and Feminism,” in The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology, Susan Frank Parsons (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 135-50 and Lucy Gardner and David Moss, “Something Like Time; Something like the Sexes—and Essay in Reception,” in End of Modernity, 130-37.

253 See: TD 2, 207-216.

254 See: ExT 4, 132-38.
defense.” Jesus Christ authenticates in finite being God’s infinite, unrelenting fullness that sacrifices all for love. The Divine-human person Jesus Christ alone can give voice to what the Father wishes to say to humanity. Jesus is the Father’s unconditional act: “what God wishes to say to [the person] is a deed on his behalf, a deed that interprets itself before [the person] and for his sake (and only therefore to him and in him).”

Ur-kenosis provides Balthasar’s exegesis of how God exists both in the radiant fullness of Transcendent, intra-Trinitarian relations and in the pure *actus essendi* of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the one sent (e.g. *Jn. 8:42 & Heb. 3:1*) and in being sent confirms Creation’s relative autonomy and ability to “contain” the Divine for as Aquinas reminds us: “a thing is sent that it may be something else, and is given that it may be possessed; but that a divine person be possessed by any creature, or exist in it in a new mode, is temporal.” Aquinas’ understanding of mission is developed by Balthasar and universalized in Christ’s mission. Christ takes responsibility for the whole of Creation and the Father is inseparably bound to Jesus Christ:

[T]he intimate relationship between the One sent and the One who sends him takes the form of obedience within the Father’s act of surrender. The Father is the One who sends, and in this act of sending he establishes, guides and takes responsibility for Jesus’ whole existence on earth; he lays down the latter’s purpose right from the start, namely, the salvation of the world…  

Saint Paul highlights the dual passive-active sense of Jesus’ kenotic state with his use of the verb “grasped”. The verb “grasped” (*πιάνεται*) is used by Paul in his *Letter to the Philippians* (*Phil. 2:6*), to suggest the state of natural passivity necessary when one

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255 *GL* 5, 626-27.
256 *LA*, 10. See also: *ExT*, 1, 69-93.
257 *S. Th.* 1, q. 43, a. 2.
258 *TD* 3, 153.
hears God’s will for oneself.259 The natural malleability of the human being under Divine directive can be stretched to the point of distress if replaced by a faithfulness that allows one to be “seized” by evil and malicious intent.260

As fully human and fully Divine, Jesus freely accepts the extreme suffering and deformation that will be waged upon him by being grasped by the hands of violent men. Even though Jesus experiences solitude and abandonment, he survives as transcendentally related to the Son and humanity by the Spirit in his person and mission:

And the Spirit is two things: he is most interior to the ‘I’, making the person a son and causing him to cry, ‘Abba, Father’; and he is the socializing ‘between’, rooting human fellowship in a (Trinitarian) personal depth that cannot be realized by purely earthly means. Both dimensions, the aloneness of the ‘I’ with God and its subsequent opening-up to the world in its entirety, are inseparable in the biblical event of mission...261

Love holds the Divine Persons in perpetual and intimate union allowing for Christ’s mission of personal giving. Ur-kenosis is a transparent movement that contextualizes Jesus’ life in freedom and love. God descends into Creation in order to redeem (Erlösung) all by offering the opportunity to find transcendental and personal meaning in agreeing to be part of Jesus Christ’s mission.262 Jesus Christ’s sacrificial offering glorifies the Father and offers a solution (Lösung) to the quandary of human existence’s relationship to sin, evil and death, for: “there is no distinction, since all have

260 The violence that is perpetuated on the passive person is personal but has larger social implications such as the crimes of robbery and rape, see: C.F.D. Moule, “Further Reflections on Philippians 2:5-11,” in Apostolic History and the Gospels (eds.) W. Ward Gasque and Ralph P. Martens (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1970), 264-76. See especially page 268.
261 TD 1, 646-47.
sinned and fall short of the glory of God, by his grace they are justified as gift, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:22-24). The Ur-kenotic emptying of the Son calls each person into love’s Trinitarian home through Jesus Christ’s redemptive action. Saint Paul tells us that alignment with the Divine demands an emptying of the ego, that is, a certain humility: “[h]ave this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:5-6). The Son takes on human nature while remaining connatural to the “essential” form of God (Jn. 17:5). The appearance or form of God as a servant is revealed existentially, for: “[a] non-existential theology, therefore, remains unworthy of belief because it is not capable of making anything really visible.”

In summary, as the new Adam (Rom. 5:14ff) Christ is the unique man (einmalig), whose personal and concrete integration of full divinity and humanity makes known the invisible triune God as the eternal Father, Son and Spirit. Jesus Christ is the totality (das Ganze) of the Father’s will in the concrete (Col. 1:16-17), calling each person into proportionate relations with the Trinity. A purely Transcendent God would be an abstract and apophatic mystery, whereas a God who becomes immanent is a positive mystery. Divine love permeates and transcends all intrinsic and extrinsic boundaries in Creation. In this dramatic emptying of the Father’s heart a kenotic basis for the

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263 See: MP, 35 and CSL, 149-163. This also grounds Balthasar’s argument against monophysitism, see: TD 5, 120.
264 GL 5, 602.
265 See: S. Th. I, q. 4, a. 3.
immanent and economic Trinity, as well as Creation is established.\textsuperscript{267} The Son takes up in Jesus Christ the returning of all the Father gifts in Creation back to their Divine spring:

...the world’s location in the Son directly implies its location in the totality of the Godhead. The world can be thought of as the gift of the Father (who is Begetter and Creator) to the Son, since the Father wishes to sum up all things in heaven and earth in the Son, as head (\textit{Eph}. 1:10); thus the Son takes the gift—just as he takes the gift of Godhead—as an opportunity to thank and glorify the Father.\textsuperscript{268}

\textbf{(12) Love: Immanent and Transcendent}

The Spirit brings to the Father Jesus’ conversion of all finite and immanent differences into the eternal love of the Trinity.\textsuperscript{269} The Spirit leads the disciple into the truth of Jesus’ existence.\textsuperscript{270} Jesus’ Ur-kenotic generation presents a way for him to transform Creation by presenting to her the Father’s desires.\textsuperscript{271} In the Trinity the will of the three Divine Persons are unified as all find a generative principle in the Father’s will. Jesus Christ’s obedience to the Father’s will places him and, by virtue of his mission, Creation into the Trinity’s hierarchic ordering of “obediential love” (\textit{Liebesgehorsam}).\textsuperscript{272} Love offers the only hermeneutic through which one can begin to understand the reconciliation of unity and plurality in God and in the world.\textsuperscript{273} God overcomes even what is hostile to Godself by extending the love the Trinitarian relations create outward to that which is not divine.\textsuperscript{274}

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{268} \textit{TD} 2, 262.
\item \textsuperscript{269} On the Trinitarian inversion the Spirit’s role necessitates see: \textit{TL} 3, 28ff.
\item \textsuperscript{270} See: \textit{TD} 3, 131.
\item \textsuperscript{271} \textit{GL} 7, 218. See also: \textit{TD} 5, 61-65.
\item \textsuperscript{273} See: \textit{LA}, 56-60 and \textit{TD} 4, 72-73.
\item \textsuperscript{274} See: \textit{TD} 3, 530.
\end{itemize}}
Divine freedom and love are realized perfectly in Jesus Christ. The Father’s generation of the Son does not limit the Son or the Spirit’s relationship with Jesus Christ. Divine love always unifies. Because the Son’s relationship with the Father continues in Jesus’ mysterious enveloping of finite existence, Jesus invests Creation with the presence of the Trinitarian relations. The eternal synchronicity of Divine love alludes essentially to God’s monotheistic identity while notionally (actus notionales) pertaining to the distinctions of the Divine Persons.

The Son’s mission requires redeeming not only beings but also all relational differences that threaten to bring about absolute separation of the finite from the Divine. Faithfully and sacramentally sharing in Jesus’ life, one enters into relationship with the Ur-knotic and Trinitarian God; this association changes how we experience relationship and difference in Creation. The apparently asymmetrical and contradictory Transcendent-finite association resolves itself in the truth of Jesus Christ’s being for: “…once we presuppose the creation, processio within the Godhead and missio outside it are one and the same as far as the Divine Persons are concerned, even at the point where the Son and the Spirit enter the visible realm of creation.” No part of Creation loses its innate freedom by virtue of Jesus’ mission as the distance between the eternal hypostases and their personal grounding establishes the leeway necessary for both Creation’s origins

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275 This neologism stands in for the divine knowledge of God, which is equally tri-part and simple and eternal. See: TD 3, 297, TL 2, 43-46, 139-43 and TD IV, 447-52.  
277 TD 5, 63. See also: Bonaventure, Breviloquim, 7.72 in “Sententiarum.”
and human freedom.²⁷⁸

The Son’s incarnate nature and freedom point to how the limitations of finite nature are not limiting. Jesus Christ makes known that the human enterprise finds its basis in Divine freedom and the gifting of grace that confirms human love: “[f]rom the point of view of finitude, one might suppose that the infinite self-possession of infinite reality would be bound to be the ultimate satisfaction and blessedness. But in God’s self-proclamation in Jesus Christ the more blessed mystery is revealed, namely, that love—self surrender—is part of this bliss of absolute freedom.”²⁷⁹ Love assimilates us into Christ and thereby mysteriously into Trinitarian community.²⁸⁰ In giving the created world freedom, God gives the non-necessity of finite being inexpressible importance to love’s generation.

²⁷⁹ TD 2, 256.
²⁸⁰ See: GL 7, 255-63 and TD 3, 123.
Chapter Three: Kenosis: The Logic of Divine Subtraction

Introduction

In the last chapter we analyzed Balthasar’s Ur-kenotic understanding of the immanent and economic Trinity. It was argued that Ur-Kenosis maintains Trinitarian unity among the Transcendent Divine Persons and in the person and mission of Jesus Christ. We now return to an in-depth study of the economic Trinity (*opera ad extra*). More specifically, we will look at how Ur-kenosis perpetuates Jesus’ mission even when He was charged with carrying the totality of sin, by dying and descending into Hell. Balthasar’s interpretation of Jesus Christ’s person and mission provides us with new insights into how *transcendence*, immanence, relation and difference function in Creation and its antithesis in Hell.282

In the first section, Ur-kenotic Sacrifice and Incarnate Mission, we provide an overview of the Son’s emptying of divinity, thereby establishing Jesus Christ’s unique relationship with the Father and Creation. Neither the distance separating Jesus from the

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281 When the paradox of singular identity and tri-personal-unity of Trinitarian identity is being stressed, the symbol ONE □ □ 3 can be used to represent how the Divine relations can be symbolically represented. Likewise, the monotheistic and Transcendent dimensions of Divine identity are categorized as ONE and the Ur-kenotic characteristics of God by 1/GOD. For the implied working of these distinctions in Balthasar, see: E, 89-93. The term *subtractive* highlights the Ur-kenotic action in God and the foundational property of unity in a finite being that also entails freedom or an “aporetic” quality given its composite nature and polar relationships. In this way, the *subtractive* nature of being points to its underlining relationship to an Ur-kenotic Divine.

282 The term *transcendent* is used to point out that one’s experience of transcendent relationships never deny one’s grounding in immanence. Indeed, *transcendent* movements are paradoxically interior conscious and intentional movements. All of created being’s relationship to an Ur-kenotic God endows being with an intrinsic self-transcendence.
Father nor the sin loaded on to his person destroys the love they perpetually share. The Holy Spirit actualizes the Father’s intent in the Son’s perfect receptivity—a stand of total commitment to Divine Love that undergirds Christ’s historical presence. This is possible because the Son’s “passivity” is embraced by the infinitely greater freedom of the Trinity. Ever conscious of the Father’s love, Jesus experiences immanence as a mode of his transcendent and obedient relationship to the Divine.

The second section, *Divine Consciousness and Sin*, looks at how Jesus consciously engages evil and sin. Christ’s Divine and human natures pervade his person and consciousness in a unified yet distinct manner. The unequivocal, substantial and relational capacities of Jesus’ natures generate an exclusive interaction with evil and sin, as reflected in Jesus’ consciousness. Because Jesus’ Divine identity and nature operate subconsciously in all his cognitive functions, he is never without some sense of his divinity—even when loaded with sin and exiled in Hell. The living death of sin is unable to undermine the Trinitarian life. Further, for Balthasar, the formulation of Divine nature’s relationship to human consciousness contextualizes his contentious belief that Jesus’ human consciousness develops. It is Jesus’ kenotic grounding that explains how these two distinct movements of eternal generation and human freedom are in perfect union within Christ’s person. Since, as Balthasar claims, loving is an infinitely higher state of consciousness than knowing, the development of Jesus’ human consciousness highlights the relationship between knowing and loving. Jesus’ redemption of sin and

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283 Sin is taken as real insofar as it affects change in the world.
284 See: *GL* 7, 216.
285 Mission is a concept that arises from creative tension between the scriptural overlay and dogmatic overlay, the apocalyptic element of Jesus and the theological interpretation of his person. See: *TD* 3, 149. Balance between these elements is possible if Jesus possessed a sense of mission that was eschatological and universal, *ibid*, 149.
defeat of evil is a matter of interior conscious intent and movements, as much as it is a matter of external actions.

In the third section, *Gift, Difference and Freedom*, we consider how the Ur-kenotic distance between the Divine Persons becomes crucial for the way in which Balthasar understands Creation’s external and internal relationships. The “zone” existing between Creation and the Divine Persons is mirrored in the “spaces” existing within Creation and, thereby lead to relative autonomy from God. The absolute unity and distinction of the Divine Persons in the Trinity exemplifies how Creation can be seamless yet structured in “differences” or “territories” that admit degrees of freedom for created beings.\(^{286}\) Reality is not “monolithical”.

At the deepest ontological level every created being reflects these distances in the way its internal metaphysical architecture consents to and even supports the vital difference between its essence and *esse*.\(^{287}\) Since he is fully human Jesus experiences in his person this relational construct, rooted in ontological difference.\(^{288}\) The essence-*esse* dynamic suggests to Balthasar that a modified sense of difference and relation is

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\(^{286}\) Difference allows for the arraying or placing of beings in reality. Many postmodern thinkers continue to develop the centrality of difference to how a being relates in the world: rupture (Bachelard), epistemological break (Althusser), difference-break (Deleuze), literal cut (Lacan), etc.

\(^{287}\) See: *S. Th.*, I, q.3, a.6.

\(^{288}\) Ontological differing can be taken to be the primordial fact (*Urtatsache*) of finite existence for it speaks to the question of “what it is to be” by asking the essential question, namely, “what it is to be something?” Actual existence limits a being’s essence and this tension allows for the potency and act in the existential order, see: *S. Th.* I, q. 50, a.2 ad 3 and *De ver.*, q. 27, a.2, resp. 8 where Aquinas notes that: “...there are some things in the category of substance reductively, such as the principle of a subsistent substance, in which the composition in question is not found; for they do not subsist, and therefore do not have their own act of being.” Thomas Aquinas, *Truth. vol. 3: Questions I-IX*, (trans.) Robert W. Schmidt, S.J. (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1954), 312.
necessary for the birth of consciousness and, connotatively, the freedom and means to
image the Divine. The person can image the Divine in this way because appearance is
seen as the empirical pole of ontological difference, that is, the essential-esse relationship
that always reveals itself in actual being. The so-called real distinction in Jesus Christ
explains how difference and relation analogously structure the human person when
grounded in Trinitarian Ur-kenosis.

Building on our interpretation of the kenotic infrastructure of ontological
difference and freedom in Christ’s finite nature, we proceed in the fourth section, *Eternal
Choice and Evil*, to a discussion of the role sin and evil play in Jesus’ person and
mission. In Balthasar’s Ur-kenotic theory Jesus’ freedom interrelates with the Son’s
eternal will. Outside of his divine nature, Jesus can only look to the work of the Passion
with fear and necessary ignorance, an experience that repeats itself in history: “God
divested himself of his deity—to receive it back from the odyssey of time weighted with
the chance of harvest of unforeseeable temporal experience: transfigured or possibly even
disfigured by it. In such self-forfeiture of divine integrity for the sake of unprejudiced
becoming, no other foreknowledge can be admitted than that of possibility.”290 The
Son’s omnipotence works through the internal and external factors that are part of finite
being and hence Jesus’ human nature. The Incarnation introduces itself into Creation in
the flesh and finitude of Jesus’ existence, something absolutely other, that is, a new way

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289 See: *S. Th.* I, q. 3, a. 4 and *GL* 5, 650-56.

to reveal the Transcendent God’s threefold life.291

Given the radical nature of evil only God can completely overcome its seductive allure and see the lie human purpose conveys in its self-absorbing complacency, its wielding of power and its isolation. In the fifth section, Kenosis and Cultic Sacrifice, we outline Jesus’ ritualistic answer to evil. Jesus Christ’s kenotic identity, Balthasar claims, gives Jesus the leeway to take on the role of sacrificial scapegoat.292 Jesus establishes solidarity with the human family by accepting rejection, being ostracized and becoming humanity’s expiatory victim. Christ’s death stages this process in cultic practice.293 The simultaneous “fracturing” of the Eucharistic bread, its sharing and the unification of the members of a Church as “one” body with a common belief are isomorphic to the economic communication of the Ur-kenotic event: “positive finitude of the Incarnation-structure of Christ, in which the Church shares as his ‘body’, and so finds herself endowed with the Spirit and commissioned with corresponding tasks.”294 The existential dimensions of Christ’s death are offered to the faithful through the Eucharist as the institution narrative teaches: “this is my body, which is broken for you: do this in remembrance of me…” (1 Cor. 11:23ff).295 The event of the Last Supper continues as a living narrative and drama. This event exists as a means by which future generations can participate in the life of Christ—it interrupts their lives as a free response to the

292 See: TD 5, 484 and Threefold Garland, 93.
294 TL 3, 310. See also: TD 4, 324 and 332.
295 See: John McIntyre, The Shape of Soteriology (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), 9-10.
excessiveness of grace. In faithful response to this gift the future becomes a lived promise for finite beings to choose freely.

It is his person and transcedent relationship to the Father that make the event of his death an efficacious act of Divine love. The mystery of God is revealed in love, formalized in the Covenant and actualized on the Cross and the “omnipotence” of the Resurrection, as Balthasar avouches: “[t]he fact of that human freedom and its perversion are always exercised within the Son’s eucharistia—since, reading backward from the Cross to the covenant and from there to Creation, the latter is the precondition for every possible and real world—shows the confrontation between ground-less divine love and ground-less human sin: ‘It is to fulfill the word…’They hated me without a cause’. But ‘If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin’ (Jn. 15:24, 22).”

Only a kenotic God can make the Father’s abandonment of Jesus Christ on the Cross an act of Divine unity that infinitely supersedes the suffering, pain and death of Jesus. In Jesus’ acceptance of his mission, his “handing-over of himself is no mere passivity but a form of action, which—humanly speaking—demands of the subject, far more self-possession and initiative than the pursuance of self-imposed percepts and goals.”

We look in the sixth section, Death, at Balthasar’s view of the ultimate contradiction, namely, the death of God. With death comes the separation of the soul-body unity of Jesus Christ, however, one must reconcile the Council of Chalcedon’s tenet that the two natures of Christ are inseparable. Balthasar attempts to resolve this issue in

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296 TD 4, 332.
297 TD 3, 186.
seeing Jesus’ death as having a likeness to a more radical form of Trinitarian kenosis. Balthasar tries to resolve the contradiction of Jesus’ death by dialectically balancing the material principles of his being and the formal Trinitarian principles of redemption. Jesus Christ’s self-surrender is an eternal event. Christ’s death gives meaning to the cessation of life and the apparent irrecoverable dispersal of the person that results. In dying the Eternal Word becomes the “non-word” of the Father and bears in silence the judgment against the “non-discourse”, the “un-word” of sin and evil. The Spirit can offer the grace of Jesus’ redemption to all because the Spirit relates without limit to the Father and Son and all of Creation: “[t]he Spirit is not so much a divine object of faith as the divine medium of the gift of faith made to the Father in the Son.” Consequently, Jesus’ death presents us with a new way to look at the end of life, as an act of love.

In the seventh section, Divine Concealment, we look at how Balthasar portrays Christ’s suffering, disfigurement and alienation as a radiation of the Father’s glory: “[t]he wound of the body also reveals the spiritual wound...let us look through the visible wound to the invisible wound of love.” Christ becomes the “non-image” of the Father in his Incarnation and subsequent encounter with the harsh demands of a “fallen”

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300 S. Th. III, q. 107.
301 Saint Bonaventure, *Vitis mystica* c.3, 4 (ed.) Quaracchi, VIII, 163b. See also: “I repeat that, even though He could not suffer in His divine nature, He suffered in His human nature a passion most comprehensive, for not only every part of His body was affected, but every power of His soul as well. He suffered a passion most bitter, for besides enduring the anguish of His wounds, He endured the added anguish of grieving for our sins. He suffered a passion most shameful, alike because crucifixion was a punishment set aside for the worst criminals, and because He was placed in the company of evildoers, that is, robbers (*Is. 53:12*),” Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, 4.9.1 in “*Sententiarum.*”
Creation. Divine glory is to be seen in Jesus’ unmerited abuse, his final failed gasp for air, as well as his death and descent into Hell, as all are part of his and the Trinity’s engagement with sin and evil. This can only be the case, Balthasar reasons, if Jesus’ degradation is part of the Son’s eternally generative relationship with the Father.

In the eighth section, Transfiguring Silence, Death and Descent, an interpretation of Balthasar’s understanding of Jesus’ presence in Hell will be offered. Jesus’ death presents an enigma that seems to push what is paradoxical into the realm of the contradictory. Indeed, human reason can only comprehend the apparent incongruity of Christ’s death and descent into Hell when it measures this mystery by faith’s standard. The faithful focus on Christ’s relationship to death, which shapes Christ’s life and thereby their own: “He is for every person, in every age, the One who is already dead; each of them possesses the reality of his death in him, For the Son has not merely carried each sinner’s sins, in order to redeem him; he also died each one’s death, so that all the dead might share in his being.”

302 Theologians, Balthasar argues, must have the humility to recognize that the Divine mystery must remain a living question for the faithful: “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.”

303 This is possible because Jesus lived his own life in terms of the question his death posed given his Trinitarian identity.

We take Balthasar’s writings on Christ in Hell are fully revealed in his work on the Son’s relationship to the Spirit. The Son’s inseparable but infinitely free relationship with the Spirit provides a “transcendent” evaluation of the abyss of Hell’s infinitely

302 Colossians, 35.
constricting contingency: “[h]is fullness does not stand in contradiction to any void, because it is not the fulfillment of a determined quantity or a particular power of comprehension. It is fullness without antithesis.”

Only the eternal freedom and simplicity of the Divine Persons in the immanent Trinity, Balthasar reasons, is able to underwrite God’s impassibility in Jesus’ finitude and descent into Hell. Christ descended to the “lower parts of the earth, to see with his eyes that part of creation” what was inactive and resting in Creation. Hell is not understood by Balthasar to be some kind of negative “henology” as Christ consciously transcends all experiences of Hell. Balthasar views Hell as a privation and inversion of Creation’s goodness. Such a description of Hell is proposed to follow from Balthasar’s definition of evil as virtual or holographic. A holographic reading of evil can be seen as the inverted conversation partner to the belief that the event of the Passion offers a pattern of redemption, for: “all men being lost according to the transgression of Adam, His flesh before all others was saved and liberated, as being the Word’s Body; and henceforth we, being incorporate with it, are saved after its pattern.” Balthasar’s view follows from his larger theological vision of the nature of Christian witness and, more particularly, his apprehension of Jesus’ conscious reflection in Hell. If our reading is correct, Balthasar challenges more traditional considerations of the function of transcendence, immanence, relation and difference in Hell and by extension Creation. Balthasar defends his opinions on the matter, arguing that his understanding of Jesus’ Divine nature and relations is

304 Colossians, 40.
305 Ireneaus, Contra haereses, IV, 22, 1 (PG 7), 1047A. See also: NPNF, 494.
306 Henology here relates to Plotinus’ view that the Transcendent remains beyond all finite conceptual or material confinement.
307 Athanasius, Against the Arians, 2. 61 in NPNF, 381.
orthodox. Further, Balthasar claims that his approach permits Jesus to confront sin and evil, given that both are impotent over against the eternal relations of kenotic love among the Divine Persons who constitute his person. In other words, Trinitarian identity mediates Christ’s consciousness in Hell.

Balthasar reckons that it is Christ’s love of the Father, rather than a celebration of his triumph, that encourages the beatific vision throughout his self-reflective operations even in Hell.308 Jesus thereby elucidates Trinitarian identity and a vision of the Father regardless of where he finds himself “spatially”. This is possible because Jesus is conscious of evil in a non-subsistent manner. Christ’s experience of alienation from the Father in Hell changes how we can relate in Creation to absence and silence: “alienation, potency, otherness, non-being, change are pervaded by the positivity of an infinite movement of being toward reality, which as such does not come form the form but takes place within being itself. Only thus is being the pure likeness of the absolute.”309

Evil’s opposition to Divine love becomes a way for Jesus to intuit the Father’s propinquity, just as, the Father’s absence from Jesus on the Cross and in Hell is strangely proof of their unity, for God is all in all (1 Cor. 15:28). Jesus sees in Hell’s agenda to return being to non-being a hint of the Father’s own eternal desire for the sinner’s redemption. Christ shows that love is not simply a question of a materially based fecundity.310 Christ’s celibate state witnesses to the spiritual character of sacrifice that rejects the non-redemptive forces of solitude, [subtraction, non-being and regressive

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308 The visio mortis never denies Jesus’ beatific vision, see: GL 7, 209, MP, 175, TD 5, 265-69 and GL 7, 233-34.
310 See: TL 2, 167.
division fully experienced on the Cross.

Balthasar’s analysis suggests that Hell can be taken as the antithesis of Transcendence. Christ’s relationship to the Father while in the demonic sphere alone makes Hell’s correspondence to the Transcendent meaningful. Thus, Christ’s journey into Hell is propaedeutic, showing us how relationship, difference, immanence and transcendence can be lived in the Church and world.

The Chapter concludes with the a ninth section, The Resurrection. Here we explore the manner in which Christ overcomes Hell’s radical rejection of the Father’s love, drawing forth his person from Hell’s burrowing immanence unto the glory of Resurrection. Returning to the Father, Jesus charges the Spirit to witness to his Resurrection as a benefaction for all other human beings. Christ’s defeat of sin and evil is, thereby, offered as a gift to all those who enter into a loving relationship with Christ.

(1) Ur-kenotic Sacrifice and Incarnate Mission

The “supra-event” (Über-Ereignis) of the Son’s generation by the Father infers for Balthasar the Son’s bridging of the distance separating God and Creation in Jesus’ mission. Jesus’ pure receptivity opens him to all God’s providential plan entails (1 Cor. 15:35), including the paradoxical self-emptying of the Son’s divinity (Entäusserung) and the accepting of suffering and death as part of the Father’s redemptive plan (Phil. 2:5-11).311 This apparent inconsistency is sensible because the Son renounces his divine privileges in becoming incarnate, but not Godself’s divine nature (Rom. 4:14; 1 Cor. 1:17 & 2 Cor. 9:3).

311 See: TD 3, 530 and TL 3, 441-45.
It is the Father’s will to unify all that is disjunctive with God from within Jesus’ own transformative love of the Father. Traditional theological categories such as immutability, omniscience and omnipotence are put into a kenotic framework that is conducive to a fuller expression of Trinitarian love’s infinite relational capacities. As Balthasar writes: “[l]ove is the receptivity that gives the other’s truth credit for being able to reveal itself as truth. Love is the most all-inclusive a priori there is, because it presupposes nothing other than itself.”

As the Son, Jesus Christ has already abandoned himself completely in trust to the Father’s love. Jesus’ infinite love of the Father gives him the freedom to personalize all that he embarks upon:

In concrete terms, infinite freedom appears on stage in the form of Jesus Christ’s ‘lowness’ and ‘obedience unto death’. Thus he can call himself the ‘weary and heavy laden’ and summon even the clumsy and hesitant to be his disciples. We need to keep ever before our eyes the way in which infinite freedom was pleased to appear in the midst of finitude, if we are not to be drawn aside into abstract (and hence falsely posed) speculative problems.

Love’s kenotic “unified separation” or relational “subtraction” of the Divine Person in the Trinity is the fundamental hermeneutic by which Balthasar conceives both Creation and Jesus’ person.

Christ’s Divine-human natures are interiorly unified in his person given his relationship to the Father—they are not simply circumscribed and “glued” together materially or accidentally for when: “the Word of God becomes flesh...he showed forth the image truly, since He became Himself what was his image; and He re-established the

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312 TL 1, 128.
313 TD 3, 170-71.
314 TD 2, 250-51.
similitude after a sure manner...”315 Jesus’ transendent relationship to the Father does not take away from the fact that like all finite natures, Jesus exists in Creation by being-in-relationship with other beings.316 The integration of Jesus’ natures fosters one’s receptivity to being’s excessiveness, for: “truth is always an opening, not just to itself and in itself, but to further truth”317 The unification of Christ’s natures also suggests to Balthasar a way to understand our transendent relationships to others and God. The particularities of Jesus’ humanity do not interrupt his identity as the eternal Son. From the Son’s standpoint this relationship is one of kenotic emptying, whereas for Jesus this same prospect is distinctly a matter of the transendent gaze of the Father. Regarding this perfect balance Balthasar states that: “Christ’s human nature stands out—ecstatically—in relation to his Divine person, from which he draws his human existence; the mission he receives from the Father forms not only his office and destiny as Redeemer, but the essential traits of his individual nature.”318 Balthasar argues that this reading of the Divine communicatio idiomatum bolsters a non-heretical view of Christ. He writes that: “the Son on earth cannot represent his own divine nature (this would constitute a form of monophysitism): rather, he translates his eternal relationship with the Father into the terms of time and creatureliness.”319 Jesus is historically faithful to the

315 Ireneaus, Contra haereses, 5.16.2. See also: NPNF, 544. See also: Col. 1:15-18.
316 We use transcendence to point out that one’s understanding of the Transcendent never denies the finitude and immanence of created nature. Balthasar seems to suggest that the transcendence one experiences is genuine given its source in the interior human person. Indeed, an interior correspondence can be made between the finite person and the Divine given the presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart of Jesus’ being.
317 TL 1, 39.
318 LA, 126.
319 TD 5, 120. See also: TD 3, 222.
Covenant in *transcendent* relation to the Father because God is faithful to Godself’s own identity in eternity and in time (*2 Tim.* 2:13). Consequently, a link exists for Balthasar between the Divine act of Creation, the Son’s generation, Incarnation and a believer’s personal *transcendent* acts of faith that puts one in relationship with the resurrected Christ (*Jn.* 3:3-7).

Jesus’ *transcendent* relationship to the Father and his Trinitarian *communio* is displayed in a life marked by filial love and obedience, a complementing of his will to that of the Father.\(^{320}\) In no way does Christ’s acceptance of human nature impose relational limitations on the Son’s eternal liaison with the Father nor, counter-wise, does the Divine nature nullify in any way Jesus’ finite capacities:

He is no lifeless tool. Nor should we forget that his freedom stands in a mysterious communion with the free decisions and habits of his sinful brethren, since there can be no fully isolated individual among men, and that Jesus, through his participation in the common human nature, knows the deviance and darkening of the human will from the inside. Although they do not cloud his relationship with the Father, they nonetheless determine the milieu in which he must ever anew clear his way to the center of the Father’s will.\(^{321}\)

Jesus’ obedience to the Father synthesizes and concretizes the perfect human response to the Divine’s promise (*2 Tim.* 2:13) without violating God’s simplicity or disregarding God’s Transcendence. In this way, Jesus is the exegesis of the Father, the one who

\(^{320}\) See: *TD* 5, 94. Balthasar parallels Patristic formulations when he writes of this obedience as an eternal modality: “As man, he [Christ] thus fulfills in deed and in truth through inviolable obedience all that he himself had decided beforehand as God and for our sakes carries out the entire will of the Father,” see Maximus, *Ambigua*, 1309 D. On Balthasar’s dependence on Ignatius of Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises* for this insight, see: Werner Löser, S.J., “The Ignatian Exercises in the Work of Hans Urs von Balthasar,” in *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, (ed.) David L. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 103-20.

\(^{321}\) *TL* 2, 293.
completes the covenant by making God’s eternal love in a sinful world known: “[w]hat founds the continuity is the absolute love of God for man, manifesting itself actively on both sides of the hiatus (and so in the hiatus itself), and his triune love in its own intrinsic reality as the condition of possibility for such a love for man.” Divine love in Jesus Christ renders human freedom possible and consequently sin, but both must be read in terms of God’s eternal offering of grace.

Human sin adds a new proviso to the finite covenantal relationship by increasing the interstice between the creature and the Divine. As the prophet warns: “[t]he more I called to them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning incense to the idols” (Hos. 11:2). The Divine’s Transcendent viewpoint keeps the sinner in “view” when she rejects or contorts her relationship with the Divine. The distance or separation caused by sin is accounted for in the interior principle of the Son’s kenotic evacuation as this act sets the stage for Divine omniscience. As the Son, Jesus’ love and obedience unifies him with the Father against both the sinner’s lie of self-sufficiency and her will to power. Consequently, Jesus’ relation to the Father is the heart of the economic mission: “[t]hereby, with the removal of the whole superstructure of the Incarnation, the eternal will of the Son within the Trinity to obedience is exposed, as the substructure that is the basis of the entire event of the Incarnation: and this set face-to-face with the hidden substructure of sinful existence, exposed in Sheol, as the status separation, from God, the ‘loss of his glory.’” Ur-kenotic identity “in-forms” Jesus’ entire existence from Incarnation to Resurrection including his mission into the far

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322 MP, 79.
324 GL 7, 231. Because love transcends all negativity Balthasar does not discuss the Incarnation in “Thomistic-Scotist” terms of intention, but rather love, see: TL 2, 163.
country of sin, forsakenness, death and their infinite dissembling in Hell.

Jesus Christ is the living tabernacle of the eternal God, the One who manifests in his person the connatural relationship between the Divine and human natures. Perfectly symmetrical and immediate, the Son and Jesus are in a free and inseparable relationship with the Father in a love that obeys. The Son is without limitation in the ever-greater (das immer Grössere) flourishing of the intra-divine order by which the Trinity secures Jesus’ person and mission. The eternal and holy distance between the Divine Persons is absolute, Balthasar alleges, because it is an impassible function of God’s own eternal identity: “for in God without Creation there is nothing except being and source; there is no operation.”

Jesus’ person and mission unfold in the substantial and relational aspects of Divine and finite natures. Jesus directs others to personally partake of his own transcendent orientation to the Father and the hope of Trinitarian destiny such a relationship yields to the believer. God alone can hold together the amplifications that finite freedom and personal differences provide, the unique gifts each person brings to their relationship with the Divine. Christ’s mission sets out a pathway for others to discover the Divine by helping others to formulate the question: “who am I in all my

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325 On the reciprocal relationship between Trinitarian Persons and the grounds of absolute freedom see: TD 3, 515-16.
326 GL 5, 63. The sending of the Son is only possible given the Father’s ungenerate identity see: Bonaventure, I Sent. d. 27, p.1, a.u., q.2, concl. (I, 470 B). On Jesus being the homologation of the Father, see: Karl Rahner, The Trinity, (trans.) Joseph Donceel (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 59-60.
327 The concept of mission for Balthasar is expansive. See: TD 3, 202-220 and TL 1, 238.
particularity?” The Father invites everyone to tailor his or her gifts to personally help Creation move towards its divinely appointed end.\textsuperscript{329}

When one freely chooses to attune the totality of her life towards eternal life, a natural inclination to love and serve one’s neighbor follows.\textsuperscript{330} The specificity of each person and the singularity of her mission in the world counter-intuitively open a person to a larger network of relationships, potentialities and possibilities. Through one’s personal vocation the Father lovingly calls all personally by “name”, that is to say, with respect to their freely chosen lives. This Divine invitation partially supplies one with the means to become fully human by imaging the Divine. As Balthasar says:

In love he opens himself unconditionally and is therefore also open to all the truth that transcends him and his personal standpoint. In love he is willing to acknowledge that there is more to truth than he himself can survey and pass judgment upon. Love is the receptivity that gives the other’s truth credit for being able to reveal itself as truth. Love is the most all-inclusive \textit{a priori} there is, because it presupposes nothing other than itself.\textsuperscript{331}

Empowering us to be human, God paradoxically gives us the means to be the most authentic image of Christ and therefore the Divine.

\textbf{(2) Divine Consciousness and Sin}

Eternity enters into finitude in Jesus. This transforms being and the meaning of Creation. Balthasar is keen to note that the radical, reciprocal, intermodal relationships among the Divine Persons are in fact the movements of a single “super-personal” God. The identity of Father and Son persists in the pneumatic economy (\textit{Acts} 5:30) of

\textsuperscript{328} See: \textit{TD} 1, 636.
\textsuperscript{329} See: \textit{TD} 3, 154-55.
\textsuperscript{330} See: \textit{GL} 1, 475 and \textit{TD} 3, 263.
\textsuperscript{331} \textit{TL} 1, 128.
Trinitarian life and in Creation as the perfect “Who I am” of Jesus Christ’s person and mission. As part of the eternal Trinitarian identity, Jesus Christ perfects, that is, freely invents, his historical mission.

Divine consciousness in the immanent Trinity makes known the intrinsic relational capacities of the Divine mind. Jesus’ self-reflectivity, cognitive operations and extra-mental relationships replicate the workings of the Divine mind. Primary to Jesus’ apperception of self is the sense that his stand in the world transcendently relates to the Father and Spirit. Extrapolating from Balthasar’s work it seems fair to suggest that Jesus’ subconscious is also informed by the Son’s conscious self-measure of the Divine hypostases and the eternal kenotic procession from the Father. As noted earlier, Balthasar believes a distinction can be made between how Jesus’ Divine and human natures experience being in relationship with the Father. Namely, Jesus’ human nature experiences a relationship with the Son as an interior movement (interius intimo suo) whereas his Divine nature consciously knows of eternal Trinitarian identity.

Congruence exists between the Son’s eternal choice and Jesus’ finite intentions. The Son’s Incarnation is part of the Father’s intentions for Creation. Some critics have argued that Balthasar’s temporization of the Son’s eternal choice leads to an unorthodox evaluation of Divine omnipotence and omniscience. Balthasar’s configuration of free

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332 See: *TD* 3, 186. On the distinction between God’s direct knowledge and the Divine’s non-discursive eternal knowledge see: *S. Th.*, I, q. 14, a. 6 and a. 7.
333 See: *TD* 3, 168, 198 and 225.
334 See: *TD* 3, 163-229.
335 See: *GL* 1, 328.
choice and will requires that the omniscient Son submits in Jesus Christ to the same constraints of conscious development as all other beings. Advocating a more traditional approach theologians such as Levering argue that Jesus Christ did not mentally develop as his mind is seen to be an exact representation of the transcendent Divine mind. Aquinas’ position on this matter, Balthasar suggests, demands a clearer elucidation of how one understands that Jesus Christ brings together divine knowledge, freedom and love. The Ur-kenotic correspondence of these themes is fundamental to Balthasar’s theological explorations of this mystery.

For many theologians the latter relationship is seen in Balthasar’s system as being so passive it threatens heterodoxy. If the divine aspects of Christ’s nature assimilate the Son’s streaming-forth of the super-event of Divine life, some ordering of Christ’s person occur at the subconscious level. Balthasar adduces that the passive and active characteristics of Jesus’ finite cognition harmonize with the Son’s omniscience. Divine love unifies the Divine mind with the multi-dimensional, psychical states of Jesus’ intellect. It is left to future scholars to judge whether or not Balthasar’s conceptions of receptivity and obedience are active enough to account for Jesus’ divinity or are simply a manifestation of his finite subconscious.

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337 It is beyond the scope of this work to detail this debate however for an introduction to these themes, see: Alyssa Lyra Pitstick, *Light in Darkness: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Catholic Doctrine of Christ’s Descent into Hell*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007) and Matthew Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Group, 2006). It will be fruitful to see if Balthasar’s understanding of Christ’s consciousness can be defended given scientific advances and a psychologically expansive concept of the subconscious.

338 See: *TD* 3, 159-63.
For Balthasar the act of loving promotes a higher state of being than that of empirical knowing.\textsuperscript{339} All that Jesus Christ undergoes as a human person—his natural physical, mental and emotional development, his suffering and death—are redemptive given the Father’s love. Ur-kenotic movement individuates Divine Being as change is symptomatic of finite being; Hell and evil alone move us towards the static and unmoving. Love, a unifying, relational movement, allows Christ to undergo all that is entailed by finitude. Balthasar is not unaware of the danger his interpretation risks; he states: “[t]o think such a way is to walk on the knife’s edge: it avoids all fashionable talk of “pain of God” and yet is bound to say something happens in justice in God’s sharing in this latter, in which he goes to the length of vicariously taking on man’s Godlessness.”\textsuperscript{340}

While no pain or suffering takes place in God, Jesus, nevertheless, experiences these negative forces in Divine love.\textsuperscript{341} Love’s unitative force holds Christ’s ongoing becoming and cognitive development in relationship with the Trinity. Jesus’ human becoming never denies the: “indispensable axiom that the Son, even in his human form, must know that he is the eternal Son of the Father.”\textsuperscript{342} However, in Balthasar’s theological project, Jesus’ direct knowledge of the Father, Spirit, and even the Son, is at times eclipsed by their unreserved love:

\textsuperscript{339} Critics rightly note that such a favoring of totality of love over totality of knowledge in defining the Divine risks a bifurcation of divine essence given the difference between the Father’s and Son’s knowledge, projects upon the immanent Trinity a static noetic sense and suggests a possible separation of a unified divine will and intellect, see: Matthew Levering, \textit{Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas & the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology} (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 124. Perhaps it might be closer to Balthasar’s intent to argue that he sees Christ’s mission to harmonize with our own faith journey, one that should distinguish between loving to know the unknown and loving the unknown, see: Augustine, \textit{De Trinitate}, Book X, (PL 42), 3. See also: \textit{NPNF}, 136-37.

\textsuperscript{340} \textit{TD} 4, 324. See also: \textit{TD} 4, 191-92 and \textit{TD} 5, 236-39.

\textsuperscript{341} See: \textit{TD} 4, 324-25.

\textsuperscript{342} \textit{TD} 5, 124.
[The] Father shows the Son less his total knowledge than his total love, which conceals something whose concealment lets his love radiate ever more [brightly]. In God there are things, which exist only to provide love with every opportunity for development, to give it the room, which it needs, for it cannot exist without self-surrender, movement and flight.\footnote{343}{TD 5, 96.} Love never interferes with human freedom and Jesus freely accepts his mission from the Father knowing that the Spirit will nurture its conclusion with the same Divine love in which it finds its source.\footnote{344}{The spatiotemporal of course contributes to dramatically enact Jesus’ inner constitution of his finite nature, see: See: TD 3, 14-15.}

The more God unveils Godself, the more deeply does the Divine Godself share in the truth of Christ’s participation in a fallen humanity. Bearing sinners and their hopelessness within himself, Jesus experiences their resistance to God.\footnote{345}{TD 4, 349.} By taking on the intransigence of the sinner, Jesus opens a path for the Son to see Creation through a finite being’s eyes: “[t]he Son must ‘take in with his own eyes what in the realm of Creation is imperfect, unformed, chaotic’ so as to make it pass over into his own domain as the Redeemer.”\footnote{346}{MP, 175.} Balthasar depends here on early work done by Irenaeus.\footnote{347}{See: Adversus Haereses IV. 22, I (PG 7, 1047A).} Evil and sin work to reduce Creation’s excessiveness and “[t]hus all human life becomes an uninterrupted, chaotic searching and feeling after a totality of meaning.\footnote{348}{TD, 4, 77.}

Christ sees Creation through the “eyes” of the sinner. Because this adoption is incidental to his nature it does not enfeeble his Divine immutability, omniscience or omnipotence.\footnote{349}{See also: TD 5, 272, S. Th. I, q. 19, a. 1 and a. 3 where Aquinas argues that the}
doubting in his Divine nature that the Father is the “God Who is” and that together with the Spirit, they are the Transcendent Trinity. Thus, Jesus can be the finite “other” of the Father, that is, the one who substitutes for the sinner. Again it is important to stress that this “difference” or “separation” (Trennung) between the Father and Jesus never denies the Son’s intimacy with the Father. Christ is also separated from the sin that he accepts insofar as it is taken as part of his mission. This ironically, gives him the freedom to approach every difference in Creation with the measure of the Father’s love.

The Spirit respects the Father’s Transcendence by keeping sin and evil away from the Son. Free from any contingency, the self-reflective event of pneumatological identity makes possible the “heno-triadic” relations within the Trinity. Evil’s negativity is infinitely inferior to the supra-sensible real relations of the Divine Persons and Jesus’ integration of the Divine and human natures. However, these relationships are conducive to the Father’s salvific plans, for as Aquinas reminds us: “we know each thing more perfectly the more fully we see its difference from other things.”

When Jesus faces evil one must account for both his Divine and human natures. The Spirit is critical in the immanent and economic Trinity’s vanquishing of evil. The Spirit bears out the Ur-kenotic relations between the Father and Son, thereby warranting

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350 TD 4, 324-25.
351 See: TL 2, 288, TD 5, 95, 98, 245, 345 and 502 for how Balthasar understands Jesus’ concealment in a veiled fashion (e.g. als verhüllte enthüllt) in His death and descent into Hell as a revelation of His divinity.
352 See: TD 3, 514, 518-19, 530, TD 4, 325-29, TD 5, 327, 483 and 516.
353 SCG, I, 14.
the Son’s sovereignty even when Jesus gives himself up in a mission that includes direct contact with godless evil and alienation from the Trinity. Further, the Spirit’s communication of the Paterological event of Ur-kenosis extends to “contain” and “qualify” all finite relationships that Jesus enters into as a human being. In the language of flesh and finitude the Spirit brings the Eternal Word’s message of Divine love to humanity. The pure relationality of the Spirit’s Person attests to Jesus’ humanity and the Trinity’ Transcendence:

If the divine and eternal Word wished to give itself adequate expression in mortal flesh—however mysterious the manner of this might be—this could not happen through man himself, unless he were to place his entire existence in the flesh, mortal and futile, at the disposal of the Divine Word in such a self-exposition, by handing himself over like an alphabet, or a keyboard, for the act of formulation in words, handing himself over as a whole; birth and death, speaking and silence, waking and sleeping, success and failure, and everything that belongs to the substance of human existence.\textsuperscript{354}

The Spirit negotiates the distance between the Trinity and Creation, thereby providing Jesus with the means to create an immeasurable place (Platztausch) in his person and Creation where his sinlessness can take a stand against all that works against the Father’s love. The Son looks to the Father through the Spirit’s sharing of Jesus’ vision and this gives the Divine Persons a “new” way to perceive: “[t]he Son now looks to the Father together with men and in so doing, experiences with his whole body man’s relationship to the Father and in his whole humanity makes himself the gauge of the relationship between man and the Father.”\textsuperscript{355}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{354}{GL 7, 143.}
\footnotetext{355}{TL 2, 287-88.}
\end{footnotes}
(3) Gift, Difference and Freedom

Christ freely enters into Creation, thereby rendering fully the potential of human nature’s *transcendental* relationship to the Divine. Created beings have a natural capacity for freedom and creative endeavor. Jesus supremely details human freedom’s role in bringing about the Father’s designs for Creation. Human freedom viaducts the Father’s aims, as John of Damascene states: “[i]f God has created the freedom of [human] nature himself, but [in incarnating] does not assume it along with everything else, then he either repudiates his own work as good, or else he begrudges us its salvation and thus deprives us of his full, encompassing care.”

Finite freedom finds ample room for expression in the primitive relationship between the existential and essential aspects of being. Balthasar lauds Aquinas’ theory of this real distinction as one of the most profound insights of philosophical investigation. The ingenious relational tension between a being’s essential and existential characteristics gives an interior measure of the person’s physical and immaterial being. An idealized concept of being and pure finitude is rejected by Balthasar given that all beings exist in relation to a virtual image of their opposite of non-being. Consequently, for Balthasar, the essence-esse complement is implied in the relationship between a representation and the truth: “the truth of the world is thus neither a mere being nor a mere becoming. If it were merely being, it would be one with the eternal truth and would no longer need to regain the truth from moment to moment. If it were a mere becoming, a constant flux, it would no longer be truth but would be one and the same as the

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356 John of Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa* III, 14 (PG 94) 1042F. Personal translation additions are put in brackets. See also: *NPNF*, 58.
inessential transitoriness of the image.”357 In this way, the esse-essential relationship
generates a fundamental openness and, therewith, freedom for created being. Healey
elucidates this point as follows: “esse can maintain its oneness with ipsum esse subsistens
only insofar as it attains subsistence by being united with an essence that is irreducibly
other than itself.”358

Ontological difference is necessary for the perfection and disclosure of non-
subsistent created being.359 The essential irreversibly looks to esse and this division in
being makes it impossible to think one of these terms without thinking the other.360
Essence’s ongoing relationship with the existential in Jesus’ human nature does not
contradict his Divine nature, given that Jesus’ essence-esse relationship is simple and
complete, yet non-subsistent (aliquid simplex et completum sed non subsistens).361

Jesus’ human nature is structured around finite ontological difference, and its

357 TL 1, 174-75.
358 Healey, 46.
359 See: Healey, 48.
360 See: TL 2, 182.
361 The Son as Jesus Christ acts in his human nature in a finite manner, for: “it
must be held firmly that God is able to, and does [in fact], create something from nothing.
To make this evident one should note that every agent acts to the extent that it is in act;
this is why it is necessary that an action be attributed to an agent in the manner in which
it belongs to that agent to be in act. Now a particularized [particularis] thing is in act in a
particular manner [particulariter], and this in two senses: (i) by comparison to itself, for it
is not the case that its whole substance is act, since things of this sort are composed of
matter and form, and this is why a natural entity does not act with respect to itself as a
whole, but instead acts through its form, through which it is in act; and (ii) in comparison
to those things that are in act, since it is not the case that the acts and perfections of all
the things that are in act are included in any natural thing. Instead, each such thing has an
act determined to one genus and to one species; and hence it is that no such thing is an
active cause of a being insofar as it is a being, but is instead an active cause of that being
insofar as it is this being, determined to this or that species. For an agent effects what is
similar to itself,” in De pot. 1, 1 (trans.) Alfred J. Freddoso in:
http://www3.nd.edu/~afreddos/translat/aquinas1.htm
inexorable changes which, in their essential and existential relationships, are synchronous with Divine kenotic movements.\textsuperscript{362} The Divine Persons have personal knowledge of the non-subsistence of created being in and through the human nature of Jesus. Again, it must be stressed that the ontological differences present in the created nature of Jesus find previous confirmation in the supra-essential actuality of the Divine hypostases.\textsuperscript{363} The supra-relations of Christ’s Divine nature do not subsume finite reason or abridge a person’s desire. To Balthasar’s mind this relation signifies not only Jesus Christ’s person but his mission: “[t]he non-subsistence of the \textit{actus essendi} is the creative medium which suffices for God to utter His kenotic word of the Cross and glory by sending his Son into the world to experience death and Resurrection.”\textsuperscript{364} Ontological difference does not add to Jesus’ perfection but points to the mission the Father has tasked him with for: “if the [reconciling] death of the Son refers to itself as the perfect love of the Father for the world, then the already indicated analogous difference in the Absolute (which transcends even the meaning of difference) becomes apparent in God’s identity…the same holds for the possibility that a different Divine ‘Person’ (identical with absolute Being) will enter the realm where the ‘to be’ of every human person [\textit{Personein}] is grounded in the all-comprehending (world-)reality from which the individual ‘to be’ of the human Jesus [\textit{Menschsein Jesu}] will be ‘personified’.”\textsuperscript{365} From Balthasar’s perspective, ontological difference is a means by which Jesus shares the Father’s love for created being: “[w]hat

\textsuperscript{362} See: \textit{TD} 5, 67-68.

\textsuperscript{363} Balthasar’s use of the terms “super” and “supra” is problematic for some theologians. We see in his use of these labels, the application of the Ignatian theme of \textit{magis} or excessiveness (\textit{Überschuss}) that argues against the comfortable employment of pre-existing predications of the Divine in order to open one up to one’s current context and prayerful and reasoned development.

\textsuperscript{364} \textit{GL} 5, 631-32 (translation altered). See also: \textit{Healey}, 31.

\textsuperscript{365} \textit{E}, 65.
is more inconceivable than that the kernel of being consists in love and that its emergence as essence and existence has no other ground than groundless grace."\textsuperscript{366} The essence-esse relationship is non-inhering but congruent with one being the \textit{imago Trinitatis}.\textsuperscript{367} At the metaphysical level the freedom of the essence and esse relationship in the human person reflects a being’s proportionate capacity to participate in the Divine via the truth of one’s relationships to Being, oneself, and other beings.

The human being exists, Balthasar reasons, “as a limited being in a limited world, but his reason is open to the unlimited, to all of Being.”\textsuperscript{368} Being’s incomprehensible depths persist, in part, in the ordering of difference:

No mind that tries to bore into the abyss [\textit{Abgrund}] of existence will ever get to the bottom [\textit{Grund}] of it. Being is ever actual, and this actuality is so indivisible and unfathomably [\textit{unergründlich}] full that it springs upon every attempt at intellectual mastery and knocks it to the ground before it even gets started.\textsuperscript{369}

Christ’s own experiences of finite and Absolute Difference form the basis for our conscious understandings of a being’s relationship to other beings and the differences these correspondences imply, however, Absolute Difference remains a mystery.

Working through finite and created structures, Christ makes transparent how beings and

\textsuperscript{366} See: \textit{TL} 2, 225 and \textit{TL} 1, 150-58.

\textsuperscript{367} Aquinas never uses the term “real distinction” (\textit{distinctio realis}) rather he speaks of the relation and composition of the esse and essence or \textit{diversum est esse et id quod est}. In this way, Aquinas highlights the fluidity of the esse-essence relationship a move we believe that at least remains open to suggesting it reflects the freedom of the Urkenotic relationship.

\textsuperscript{368} \textit{My Work}, 112.

\textsuperscript{369} \textit{TL}, 1, 190–191. See also: “\textit{Ipsu esse est similitude divinae bonitatis},” [it is a likeness to the Divine goodness], in \textit{De ver.}, q. 22, a. 2, resp. 5 where Aquinas notes: “[o]nly a rational creature has the capacity for God because only it can know and love Him explicitly. But other creatures too participate in a likeness to God and so tend to Him,” in Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Truth. vol. 1: Questions XXI-XXIX}, (trans.) Robert W. Schmidt, S.J. (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1954), 42.
Being have a natural traction for the Transcendent.\textsuperscript{370} The lacunae of ontological differing at the heart of Jesus’ finite being sanction the gauging of all other interior, exterior and \textit{transcendent} relationships, because: “the paradox of the creature has always included the openness of the totality of being, and hence it has also included truth and goodness as absolute categories.”\textsuperscript{371} The difference that exists between the creature and the Creator enacts existentially credible human freedom in one’s relationships, most particularly one’s love of 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 \textit{esse}. Allowing natures to participate in reality—God’s most proper prerogative—is not to be understood as the disintegration or diminution (on the part of the creature) of God’s Being and unicity (which is how it is invariably seen outside the Christian tradition) and the essences of things must be seen positively as posited and determined by God’s omnipotent freedom and therefore are grounded in the unique love of God.\textsuperscript{372}

Jesus’ life unveils how interior and exterior differentiation authorizes finite freedom and hence the possibility for a created being to love the Transcendent Father (\textit{Eph.} 1:3ff.).

Strictly speaking, ontological difference dramatically demonstrates in Jesus Christ how the dyadic relationship summons a finite being to exist in the world through relationships of love, freedom, filial obedience, reason and immanent differing.

\textbf{(4) Eternal Choice and Evil}

Christ’s mission is a historical moment of the Son’s eternal bond to the Father (2 \textit{Cor.} 5:21). Sin does not erase Jesus’ interior \textit{transcendent} bearings or obfuscate his ability to enter into genuine relations with others. As Balthasar claims: “…[t]he Son’s

\textsuperscript{370} \textit{TL} 1, 243 and \textit{TD} 2, 244.
\textsuperscript{371} \textit{TD} 4, 138.
\textsuperscript{372} \textit{GL}, 4, 403-04.
eternal, holy distance from the Father, in the Spirit forms the basis on which the unholy distance of the world’s sins can be transposed into it, can be transcended and overcome by it.”

Uttering the eternal and human “yes” to the Father, Jesus commutes Divine love in Creation. As part of this mission, Jesus takes on in his person as an interior movement the: “inner appropriation of what is ungodly and hostile to God, an identification with that darkness of alienation from God into which the sinner falls as a result of his ‘NO’.”

The manner in which Balthasar formulates his understanding of obedience and receptivity become clearer in this context. The sinner’s hopelessness becomes part of Jesus’ relationship to the Trinity. Only a notional edge exists between Jesus’ free obedience and the Father’s desires. Jesus Christ intellectually and physically “accepts” sin’s essence only insofar as they are a means to accomplish the mission the Father asks him to undertake (Matt. 27:46, Jn. 1:29 & Mrk. 15:34). Jesus takes only the likeness (homoïôma) of sinful being. His essence remains invariably united in the Trinitarian exchange (ONE|3). In the end, as Pseudo-Dionysius remarks: “in divine things, the unities are stronger than the differences.”

Jesus, the sinless one made sin, never loses his inner transcendent orientation towards the Divine. The drama of Jesus’ unfolding freedom brings explanatory simplification to how the “No”, the “being-over-against-God”, results in co-operation with sin’s deconstructive impulses. Sin makes remnants of what should be unified as it fragments truth and being into: “islands of meaning in an infinite sea of

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373 TD 4, 361-62. See also: TD 3, 123.
374 TD 4, 334-35. See also: TL 1, 262 and TD 5, 502-03.
meaninglessness.”

Neither sin’s wedging apart of the created order nor freedom’s perversion of the transcendental summons can, however, veto the Father’s infinite mercy or therewith the indivisibility of the Divine that Jesus propounds. As Balthasar states:

It is a miracle of transfiguration that the world’s darkness can be taken into the inner light of the Trinity: so the estrangement of the sinful No is overtaken and encompassed by the free-will obedient estrangement of the Divine yes. God’s anger at the rejection of the divine love encounters a divine love (the Son’s) that exposes itself to this anger, disarms it and literally deprives it of its object. However, these summary, abstract formulations contain hidden and unsolved problems.

The Father who is rich in mercy takes our “No” as the “Yes” of life in Christ (Eph. 2:5). The inextendible and inward curvature of the sinner’s egoistical appetite is broken open by Christ’s infinite and transcendental measure of eternal love. Balthasar contends that: “[m]an’s verdict on himself and his relation to God cannot be the last act of the judgment…while infinite freedom will respect the decisions of finite freedom, it will not allow itself to be compelled or restricted in its own freedom, by the latter.”

To that end, Christ takes on the full force of evil and “anti-transcendental” negativity as a wayward point and posture in his relationship to the Father. Jesus Christ can be likened to a Trinitarian seed that accepts the “soil” of sin’s covering (Jn. 12:23-24) only to break through its covering to share the luminous presence of Divine truth and love (Lk.

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376 Life Out of Death, 11.
377 TD 4, 349-50.
378 See: Hans Urs von Balthasar and Adrienne von Speyr, To the Heart of the Mystery of Redemption, (trans.) Anne Englund Nash (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010), 78.
379 TD 5, 295. See also: TD 3, 153 and 188.
(5) Kenosis and Cultic Sacrifice

Supported in the supra-form (über Gestalt) of Trinitarian relations Jesus comes into the world as a slave (Phil. 2:22; Rom. 7.6 & Gal. 5:13) and willingly accepts the Father’s judgment against evil and sin. Ultimately, Jesus is at peace with his own death because the consummation of his task confirms the Father’s everlasting plan:

Christ gathers up into himself…the world’s sin, which offends the goodness of the Father, in order to burn it utterly in the fire of his suffering. The Father is henceforth to perceive this sin as being fuel for the Son’s love: ‘Behold the Lamb of God’ [The Scapegoat] who takes away the sins of the world [into the desert, into a place which is out of sight and unreachable].

Jesus’ gift or dedication of self (Hingabe) is the fundamental movement that opens up Divine mystery for us: “[i]n the New Covenant there is no longer any official cult which is not at the same time personally colored, and which does not lead into the personal communio sanctorum.” The Son relinquishes Godself’s divinity (Heb. 5:11) to take on human nature and redeem Creation by confronting evil and sin with Divine love. The fundamental relationship between the Divine and finite being is love. Love

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380 See: TL 1, 196.
381 The Threefold Garland, 71. Balthasar’s stress on Jesus’ unique role in Passion defends him from the accusation that he falls into patripassianism. See also: TD 5, 96 and Guy Mansini, O.S.B., “Balthasar and the Theodramatic Enrichment of the Trinity,” The Thomist 64 (2000): 499-519, 1 Cor. 3:15, Rom. 8:19-25, Eph. 1:10, 6:12, 2 Cor. 4:4, 5:21, 8:9, Rev. 9:3, 10, 13:5 and Jn. 19:11.
382 TL 1, 284. See also: TL 2, 136-37.
analogously actualizes the ideal and exemplary Divine-finite relationship.\(^{384}\) Freely assuming the condition of the damned (*poena domini*), Christ gives the Spirit a way to present the Father’s judgment on sin and evil without ceasing to love the Son.\(^{385}\) Owing to the fact that the Father is irrefragably given to the Son, the Son can deposit the Divine attributes and take upon himself the irredenta of Reality and suffer deicide as an act of absolute love: “You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich,” (2 Cor. 8:9). The indigence and abandonment Jesus confronts qualifies as part of his mission and, therewith, as Balthasar points out, contributes to God’s ever-surpassing fullness (*Mk*. 15:34 & *Matt*. 27:46).

The cultic law attempts to adjudicate the perceived societal obligations and needs of the people against Jesus’ right to life. The religious leaders decide the sacrifice of Jesus’ life is a viable solution to their religious, political, and social requirements. Jesus Christ becomes the accursed victim (*homo sacer*), the religious scapegoat who is separated from the human community (*Heb*. 13:11ff) and killed with impunity for the redemption of sinners and conversion of Creation. The practice of cultic sacrifice is a near universal human institution that reflects the belief that a group’s sins and perversions can be “removed” and “grafted” onto a chosen expiatory vessel. The nullification of the


\(^{385}\) Balthasar’s position on the relationship between “*poena domini*” and Divine love relies, in part, on St. Hilary’s earlier work. For Hilary this distinction between Divine love and “*poena domini*” holds given the differences existing between the malum (*sensus*) culpae and the malum culpae in Christ’s suffering, see: *GL* 7, 231, *TD* 5, 299-304 and Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Your Crown the Year* (trans.) Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 85.
scapegoat’s individual rights is likened by Agamben to prostitution or a sacrificial “commodity fetish”.\(^{386}\) There is something of the idea of Christ’s expiatory act that is communicated in terms of the language of commerce and commodity as found in the meaning of the verb atone—\(Kpr\) (Hebrew). For the Hebrews, the word atone meant “to cover” one’s guilt from the “eyes” and judgment of God. Atonement for Saint Paul thus points one toward the conceptualization of a finite-Transcendent reconciliation.\(^{387}\)

The quantification and denial of Christ’s freedom deracinates him from society and allows him to be taken as a heretical object ripe for the expediency of violence. Christ willingly participates in this violence as a means towards redemption, setting up, thereby, a liturgical practice making for solidarity with a fallen humanity. Christ’s relationship to the Father makes his sacrifice effective because it deals with sin and evil in its purest form. Balthasar writes:

That is to say, sin in its ‘pure state’ separated from man, ‘sin in itself’ in the whole formless, chaotic momentum of its reality, was seen by Jesus; and with it, the ‘remainder’ that could not be absorbed into the Father’s work of creation, because he had left man freedom to decide for or against God—the unfinished part of the creation, that it was left to the incarnate Son to finish; and the Son, obedient to his mission, is led by the Father now into the state of existence of this sin that ‘remains’. \(\text{Descendit ad inferiorem terrae, id quod erat inoperatum conditionis visurus oculis}\) (Irenaeus).\(^{388}\)

Jesus’ obedience to the Father underscores all the relationships he enters, including that

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\(^{386}\) See: Giorgio Agamben, \(\text{Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life}\), (trans.) Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 21-22 and 72 where Agamben makes a distinction between an “exclusive inclusion” and the exception which is an “inclusive exclusion”. The former determines exclusion by referring to the class from which it is excluded, whereas the latter, argues that membership is also exclusion, see: Paul M. Livingston, “Agamben, Badiou, and Russell,” in \(\text{Continental Philosophy Review}\) 42 (2009): 307.

\(^{387}\) See: Rom. 5:10, 11:15, 2 Cor. 5:18ff, Eph. 2:15 and Col. 1:20-22.

\(^{388}\) \(\text{GL}, 7, 233\).
involving his own death. Of this key component Balthasar writes: “…in an objective ‘triumphal procession’ (Col. 2:15) that is as far remote as possible from any sentiment of victory. It is ‘glory,’ because it is at the same time blind obedience, that must obey the Father at the point where the last traces of God seem lost (in pure sin), together with every communication (in pure solitariness).” 389 Jesus’ incalculable Divine nature renders his execution conciliatory for not only the needs of the local community, but also, for all humanity, even Creation as a whole.

Recalibration of the totality of Creation back to its divine end is costly in the extreme. 390 With the Cross Christ puts his whole existence in relationship to the world’s rejection and the Father’s “desertion” (Mrk. 9:31). 391 No difference, no tension, is greater than that embedded in the idea of God’s abandonment of God in Jesus Christ on the Cross (1/GOD). This act strains the accord existing between Jesus and the Father (ONE). 392 As Balthasar states: “[t]he Son’s “God-forsakenness” on the Cross cannot be interpreted one-sidedly as something felt solely by the dying Jesus; if God is objectively forsaken here, then we must say that God is forsaken by God: this is still an economic form of the personal relationship within the immanent Trinity.” 393 The eternal choice of the Divine life makes possible a human response to this mystery:

The ultimate abysses of man’s freedom to oppose God open up at the place where God, in the freedom of his love, makes the decision to descend kenotically all the way into the forsakenness of the world. With his descent, he reveals this

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389 GL 7, 233.
390 Christ’s remotion goes to the extreme of his death, a move made possible given his choice to do the Father’s will, see: GL 7, 225, 234 and 250.
391 See: GL 1, 148 and 207.
392 See: MP, 105-07.
393 TD 3, 530. See also: TD 3, 508 and Hilary, On the Trinity 10, 34 (PL 10), 370B. See also: NPNF, 190-91.
forsakenness: to himself, insofar as he wants to experience abandonment by God, and to the world, which only now measures the entire breadth of its own freedom to oppose God against the dimensions of God’s love. From this point on, it becomes possible to sound out “the depths of Satan” (Rev 2:24). From this point on, true, deliberate atheism becomes possible for the very first time, since, prior to this, without a genuine concept of God, there could be no true atheism.\(^{394}\)

Indeed, as Derrida reflects, something far more profound is in play with the Cross, specifically: “[t]he desire of God, God as the other name of desire, deals in the desert with radical atheism.”\(^{395}\) The order of God’s relationship to the Cross is important here as: “[i]t is not simply that the full doctrine of the Trinity can be unfolded on the basis of a theology of the Cross…rather, we must see the doctrine of the Trinity as the ever-present, inner presupposition of the doctrine of the Cross.”\(^{396}\)

In the Passion Jesus is forsaken by the Father in direct proportion to their prior intimacy.\(^{397}\) Christ’s death must be theologically qualified: “[o]f course, one cannot say that death, as an end, is in any sense in God, since his eternal life is unending. But if death is understood to mean the sacrifice of life, then the original image of that sacrifice in God as the gift of life flowing between Father and Son in the Spirit.”\(^{398}\) Jesus’ dereliction on the Cross does not oppose the Father’s love because it is the Father’s

\(^{394}\) Love Alone Is Credible, 91–92.


\(^{396}\) TD 4, 319.

\(^{397}\) TD 4, 359-60.

unwavering love that makes the Passion possible. The generative relationship between
the Father and Son renders all instances of disunity part of Jesus’ mission (2 Cor. 5:21).
The splendor of the Father augurs the Son’s surrender of Dei formam and Jesus’ death
because these events are precursor to the announcement of Trinitarian ordered new
beginnings. Christ’s death provides us with the means to reconcile with God (see: Rom.
5:9). Balthasar notes that Divine love is stronger than hell because hell “is only possible
given the absolute and real separation of the Father and Son.”399 The concinnous
relationship between Father and Son includes the whole of Jesus’ identity.
Simultaneously, Jesus’ solitude does not deter the Spirit from ceaselessly upholding
Jesus’ identity in the immanent and economic Trinity. The Spirit possesses the Father as
eternal intentional end and this movement is received into the space of Jesus’ real
becoming. Balthasar rejects any interpretation of the Passion that separates Jesus’
abandonment from the Father’s judgment of sin and evil; such a stance, he claims, entails
Nestorianism and other heretical dualisms of Jesus’ person, mission and relationship to
the immanent Trinity.

Luther’s distinction between Jesus Christ’s Divine nature (göttliche Wesen) and
his Divine figure or form (göttliche Gestalt) was influential for Balthasar’s own
demarcation of Jesus’ experiences in the economic Trinity as well as that of the
Transcendent Divine Persons in the immanent Trinity. The degree to which Balthasar

399 TD 4, 325. God’s revelation of absolute freedom exceeds our own
comprehension given the limits of our own freedom: “Not by will or necessity, but by
nature,” (DS 71) and again, “quia nec ulla in Deo necessitas cadit nec voluntas
sapientiam praevenit,” [For there is no necessity in God, nor does his will precede his
wisdom] (DS 526). And so we can say that it was “[t]he unanimous salvific decision on
the part of the Trinity, according to which it was resolved to send the Son,” TD 3, 187.
See also: MP, 53, GL 7, 213-235 and TD 4, 328.
agreed with Luther’s belief that Jesus is simultaneously justified and damned is part of a larger question that cannot be answered here.\textsuperscript{400} However, one can say that the supposition that differences exist between Jesus’ nature and appearance furnishes Balthasar with a rationale for Jesus’ experiences without imputing a heretical understanding of the Divine Persons. The Father gives Christ up for lost to gather the lost.\textsuperscript{401} With the Father’s abandonment of Jesus on the Cross, God experiences the mystery of God denying God:

The Son bears within himself, together with the hopeless impenetrability of their sin, which prevents the divine light of love from registering in them. In himself, therefore, he experiences, not their sin, but the hopelessness of their resistance to God and the graceless No of divine grace to this resistance. The Son who has depended [\textit{sich verlassen}] entirely on the Father, even to becoming identified with his brothers in their lostness, must now be forsaken [\textit{verlassen}] by the Father. He who consented to be given [\textit{ver-gehen}] everything from the Father’s hand must now feel that it was all “for nothing” [\textit{vergebens}].\textsuperscript{402}

All the same, Christ’s death also establishes an unmoving limit to immanence, negativity and meaninglessness for no greater contradiction or paradox is possible than the event of God accepting death at the hands of human beings. It is, however, with this unthinkable historical event that evil and sin are moved into the greater mystery of Divine Being: “for all these are modi of radiant and universal love and have as their basis the breadth of the world’s Creation as a whole (Rom. 8: 18-25) and of its painful (painful for

\textsuperscript{400} For an argument that Balthasar and Luther’s positions fundamentally correspond, see: Graham Ward, “Kenosis: Death, Discourse and Resurrection,” in \textit{End of Modernity}, 30-33. See also: \textit{GL} 1, 47-48 and \textit{TD} 4, 284-290 where Balthasar’s critique of Luther’s understanding of the concept of \textit{Deus sub contrario} that reads, in part: “God cannot be God, he must first become the devil, and we cannot come into heaven, we must first descend into Hell,” see: Luther’s \textit{Commentary on Psalm 117}. See also: \url{http://www.wlsessays.net/files/PetersSummarien.pdf}.

\textsuperscript{401} See: \textit{TL} 3, 433-439 and \textit{TD} 5, 516-17.

\textsuperscript{402} \textit{TD} 4, 349.
God and for the world) concealment in the mantle of the divine Being which encompasses all things (Rom. 8: 26-27).” Christ’s crucifixion is the privileged declaration of Divine self-dedication and the defeat of evil. Jesus’ choice to love to the end becomes acute when the Father takes the supra-abundant Divine life from him—a move the Son eternally assents to: “[t]he Son’s eternal decision includes his temporal one, and his temporal decision holds fast to his eternal decision as the only one that matters.” Eternity and history, death’s empty time, and love frame and substantiate Christ’s experience of the Cross.

Christ’s alienation from the Father creates a “negativity” that overcomes the myriad of Hell’s asphyxiating evils as well as sin’s opposition to created goodness. Given the Son’s decision we can also say that while Jesus is never without the Father’s love, he does, in his handing over (παραδιδόναι) in the Passion, experience the solitude of a sinner alongside the death of a failed man. Jesus experiences the sinner’s false belief that happiness rests in eliminating one’s relationship to God and in finding comfort in increasing one’s independence at the cost of ongoing self-enclosure. Removed from the Father’s presence Christ experiences something more painful than physical pain and suffering, namely, the sense of failure, the realization he has failed in his mission: “[i]t is all the more terrifying for the Son, therefore, in the darkness of his anguish, to see that this whole work, which has begun to be realized in Mary is pointless (because of his

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403 GL 5, 627. On difference between knowing one’s death and suffering through death, see: Charles Péguy, La Dialogue de l’histoire et de l’ame Chanuelle,” L’Amité Charles Péguy et l’ame Channelle (April-June 2003), 164-78.

404 TD 3, 199. See also: TD 3, 165ff, 171, 515ff and MP, 152. On the transcendent receptivity in his earthly mission, see: TD 4, 471-73, 106-07, GL 7, 130-161 and Levering, 128.

405 See: TD 3, 183-84, GL 7, 224, 260, TD 5, 516 and MP 112-118.

406 TD 4, 137.
gratuitous suffering) and doomed to failure.”

These predications refer to the finite nature of Jesus, for to ascribe emotions directly to the Divine would be a “crude anthropomorphism” that would be equivalent to charging God with “powerlessness” and “cowardice.”

Sin distorts a fundamental truth of Creation and being, namely, that its underlining mystery increasingly unfolds in correspondences and, more perfectly, in transcendent relationship. Being, truth and identity come together in a symphonic manner for Balthasar. He writes: “[a]ll human relationships are characterized by elements of self-revelation within a context of mystery. This is what makes them valuable and thrilling…communicating the incommunicable this paradox is no more evident than here.”

Christ’s infinite and Divine nature gives us an apophatic measure of our finite nature and its natural end in death. Jesus’ disfigurement and death enshrouds the super-eminent fullness of God’s absolute goodness, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence and love (Jn. 12:23-24). God’s hiddenness in Christ becomes a fundamental hermetic that discloses the mystery of a finite being’s infinite relationships. Christ’s coup de grâce reveals, for Balthasar, that Divine love and glory have the final word on death: “Arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light” (Eph. 5:14).

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407 TD 4, 357.
410 See: TD 4, 132, 359 and TD 3, 122.
411 For some formative influences on Balthasar’s position see: Bonaventure, Vitis
(6) Death

Balthasar cautions us against following those theologians who overlook the radical nature of the event of the Cross in order to focus on Jesus’ Resurrection. Jesus cries out on the Cross: “Father into your hands, I commend my Spirit” (Lk. 23:46) and breathes his last. These words are like a heavy stone dropped into an unlit pool of water (see: Matt. 27:45). Alienated from the Father and abandoned by all but a handful of disciples and his mother, Jesus dies. The Eternal Word continues to be revealed in the “non-word” of Jesus’ death and the resulting silence (Todeschweigen). Balthasar’s interpretation of the Passion leans on von Speyr’s mystical visions of Christ; she writes: “Christ did not (as in the icons of Eastern Church) descend as the victorious Risen One—Holy Saturday is not Easter—but as the Dead One, who no longer speaks as the Word of God, or rather ‘has become the silent Word of the Father’. And so we have to learn to share this silence between Death and Resurrection.”

Outside of Divine intervention all death ends similarly in exhaustion, the dispersal...

\[\textit{mystica} \ c. \ 3, \ 4 (\text{ed. Quaracchi,} \ viii, \ 163b.), \ Rev. \ 5:9, \ 12, \ 13:8, \ 21:6, \ Job \ 34:15, \ Ps. \ 104:29 \text{ and } Eccl. \ 12:7.\]

\[412 \text{ Only God can go to the end of the abandonment of God by God. See: } GL \ 7, \ 211, \ 226, \ GL \ 1, \ 616, \ TL \ 2, \ 330, \ TD \ 3, \ 54-55, \ TD \ 4, \ 77 \text{ for further development of this theme.}\]

\[413 \text{ The dual reference of “My God, my God”, by Christ on the Cross has been seen by some rabbis to be reducible to Jesus’ configuring his life of faith around the Exodus event and giving of the law, that is to say, the Covenant. In this schema the first calling of “My God”, refers to the Sea and the second invocation to Mount Sinai, see: PR } \ 22, \ \text{William G. Braude, } \textit{Pesikta Rabbati}, \ I (\text{New York: Yale University Press, 1968}) \text{ and Alan F. Segal, ‘Two Powers in Heaven’, in } \textit{The Trinity}, \ \text{Stephan T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, S.J. and Gerald O’Collins, S.J., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 80. Balthasar in no way limits the imports of the Cross as it includes all Creation and Reality, see also: } TL \ 3, \ 255-59.\]

\[414 \text{ Adrienne von Speyr, } \textit{Kreuz und Hölle}, \ \text{op. cit. 11, cited J. Saward, } \textit{The Mysteries of March}, \ 113-14. \text{ See also: Adrienne von Speyr, } \textit{The Cross, Word and Sacrament} \ (\text{trans.}) \text{ Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983).}\]
of one’s last breath, the obliteration of one’s relationships and the beginning of the body’s decay. Yet, with God’s death, death itself is given a voice: “the death, and the dying away into silence, of the Logos so become the center of what he has to say for himself that we have to understand precisely his non-speaking as his final revelation, his utmost word.”

Christ’s death is one of Jesus’ greatest proclamations because of the way it initiates Creation’s redemption. Silence serendipitously brings about God’s designs as evil cannot rebuke dead air or apostatize against the Divine void. Balthasar opines that: “[w]hat the spoken word could not do—it only provokes increasing resistance—was done by the sacrificial word slowly dissolving in the words of the Cross and finally, fading away into the tremendous, ultimate death which sums up all—the spoken and the inexplicable.”

Jesus’ lonely journey into the “un-words” of sin and evil is made possible by his relationship to the Divine Persons. As a result, there is a difference between the Son knowing about death and Jesus’ suffering and death, although the former sets the context

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417 Against Balthasar’s vocal rejection of Patrerpassianism critics still argue that Balthasar’s position fails in its understanding of Divine Impassible, see: A. Nichols, O.P., “St. Thomas Aquinas on the Passion of Christ: A Reading of Summa Theologicae IIIa, q.46,” Scottish Journal of Theology 43 (1990): 447-59. The unity of the Father, Son and Spirit does not rupture with the Passion. This is not to say a distinction between each of the three Divine Persons may also be stressed. Most notably the Church advocates a sense of divine unity that rejects Praxeas (fl. AD c.200) and the Patrerpassian Monarchians who argue the Father and Son’s unification manifests as a singularity where Father and Son mutually incarnate, suffer and die on the Cross.
for the latter. According to Balthasar, the Ur-kenotic eternally pioneers Jesus’ historical Passion for: “[t]he immanent Trinity must be understood to be that eternal, absolute self-surrender whereby God is seen to be, in himself, absolute love; this in turn explains his free self-giving to the world as love without suggesting that God ‘needed’ the world process and the Cross in order to become himself.”

The Passion establishes a “lexicon” that makes sense of being’s apparent annihilation into non-being. Death does not have the final word as the Logos promulgates love in death; indeed, even non-being can give us some glimpse of the Divine. The absolutely Transcendent God is cryptically allied to Jesus’ death and his body’s decomposition. In the “neorama” of Divine Life nothing is beyond the purview of God, including Divine death for: “the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God” (1 Cor. 2:10). The Spirit preserves a relationship with Jesus when death and self-immolation remove Jesus’ life. The Transcendent Spirit conveys Trinitarian love through the darkest evil and sin, even to Jesus in the deepest crevasse of Hell. No less is it the case that Christ’s experience of Hell is qualiedly different than all others’ in light of Jesus’ death. Balthasar puts forward that the Father’s abandonment of the Son on the Cross was a greater punishment than any evil Hell could devise or practice:

And here we must not forget that, in thus ‘dying to sin’, the Son underwent death...
in and through each individual sin that makes up the totality of the world’s evil, insofar as the holy God cursed (and so banished) in him everything hostile to the Divinity. Of course we can say that the Son dies ‘because of sin’, but at a deeper level he dies ‘because of God’, because God has definitively rejected what cannot be reconciled with the divine nature.\(^\text{422}\)

Divine love contradicts the principle of non-contradiction—the eternal God dies on the Cross, descends into Hell and eternally lives.\(^\text{423}\)

Jesus’ death dispatches the Father’s righteous wrath against sin and evil. This purifying judgment is thus also an act of Divine love.\(^\text{424}\) Despite Jesus being made sin and dying, his Divine interior nature enigmatically sustains a transcedent relationship to the Father.\(^\text{425}\) In-formed in the Father’s love, Jesus shows that any sin or evil is a meaningless lie. Only the Spirit, who never rests, can “surround” what is absolutely not-God in Jesus Christ.\(^\text{426}\) The Spirit’s groundlessness frees the Divine Persons to be in simple existence and in relationship with Jesus. Correspondingly, the Spirit attends to Jesus’ transcedent relationship to the Father from Hell without falling prey to evil’s binding. By definition, the Spirit, Balthasar assures us, must have the possibility of giving itself to the other, without the other having the possibility of capturing it.\(^\text{427}\) Therefore, Jesus Christ’s substitution for the sinner is a positive aspect of the Spirit’s own groundless grounding (Un-)Grund and narrative of Divine love: “in the night [of Christ’s

\(^{422}\) \textit{TD} 4, 496.

\(^{423}\) Nothing is intelligible except in terms of being and the principle of non-contradiction: all other principles draw their validity from these two, see: \textit{TD} 3, 228-29, \textit{TD} 4, 494-95 and \textit{GL} 7, 304.

\(^{424}\) See: \textit{TD} 4, 325. There is love in God’s wrath, see: \textit{TD} 4, 341-49, \textit{TD} 5, 267 and \textit{GL} 7, 205-07, but it is essentially a categorical rejection of complicity with evil and sin that is overtaken and incorporated in Christ’s love for the Father.


\(^{426}\) See: \textit{TD} 3, 188.

\(^{427}\) See: \textit{TL} 1, 98-99.
agon} in which God hid himself, there was the darkness of an extreme love, which could still be affirmed even in non-vision and the naked faith of indifference. Divine love foresees all opposition and responds to created being’s entropic tendencies in the Spirit’s endless unification of the kenotic distance (*die unendliche Differenz*) between the Father and Jesus, that is, the incarnate eternal Son. 

Through the theonomy of sacrificial love Christ brings the *donum increatum* or uncreated grace of the indwelling of the Spirit’s Person to all (*Rev*. 1:5-6). Christ’s body is not simply materiality or flesh (*σάρξ*) but a sacramental vehicle that communicates grace for “the body is for the Lord and the Lord for the body” (*1 Cor*. 6:13). Jesus’ mission “unfolds and develops beyond himself in a sphere that the Spirit administers”. This, Balthasar continues, shows how Jesus’ death is a grace-filled act in consensus with who we are meant to be.

Love and humble service reveal the innermost heart of the Father. The Passion does not deny Divine or human freedom but reevaluates them and Creation in relation to Christ’s redemptive mission and its continuing gifting in the Spirit: “for the Creator gives up a part of his freedom to the creature, in the act of creating; but this he can dare to do only in virtue of his foreseeing and taking into account the second and truest kenosis, that of the Cross, in which he makes good the uttermost consequences of Creation’s freedom

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428 *GL* 5, 51. See also: *TD* 4, 324, 333, *TD* 5, 216 and 242-46.
429 See: *TD* 5, 245 and *TD* 4, 333.
430 Jesus Christ’s identity, like that of all historical beings, points to his origins. As Aquinas states: “[f]or the ultimate perfection of the rational creature is to be found in that which is the principle of being; since a thing is perfect so far as it attains to its principle...Hence it must be absolutely granted that the blessed see the essence of God,” *S. Th.* 1, q. 12, a. 1.
and goes beyond them.”\textsuperscript{431} Christ is no mere advocate for us as his death displaces Creation at its source in Divine freedom, which opens the Trinity up to all who follow his example:

[this] absolutely unique man…is unique because he is God, and who for this reason and no other, can communicate a share in his Cross to his fellow human beings, with whom he is more profoundly solitary than any man can ever be with any other man, and can do that in death itself, where each man is absolutely alone.\textsuperscript{432}

Christ’s mission clears the way for all to enter into eternal relationship with the Transcendent God in the afterlife (1 Cor. 2:11, 15:40 and Rom. 8:14).

(7) Divine Concealment

Christ anticipates his death with humility and a poverty of spirit that is transformative for Creation (Col. 1:24). Jesus’ actions show that being in relationship with the Father entails serving in neither self-effacement (\textit{eine dienende Selbstaufhebung}) nor dominating self-affirmation (\textit{herrschende Selbsthebung}). Such a relationship argues against the isomorphic and dialectical correspondence of concealment and revelation at the level of finite freedom. True humility lies between these two extremes and is manifest in the loving and glorifying of God: “[h]e it is…that slays death in hell (\textit{mortum in inferno}) that strengthens the assurance of our hope by the glory of his

\textsuperscript{431} GL 7, 214. See also: “[t]he Divine Persons according to the nature of their processions have a causality respecting the creation of things…God the Father made the creature through the Word, which is his Son, and through his love, which is the Holy Spirit,” \textit{S. Th.}, I, q. 45, a. 6.

\textsuperscript{432} MP, 138. Kenosis does not lead to nihilism or the death of metaphysics for Balthasar, however, for contrary interpretations see: Gianni Vattimo, \textit{Belief}, (trans.) Luca D’Isanto & David Webb (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999) and “The Trace of the Trace” in \textit{Religion} (eds.) Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998). Derrida’s philosophical approach to such themes as relation, difference, deconstruction, etc. makes no concession to Balthasar’s own project and thus serves us in this thesis as an illuminating dialogue partner.
body." On the Cross, the antipodes of death and eternal life are centered in Jesus’ person. In this meeting the Trinity’s Ur-kenotic expiation of evil takes place in Jesus Christ. Balthasar’s mentor Ferdinand Ulrich summarizes: “[p]ain and death are eternally the language of his glory (and this applies even to the cry of death, the silence of death and to being dead itself).”

In his suffering and deformation Christ becomes the “non-non” word and “non-image” of the changeless God. Jesus’ kenotic existence warrants simultaneous acquaintance with both physical defacement and perfection given the Father’s love (Jn. 16:32). The union of these semblant polarities reaches an extreme in Christ’s death and plunge into Hell (usque ad poenam infernalem). The realm of the dead exists outside of quantifiable measure because time and space are created entities that require subjective interiority, observation and extra-mental relation, that is, the very capacities lacking in the dead. However, in Hell Christ’s adopted non-form (Un-Gestalt) of the Father and

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434 Ferdinand Ulrich, personal letter to Balthasar cited in *TD* 5, 246.

435 *GL* 5, 51. Balthasar links the Ur-kenotic pre-sacrifice of the immanent Trinity and the “supra-suffering” Christ undergoes in the Paschal Mystery that sacramentally actualizes, see: *TD* 5, 134. Balthasar is here extending both Augustine and Aquinas. However, one must move to the East in theologians such as Sergius Bulgakov (1871-1944) and Vladimir Lossky (1903-58) to find these themes most eloquently explicated in modern times. Suffering is analogously found in God both in terms of signification (*perfectiones ipsae significatae [perfections they signify]*) and with view to mode of signification (*modus significandi*). Even though Balthasar speaks here analogously, his thesis has meet with scholarly opposition. Without Trinitarian supra-causal relations the death of God would lead to the death of representation, see: J. Collins, *The Emergence of Philosophy of Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 341. For an exposition of these themes, see: Healey, 107.


437 Ben Quash, ‘Drama and the Ends of Modernity,’ in *End of Modernity*, 168. See also: *MP*, 175-76 and *TL* 1, 198 where Balthasar characterizes properly ordered being by its future orientation versus those damned being centered in the past.
the Spirit’s representation (*Vorstellung*) of the Son’s rejection of evil and sin to the Father are coeval. The role assigned by Balthasar to the Spirit is partially conversant with Hegel’s approach. Hegel forwards that the dialectical movement of Spirit in the Son’s kenosis moves Jesus Christ beyond his representation as disfigured and powerless. For Hegel, this move from divine concealment to resurrected Son is motivated by the Spirit’s self-consciousness: “[t]his concealment ceases when the absolute Being *qua* Spirit is the object of consciousness,” see, Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, 479.

438 *GL* 7, 204. The role assigned by Balthasar to the Spirit is partially conversant with Hegel’s approach. Hegel forwards that the dialectical movement of Spirit in the Son’s kenosis moves Jesus Christ beyond his representation as disfigured and powerless. For Hegel, this move from divine concealment to resurrected Son is motivated by the Spirit’s self-consciousness: “[t]his concealment ceases when the absolute Being *qua* Spirit is the object of consciousness,” see, Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, 479.

439 *TD* 5, 311. Richard Bauckham succinctly notes that: “the Cross reveals who Jesus is,” in *God Crucified: Monotheism & Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 63. For Balthasar the Cross brings to the fore the strange marriage of divine and finite, eternity and time, evil and the spatiotemporal as answered from the Trinitarian perspective, see: *TL* 2, 321-22.
(8) Transfiguring Silence, Death and Descent

With Christ’s death, the Eternal Word falls silent in Creation. All activity and relationships cease for the dead and this makes Christ’s actions in Hell including his transcendent relationship with the Father particularly problematic.\footnote{440} It seems logical to assume that Jesus’ free and creative perception of the Father is deprived from him in Hell (\textit{Jn. 3:16}).\footnote{441} Although the love among the Divine Persons is absolute in the economic Trinity, in Hell, Balthasar argues, Jesus experiences his perfect reciprocity with the Father as demolished and unfruitful.\footnote{442} Therefore, Christ abides kenotically tied to the Father in all that is inimical to the Divine. In the utmost pitch of Hell Jesus experiences his abandonment as proof of his unity to the Father: “[o]ne must go further: the deeper experience of abandonment by God which is to be vicariously real in the Passion, presupposes an equally deep experience of being united to God and of life derived from the Father—an experience that the Son must have had, not only in Heaven but also as a man, even if this does not mean that his Spirit must already enjoy a perpetual \textit{visio beatifica}.”\footnote{443}

Creation is the point where infinite possibilities of created being’s spontaneity meet with eternity.\footnote{444} Evil attempts to invert this relationship by removing any creative

\footnote{440} See: \textit{MP}, 148-49, 161 and 172.
\footnote{441} On the link between creativity and grace, see: \textit{TD 5}, 486 and \textit{MP} 40-80.
\footnote{442} The Holy Spirit maintains the identity of the Son: “As for the Spirit, whose specific part it is to choose and decide in all freedom (since the Spirit is absolute, divine will), one might say that he embodies that reciprocal ‘mode of granting requests’ which is an invention of the whole Trinity, so that the decision on the part on the part of the united Trinity (within the order of the processions) is completely natural and common to all Persons,” \textit{TD 5}, 89. See also: \textit{TL 2}, 294-99.
\footnote{443} \textit{GL} 7, 216. See also: \textit{TD 5}, 124.
\footnote{444} See: \textit{TL 1}, 40 and 232.
outlets from the accursed and perpetually pushing them towards non-being. Ruminating about the natural end of the human person when outside of redemptive grace, Aquinas asserts: “the more closely a creature approaches God, the more it possesses of the act of existence; the further it is from Him, the more it possesses of non-existence. But since a creature approaches God only in so far as it participates in a finite act of existence, yet its distance from God is always infinite, it is said to have more non-existence than existence.”

Balthasar’s own theological vision infers a correlation between one’s existence, the relationships one enters into and evil’s underlining threat of non-existence.

Christ partakes in the Father’s vision of what Creation was meant to be, even while occupying the “space” of Hell’s continual fragmenting of being. To this end, as Aquinas eloquently puts: “God is…not the Creator of a tendency toward nothingness but the Creator of every being; he is not the principle of an evil but the principle of multiplicity.” Therefore, we can speculate that Balthasar understands the relationship between the Divine and Creation to mirror in a distorted fashion the relationship between Creation and Hell. The Divine takes non-being and nothingness and creates beings with freedom and reason, and indeed, the ability to image the supra-fullness of the Divine in their persons. Hell, to the contrary, takes Creation’s presumed end in a-temporal multiplicity and attempts to push it back towards its origins in non-being. Creation sustains freedom whereas Hell is fundamentally about de-evolution with a view to permanent non-being. Jesus does not fall prey to Hell’s degeneration as the Father discloses Godself interiorly to him and, thus, displaces the dimerous Transcendent-


446 De pot. 3, q. 16, a. 3.
immanent relations and preponderance of non-being in Hell. Most postmodern thinkers take exception to this line of reasoning as it presupposes that finite consciousness can be meaningfully equated with the One’s conscious experience of the absolute negativity of the (non)One. Such thinkers reason that any finite conscious experience of the One’s conceptualization of the (non)One falsely infers that finite reality participates in what by definition remains possible only for a Transcendent Being:

The operation of the (non)One is not at all an ‘objectivization’ of everything that falls outside the One—in the sense of self-dividing operation of consciousness—but what would have to be recognized as a setting—into absolute transcendence, beyond objectivization itself since it bears on this letter as well, of Difference and of all the ideal thetic elements which, in Difference, would come to add themselves to the One and which discover themselves in this operation as strangers to the essence of the One.

Hell is the aphelion of God abandoning God—and, paradoxically, the place where the Father divulges the hidden recesses of the Divine heart to Jesus. More specifically, the Father replaces Jesus’ beatific vision with an explanation of the hidden mysteries of Creation, freedom and evil. Balthasar does not elaborate on the particulars of what the Father shares with Jesus concerning these mysteries. However, we can speculate about how Balthasar understands the themes of Creation, freedom and evil given the central importance kenosis has for his theological vision.

Christ highlights the Father’s glory from Creation’s beginnings to its final measure (Is. 53:8-12) including its possible uncoiling in Hell, because, Balthasar sets

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447 See: TD 5, 263-6 and 300-04.
448 Philosophy of Difference, 199.
449 See: TD 5, 502-03.
450 Balthasar differs from many 19th century theories of kenosis as for him Jesus’ equality is not sacrificed with his emptying of the divine features, see: GL 7, 209.
forth: “a redeemer who does not justify the Creator has not truly redeemed anything.”

Christ restores Creation back to its original purposes and relationship with the Father. As noted above, Aquinas stresses the Father’s use of relationship and difference to promote a divinely ordained divertissement: “by reason of which beings are distinguished from one another…God is therefore not the Creator of a tendency toward nothingness but the Creator of every being; he is not the principle of an evil but the principle of multiplicity.”

Creation mediates the distances between Jesus’ descent and ascent (Eph. 4:9). By carrying sin, evil and death in his person Christ answers Creation’s travail for the Creator (Rom. 8: 19-25) and gives every person the means to connaturally exist with the Divine and Creation (Eph. 1:10). Differences in Creation help define a being’s choice given one’s appetite and a particular being’s “topological” design, that is, the various relationships it enters into with others. In comparison, evil distorts human freedom’s tendency to the “other” and is thus a perverted denial of relationship and created goodness. Evil attempts to retroactively negate Creation by seducing individuals into denying the implications of Creation’s Divine source, namely, that personal identity and flourishing result when one enters into relationships with other beings and the Divine: “[n]ow the quality of evil has lost all relationship”, in its self-devouring it no longer has

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451 GL 7, 523.
452 De pot., 3, q.16, a. 3.
any relation to God.”⁴⁵⁴ We are not advocating a crude equating of a being with its environment, but rather, suggesting that one’s actions and relations are efficacious and determinative in Creation and analogously evil acts manifest in Hell.

Bereft of the centering provided by other beings, the damned exist in Hell under the unremitting force of evil’s deflagration of being:

Man only becomes acquainted with death as punishment (Gen 3:3–19: “Return to the ground!”), a punishment that is the inner consequence of Adam’s turning away from God: he dies, brutally parted from life, and sinks into the realm of the dead, Sheol, where they “no longer see the Lord in the land of the living”; the dead suffer violence, “for Sheol cannot thank thee, death cannot praise thee; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for thy faithfulness” (Is 38:11–18).⁴⁵⁵

Deprived of any relationship with the Divine, the Hell-bound sinner is only a shadow or simulacra of what she is meant to be. According to von Speyr, the sinner projects her sins into an “avatar” while alive. There does not seem to be a final moral valuation attached to such a Hellish avatar while a person is alive because it cannot thwart the possibility of having a relationship with Jesus. Adrienne von Speyr argues that: “[t]he erstwhile sinner is indeed now closer to the Lord, but at the same time, as sinner, he is copied, in negative, in hell. An effigy of him…lies buried and rejected in hell.”⁴⁵⁶

Human sins metaphorically play out in Hell’s “cinema” as each sinner’s avatar has a quasi-reality; they are not simply nothing:

...hell would be what is finally condemned by God; what is left in it is sin, which has been separated from the sinner by the work of the Cross. Because of the energy that man has invested in it, sin is a reality, it is not ‘nothing’. Sins are ‘remitted, separated from us, taken away from us. They are banished to the place where everything God does not want and condemns is hell.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁴ TD, 5, 316.
⁴⁵⁵ TD, 5, 340.
⁴⁵⁷ TD 5, 314. Sin and evil are never seen as a positive even if holographic in
A parallel exists between von Speyr’s theory of sin’s trace in Hell and Balthasar’s understanding of the operation of the image. According to Balthasar, a person invests meaning in an image by giving its insubstantial reality some stake in her existence by conferring a ‘meaning’ or ‘essence’ on images she did not previously possess. In this action the subject sees in an object the ‘signs of things that exist in themselves’. He continues, surmising that:

> The truth is in motion, it presses upon the mind and calls the conscience to decision. This characteristic of truth undermines the legitimacy of any purely symbolic world view—regardless of whether it proselytizes for the kingdom of the soul and its archetypal images in opposition to the ‘arch-enemy’, the spirit, whose stringency and coldness supposedly make it deadly to the soul, or whether the metaphysics of spirit itself leads to the pure acknowledgement of the ‘ciphers of being’, whose ultimate significance is inaccessible to man’s spirit, or else can be attained only in its total ‘failure’.\(^{458}\)

In Creation one is able to share one’s being given its dialectical structuring in esse-esse. Likewise, a sinner equates herself with the projected essence of her sins. Unlike good actions, which strengthen one’s relationships to the Divine and confirm the goodness of one’s created Being, the sins of the sinners are mirrored by the avatar they produce. In this schema, at death one is given eternal life in heaven or a privative, holographic representation of one’s sins in Hell. Sin houses those damned souls who chose a virtual presentation of their sins over an eternal relationship with the living God.

For all the difficulties raised by a virtual understanding of sin it does offer an interesting complement to traditional theories of Divine exemplarity. Concisely stated, the theory of Divine exemplarity surmises that the Divine mind creates substantially

\[^{458}\text{TL 1, 145.}\]
through the sharing of thoughts among the Divine Persons.\(^{459}\) It is our contention that like the theory of Divine exemplarity, Balthasar’s view of sin’s virtual character accounts admirably for being’s apotheosis in Creation’s hierarchic ordering and the disparity and impersonation of true existence in Hell.

It seems likely one reason Balthasar favors a virtual understanding of sin is its consistency with his view of the Christian life as the representation of Christ’s image in one’s own being: “[b]ut we all, with faces unveiled, reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into His very image from glory to glory, as through the Spirit of the Lord,” (2 Cor. 3:18). The Christian represents Christ at the most fundamental depths, guided by the Spirit’s direction:

> the power of Being, which resides in conferring of form. But as long as the form remains true—which is to say living, efficacious form—it is a body animated by the Spirit, a body whose meaning and whose principal of unity are dictated and imposed by the Spirit.\(^{460}\)

Unlike the sinner’s constructive presentation of her being, the Christian form is a living, life-giving form in relationship with the Trinitarian community: “to be a Christian is precisely a form. How could it be otherwise, since being a Christian is a grace, a possibility of existence opened up to us by God’s act of justification; by God-Man’s act of redemption?\(^{461}\)

Hell provides the inverse negative equivalent to the Christian form in its holographic or virtual presentation of the person: the fallen become the penumbra of their


\(^{460}\) *GL* 1, 22.

\(^{461}\) *GL* 1, 28.
former selves. In Hell Jesus is put in front of all these past “effigies” of sins committed in the world.\(^{462}\) Christ’s perfect imaging of the Father refutes evil’s lie about being’s antecedent origins and proper patterning in ataxia. Disordered desires and sin metaphorically “crack” the Divine image within the person, resulting in the virtual representation of Hell.

For Balthasar, a virtual concept of sin offers a way to speak of the human person whose freedom and autonomy are in crisis because of a strained relationship with the Divine. The faithful person is free and fully present in the world by being in proper relationship with the Divine, whereas the sinner functions under a reign of negative entropy that habitually situates her under a rule of redundancy, patterned and cloned. This conceptualization of sin provides for the actual sins of the sinner without calling into question the non-destructible goodness of her created being. Insofar as a being is, it is created good.

Scholars such as Levering have questioned if Balthasar’s understanding of evil and the sins of the fallen leads necessarily to Christ’s “hypostasizing of sin” in his person. These scholars find Balthasar’s theory of sin and evil indefensible when applied to Christ.\(^{463}\) Fundamental to Balthasar’s viewpoint is his insight that Christ’s encounter


\(^{463}\) Levering argues that Balthasar’s Christology puts Christ in a relation to sin in a way that necessitates: (1) projecting a sense of “becoming” in the Divine even though this “becoming” is clothed in theological terms of faith, virtue, etc., (2) creating a medium for perfect charity through divine ignorance and, (3) arguing that Jesus’ interior engagement of sin intimidates the perversion of his will. See: Matthew Levering, Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 130-31.
with sin and evil is possible given his kenotic structure as a person. The \textit{subtractive} operation in kenosis is antagonistic to evil’s privative displacements. It may be unfair to state that Balthasar’s conception of sin requires of Christ some inordinate personalization given he is at pains to speak of Christ’s non-subsistent relationship to evil and sin in his person. Sin and evil are in no way taken to be an entitative attribute of Jesus’ person—they have no “place” to “attach” or “substantiate” in his person.

The eternal hypostatic relations assign the Son’s place in the Trinity and therefore constitute Jesus Christ’s person and his conscious opposition to Hell’s constricting “no-place”. Christ’s mission gives his person its “density” in Creation and Hell. Jesus is “spatially” defined by his relationship to the Father. As Balthasar states: “[f]or whether the Son is in the bosom of the Father or treading the paths of earth, there can be no doubt that the ‘where’ that determines his state of life is the mission, the work, the will of the Father. In this ‘where’, the Son can always be found, for he is himself the epitome of the paternal mission.”\textsuperscript{464}

Without access to Trinitarian supra-movements Jesus’ experience in Hell would be comprised of solitude, ignorance and hence, meaningless, infinitely limiting self-reflection. It is only in relation to Jesus’ eternal home in the Trinity that toponymic metaphors such as “no-place” or “no-where” are sensibly applied to Christ. In light of Jesus’ relation to the Trinity, these metaphors are also apt descriptors of the Divine’s universal presence (1 Cor. 15:28); as the hermetical axiom puts it; “God is an intelligent

\textsuperscript{464} CSL, 188. See also: TL 1, 240. Charles Gore’s theory of Christ’s kenoticism is significant for amplifying the finite dimension of Christ’s consciousness to the English speaking world, see: Charles Gore, \textit{Lux Mundi}, 8th. Edition (London: John Murray, 1890), 354.
sphere, whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.”

The infinite difference and unity that exists between the Divine Persons is an internal relation that gives Christ the interior freedom to reject evil’s insubstantial contingency. In facilitating the Son’s generative relation to the Father, the Spirit guarantees Jesus’ autogenous freedom. The relationship between pure evil and Absolute good in Hell cannot be explained solely in terms of the Father-Son relation or any other “bi-nitarian” or “di-theistic” viewpoint. To do so risks making the Divine will contingent on the two polar termini of Transcendent Father and Hell-captive Son. Any relationship between the Father and Son includes the Spirit who informs and relays their consanguinity. The Spirit’s absolute freedom or groundlessness sustains their living relationship: “...the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom (2 Cor. 3:17). The Spirit’s groundless and unfathomable scope is beyond Hell’s increasingly limiting topography. Doubtless, without the Spirit’s mediation of the Son’s identity, Jesus’ mind would arrest and fall into paralysis at the hand of Hell’s inanimation and contiguous compression.

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466 See: TL 2, 162-63.

467 This inversion of the immanent ordering of the Trinity allows for Christ’s lack of divine attributes as the Spirit gives the Son a voice: the Verbum mentis is the middle always reflected perfectly by the Spirit. Unlike his critics, Balthasar does not see in this Trinitarian inversion or transposition a threat to the Divine identity.

468 See: GL 7, 230-32. Privative relations (non ens in genere) necessarily presume an essentially potential nature (ens in potentia) that reflects in Jesus’ consciousness of his finite and transcendent identity. For the scholastics the principles of contrariety are clarified as a question of privation and habitus.
Jesus’ freedom and *transcendent* relationship to the Father makes a “tear” in Creation, denying it the chance to “turn-in” on itself or to ultimately succumb to evil’s suffocating, uninspired repetition. Hell reduces the condemned person to an immaterial duplicate. Cut off from all being and relationships, the consciousness of the lost refracts against the boundary walls of their own unimaginative, mad proclivities. However, Hell cannot expunge the accused’s self-awareness. Erasing the damned person’s self-cognizance would deny Satan the demonic pleasure that comes with inflicting pain and, hence, he ironically confirms the goodness of consciousness. In order to inflict pain Satan must latently assent to the need for God’s gifting of consciousness to the person.

Christ’s existential and conscious apprehension of Ur-kenotic simplicity advances the ubiety of Divine supra-unity into Hell. Christ’s interior fix on the Father stretches his consciousness beyond Hell’s gravitating incarceration. Hell’s chaotic disorder cannot silence the finite creature Jesus Christ’s “Yes” to the Father. Reflecting on this mystery von Speyr writes: “[h]is fullness does not stand in contradiction to any void, because it is not the fulfillment of a determined quantity or a particular power of comprehension. It is fullness without antithesis.”

While imprisoned in Hell’s disjunctive chaos, Christ’s Divine consciousness penetrates Hell’s uncoiling of God’s designs. Hell’s abasement of fallen souls by an interminable metaphoric division adds up to nothing, zero. Hell’s divisiveness is hostile to the multiplication won by Christ’s annihilation on the Cross, the event that brings forth

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469 *Colossians*, 40. As Levering surmises: “Since God is simple, what he knows is not different from his act of knowing; otherwise he would be composed of the act and its object. Therefore, by his infinite act of knowing, he knows himself as infinite Act. His power of knowing is coextensive with his act of being. He thus comprehends himself fully as infinite,” see: *Levering*, 87. See also: *S. Th.* I, q. 14, a.3 and a. 4.
the fruitful and infinite unity in multiplicity of the new heaven and earth (1/GOD).\textsuperscript{470} Indeed, Christ’s kenotic effulgence and Passion bring to Hell’s nothingness a creative presence. The redemptive grace Christ won echoes back from Hell throughout Creation.\textsuperscript{471}

Balthasar’s position seems to be that Jesus has the power to act in Hell because evil cannot limit Christ given the Trinitarian provenance of Christ’s interior experience of the Father’s love.\textsuperscript{472} Simply put, Balthasar believes that it can be said of Christ, like of all lovers, that there can be much mystery but in this it is always “light”. In love is endless depth, but no darkness at all.\textsuperscript{473} The distance between the Divine Persons is simultaneously infinite and negligible. The infinite separation that exists between the Trinity and Jesus while in Hell does not decimate their perfect heno-triadic union in single Divine essence (ONE\textsuperscript{3}). The “distances” between the Divine Persons and their inseparable concord supplies Jesus with the dramatic space to bring the message of redemption to the lost and aphotic. The Spirit guarantees that a synclastic movement exists between the Father and Jesus’ consciousness and where his mission takes him.\textsuperscript{474}

\textsuperscript{470} This complex statement of faith demands more attention than can be offered here, however significant works have already set direction to a study that focuses on Balthasar’s explorations, see: J. A. MacCulloch, \textit{The Harrowing of Hell} (Edinburgh, T. and T. Clark, 1930), 318-19, \textit{TD} 5, 94 and Dionysius, \textit{Div. Nom.}, VII, 3, (PL) 872A. See also: “He is not one of the things that are and he cannot be known in any of them. He is all things in all things and he is no thing among things. He is known to all from all things and he is known to one from anything,” Pseudo-Dionysius. \textit{The Complete Works}, (trans.) Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem, (preface) Rene Roques, (intro.) Jaroslav Pelikan, Jean Leclercq and Farolfried Froehlich. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1987), 109. The difference existing between Divine Nothingness and Hell’s nothingness is implied in the use of capital letter “N”.

\textsuperscript{471} \textit{TL} 1, 244-48.

\textsuperscript{472} See: \textit{GL} 7, 229-230.

\textsuperscript{473} See: \textit{MP}, 81.

\textsuperscript{474} See: \textit{TD} 3, 198.
Jesus’ conscious habitation of the Trinitarian community bestows the means to *transcend* and overcome evil’s attempt to “vampire” Godself’s eternal light.\(^475\) Balthasar purports that Jesus maintains a life-giving relationship with the Divine because sin never lessens his obedience to the Father:

> The light that shines in the incomprehensible darkness understands itself to be no longer within the darkness. But that it still shines at all is the result of his indissoluble obedience to the fatherly sun. It gives itself over to the Father’s intangible shaping hands.\(^476\)

Christ’s person, thoughts and mission bring Divine luminescence into Hell’s irrational discordance. Christ’s preaching and presence in Hell push “language” beyond its normal limits by communicating meaning and relation in the realm of evil, silence, and metaphysical amphibology. Christ’s earthly existence and descent into Hell implies a judgment against all contradiction. Developing the insights of Scotus Eriugena and Nicholas Cusanus, Balthasar writes that:

> As God, Jesus is the ‘*aequitas essendi omnia*’ [the equality of being all things]; if God takes on human form in him, then for this very reason he can be *omnia in contractionem* [all thing in contradiction], so that ‘all fullness can dwell’ in him. In him the *coincidentia oppositorum* [coincidence of opposites] is realized, since on the Cross he descends into the uttermost humiliation without losing divine majesty.\(^477\)

Coinciding with the segregation caused by Jesus’ presence, this kerygmatic event also saturates Jesus’ conscious state (1 Pet. 3:18) and hence testifies to his Trinitarian supra-unity: “the content of preaching must be closing of the hiatus itself, the salvific

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\(^{475}\) See: *TD* 4, 362.

\(^{476}\) *Life out of Death*, 29.

healing by God of man who in the death of sin lay irretrievably torn open and apart."\(^{478}\)

Creation is recreated and Hell defeated in Christ (Jn. 17:30).

(9) The Resurrection

Participating in Christ’s Resurrection is possible because Christ not only makes death impotent, but also, takes into his person the full horror of death and Hell. With the keys of death and Hades, Christ rises: “…from the dead, Christ leaves behind him Hades, that is, the state in which humanity is cut off from access to God. But, by virtue of his deepest Trinitarian experience, he takes ‘hell’ with him, as the expression of his power to dispose, as judge, the everlasting salvation or the everlasting loss of man.”\(^{479}\) With his Resurrection Jesus becomes the head of the eschatological family (Rom. 8:29).\(^{480}\) Jesus sends the Spirit into the universe to share what his Passion has won (Rom. 3:22-24). In this inversion or reversal of order (Umkehrung) between Jesus and the Spirit, the Spirit becomes the living instrument (Rom. 8:11) by which the faithful are offered a share in the Resurrection (1 Tim. 3:16).

Christ kenotically transmogrifies Creation, defeats evil and offers a way to destroy the unwelcomed truth of death:

Life is only genuinely alive insofar as it…grows beyond itself, lets go of itself. It

\(^{478}\) MP, 68.

\(^{479}\) MP, 177. The resurrection is an event without analogy—it is a meta-historical event. On the eschatological and liturgical significance of these events see: Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute: Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man* (trans.) Mark Rafetey-Skehan. New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2004), 57-61.

\(^{480}\) See: TL 3, 18. On the theme of image in Hell, see: “In death Christ destroys the gates of brass (portas aereas confringit) demolishes the bars of iron (vectes ferreos conterit)…redeems him whom he created after his image, returns to him the sweetness of paradise,” Hilary, *On Psalm* 138, 25 (PL 9), 805 C.
is rich only insofar as it can be poor, insofar as it loves...Death will not allow itself to be pushed to the very end of life; it belongs right at the center, not in mere knowledge, but in action. Death characterizes our breakthrough into a life that is ever greater. It is through this positive death that we amass life.\footnote{TD 5, 84.}

From the perspective of faith we can claim that with Christ’s Resurrection, the entropy of death and evil are rewritten in his person.\footnote{See: GL 5, 623.} The Father’s love transforms all created negativity of dissipating difference by the soteriological measure of Jesus’ journey from kenotic obedience (\textit{status exinanitionis}) to the resurrected state of all mighty Son (\textit{status exaltationis}).\footnote{See: \textit{Col.} 1:16, \textit{Rom.} 8:19-25, \textit{Eph.} 1: 10, 1 \textit{Cor.} 3:15, \textit{TD} 3, 190 and 521.} Obedient to the example of Christ, our experience of immanence, alterity and death are “annihilated” as the faithful: “...we are treated as dying and behold we live” (\textit{2 Cor.} 6:9).\footnote{See also: \textit{Rom.} 8:9-10: “Christ lives in me,” \textit{Jn.} 11:25-26, 12:31 and \textit{TD} 4, 386.}

Christ’s obedience to the Father resolves the polarities of Jesus’ finite nature and spirit: “[i]n Christ (who rises not only as spirit but also as nature) eternal love and loyalty become possible without the laws of the physical and mortal heart condemning this love as imagination and falsehood.”\footnote{\textit{Man in History}, 65.} Christ’s obedience opens his being to the Father’s gift of eternal life. Balthasar reasons: “it belongs no less to the completion of his obedience that he lets it be ‘granted’ him by the Father to ‘have life in himself’ (\textit{Jn.} 5:26).”\footnote{\textit{MP}, 207.}

Ur-kenosis mysteriously produces more even when faced with death, sin, evil and Hell. Christ’s solitary death remains directed by the Father as: “[t]his losing of self together and in each other cannot, however, be called death (or ‘emptiness’,}
‘nothingness’); rather it is the model and expression of greatest vitality.” And Balthasar further elucidates stating that: “experience of distance from God, which in him constitutes the archetypal fides, is as such the expression of God’s experience of himself within the Trinity in the distance of distinction between Person and Person.” Ur-kensosis eternal knew that the Son would turn evil and death on their “heads”. As Balthasar states: “[h]is mission runs counter to the philosophical doctrine of dying. It is not a matter of detaching oneself from transitory things in order to escape into an actual or imaginary eternity, rather it is a matter of conversely allowing the seeds of eternity to be sown in the soil of the world and having the kingdom of God burst forth in this soil.” It must be remembered, Balthasar claims that: “Hell is the product of the Redemption.”

Christ’s mission gives the final answer to death and evil (Heb. 2:14), thereby liberating the Trinitarian isogenesis (Gen. 1:26-8) as the gifted end of each person. The reclamation of Creation and the offer made possible by Christ’s Passion is for Balthasar less a juridical act and more a propitious evangelical proposition that converts created being back to what it was meant to be. The Resurrection actualizes the teleological aim of a person’s natural transcendent relations with the Divine: “All things came to be in him, and without him, nothing came to be. And what came to be was life” (Jn. 1:3-4).

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488 GL 1, 328.
489 Life Out of Death, 26-27. See also: 2 Cor. 4.4, 5:21, 8:9, Rev. 9:3, 10, 13:5, 11-5, 16:9, Jn. 19:11 and Eph. 6:12.
490 MP, 174.
Christ’s redemptive act calls every being to fulfill the promise of her own innate capacities (Rom. 4:17) because we are all called to stretch into eternal life: “[r]edemption is not from finitude but is rather an assumption of the finite (and thus of the other) into the infinite, which must have within itself, in order to be the life of love, the Other as such (Word, Son) and that which is united with the One (Spirit).”491 The universal significance of Christ’s Incarnation and Resurrection never nullifies individual freedom or human nature. As Athanasius sums up this mystery: “He was made man so that man might be made God.”492

Christ’s Resurrection gives us the hope that the forgiveness of sins is a reality and our deaths reversible (Phil. 1:20). We become a living “happening”, that is, God’s “other” or image, radiated in and by Divine love: “the resurrection of created being that is hallowed out, burnt out, through the glory of the incomparable God, but it is this precisely as a final emphasizing of nature: insofar as it is Resurrection in the flesh, to that extent do a new heaven and a new earth arise, and these signify the completing of nature just inasmuch as they stand forth distinct from God.”493 This for Balthasar speaks to the core meaning of the Christian experience: “Christianity overcomes such uncertainty by its central assertion that God, in order to hold to the name love, wills to be in himself gift and fruitfulness. It is his sovereign will to accord space within his unity to the ‘other’.494

Jesus Christ brings his disciples—and through the Spirit, a multitude of

491 E, 38.
492 See: Athanasius, De Incarnatione, 54, 3, NPNF, 65.
494 E, 35.
humanity—to the Father (Jn. 20:22).\(^{495}\) Christ takes the sting out of all other deaths by making room in his person for the faithful.\(^{496}\) Divine beatitude expedites Christ’s solidarity with us, for as Paul preaches: “[n]one of us lives to himself and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord.” (Rom. 14:7-8a). And again: “God chose us to win salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that, alive or dead, we should still live united to him” (1 Thess. 5: 9-10).

The Church universalizes Christ’s death: “[a]s man, he [Christ] allowed himself to fall into the sleep of death so that, as God, he might derive from this death the mystery of fruitfulness, by which he would create for himself his Bride, the Church”.\(^{497}\) The Church de-privatizes Christ’s death, bringing to pass the means for all to learn of the afterlife. As Balthasar states: “Christ came as the Redeemer of [humanity], but he did not merely remit their guilt; he came to offer the fullness of all divine goods—summed up as our ‘adoption as sons’—which the Father gives (automatically, as it were) when surrendering his only Son for our sake. Since he has done this, ‘will he not also give us all things with him?’ (Rom. 8:32), far beyond the grace given to the first human beings?”\(^{498}\) An “uncanny” alienation occurs for the believer when the Spirit tenders her a place in the Trinity: “[t]he fact that the Son returns to the Father richer than when he departed, the fact that the Trinity is more perfected in love after the Incarnation than

\(^{495}\) See also: GL 1, 618, TD 4, 364 and TD 3, 339-41.

\(^{496}\) See: TL 1, 200, Jn. 2:19-22, 3:14 and 7:39. On Balthasar’s foundational sources, see: S. Th. II-III, q.48, a.4.

\(^{497}\) CSL, 233.

\(^{498}\) See: TD 3, 254. This unrepeatable act becomes universally pervasive for: “[I]nsofar as Jesus does what we cannot do his actions are primarily exclusive, insofar as on the Cross he vouches for us in God’s presence—for us effectively—his actions become inclusive,” TD 4, 351. On participating in Christ’s actions, see also: TD 3, 395-99 and Three-Fold Garland, 91.
before, has its meaning and its foundation in God himself, who is not rigid unity but a
unity that comes together ever anew in love, an eternal intensification in eternal rest.  
With his Resurrection a doxastic life becomes possible centered on Christ.

While Balthasar’s views concerning Christ’s sojourn into Hell and his explication of sin and evil are consistent and coherent, it will be left to the larger community to decide whether Balthasar’s soteriology and theodicy demands a greater degree of tolerance and imagination than is possible for an orthodox reading of the Tradition.


\footnote{TD 5, 57. See also: Threefold Garland, 110, MP, 138 and GL 5, 625-28. The adjective uncanny is employed here as a way to metaphorically affirm that while Christ’s communalizing of his death takes place in his personal being it includes the relational aspects of his identity.}
Part II. Postmodern Developments

Chapter Four: Introduction

Having set out a speculative reading of Hans Urs von Balthasar’s theory of Urkenosis in the first three Chapters we now turn to an interpretation of the “metaphysical” principles of Alain Badiou’s mathematically based ontology. Such a project risks what the mathematician Gottlob Frege warns of, namely that Badiou be numbered among those who: “have managed to mistake numerals for numbers, names for things named, and mere devices of arithmetic for its proper subject-matter. Such experiences teach us how necessary it is to demand the highest exactness in manner of speech and writing.”

Alain Badiou, noted French philosopher, dramatist, political theoretician and postmodern critic, proposes that mathematics provides the best explanation for a being’s entitative attributes. Mathematics provides Badiou with a language to attempt to explain reality

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501 Badiou rejects the term metaphysical as it treats being at the level of “empty generality”, see: Alain Badiou, Briefings on Existence: A Short Treatise on Transitory Ontology, trans. Norman Madarasz (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 34. Hereafter cited as: Briefings on Existence. Badiou argues that the philosophical localizes and specifies the metaphysical: “it is true that philosophy exposes the category of truth to the unifying, metaphysical power of the One. And it is no less true that philosophy exposes this power to the subtractive defection of mathematics. This is why every singular philosophy is less of an actualization of its metaphysical destiny than it is an endeavor, under the mathematical condition, to be subtracted from it,” ibid., 25.


503 Mathematics, Mark Steiner claims, models reality by adapting one of two approaches to analogy: (1) the Pythagorean Analogy, which establishes a bridge between reality and mathematical models without reference to an existing physical system—here logical consistency is of primary importance, and (2) a Formal system of analogy which looks to the syntactic structure of mathematical symbolism to come to some conceptual sense of physical structure or nature. See: Mark Steiner, The Applicability of Mathematics
as a tautologically self-organizing and self-designed system.\textsuperscript{504} Peter Osbourne questions whether Badiou’s mathematical ontology achieves its given end as his: “[o]ntology is severed from all phenomenological relations to objects…only because Badiou decided to sever it, in advance. Then he has the awkward task of restoring the connection between his set-theoretical mathematical entities, philosophically received ontological concepts (like nature and history) and the world.”\textsuperscript{505} On the surface Badiou seems to share little with Balthasar. Unlike Badiou, Balthasar is a man of faith and a theologian who was famously critical of reducing being and its highest expression in self-gifting to formal systems:

Modern rationalism, attempting to narrow the image of truth to a supposedly isolable core of pure theory, has exiled the good and the beautiful from the domain of the rationally verifiable, relegating them to arbitrary subjectivity or to a world of private belief and personal taste. As a result, the picture of being, the unified view of the world, is torn to shreds, so that any real conversation about truth becomes impossible. Discourse remains at the level of the generically accessible, hence ultimately trivial, while the deepest questions of truth, which need decision and taste even to be seen, are buried under the silence of a false modesty. If truth lacks decision, then decision, the personal decision that determines one’s view of the world lacks truth.\textsuperscript{506}

According to Balthasar, the human person cannot be ‘explained’ in his ‘totality’ by formal processes.\textsuperscript{507}


\textsuperscript{504} For a similar critical approach see: Christopher Michael Langan, \textit{A Cognitive-Theoretic Model of the Universe: A New Kind of Reality Theory}, http://main.megafoundation.org/Langan_CTMU_092902.pdf, hereafter cited as \textit{CTMU}.

\textsuperscript{505} Peter Osbourne, “Neo-Classic. Alain Badiou’s Being and Event,” in \textit{Radical Philosophy 142} (2007), 24

\textsuperscript{506} \textit{TL} 1, 29-30.

\textsuperscript{507} See: \textit{GL} 1, 26.
Badiou is an avowed atheist and Maoist who founds his metaphysics on the most formal of systems, that of mathematics. Peter Hallward argues that Badiou’s mathematical ontology follows from three fundamental preferences: (1) the decision to favor numbers over physical beings, (2) place the multiple over the one and, (3) reject a potential infinity for actual infinity. Each of these propositions reinforces Badiou’s underlining belief that mathematics communicates the deepest meaning of being: “[t]he thesis that I support does not in any way declare that being is mathematical, which is to say composed of mathematical objectives. It is not a thesis about the world but about discourse. It affirms that mathematics, throughout the entirety of its historical becoming, pronounces of what is expressible being qua being.” For Badiou, infinity, multiplicity and the algebraic become privileged ways by which being discloses itself. Badiou’s work is of an interest to our purposes because his philosophy includes profound insights concerning the nature of the transcendent, immanence, relationships and differences that is, the fundamental themes that put across the nature of kenosis for Balthasar. Badiou’s method can lead to some ambiguity for the mathematically inclined and non-mathematician alike. However, Badiou is confident in his approach claiming that: “[m]athematics provides philosophy with a weapon, a fearsome machine of thought, a

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508 See: Peter Hallward, Badiou: A Subject to Truth (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 75. Hereafter cited as A Subject to Truth.
509 Alain Badiou, Being and Event, (trans.) Oliver Feltham (New York: Continuum, 2010), 8. Hereafter cited as: Being and Event.
510 It is far to state that many mathematicians would claim that Badiou does not understand the mathematical concepts he employs, see: Ricardo L. Nirenberg and David Nirenberg, “Badiou’s Number: A Critique of Mathematics as Ontology” Critical Inquiry 37 (Summer 2011): 585. See also: John Mullarkey, Post-Continental Philosophy: An Outline (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 86-87. Hereafter cited as: Post-Continental Philosophy. See also: Being and Event, 8 where Badiou states explicitly that is he is not making some simple equation between being and mathematics.
catapult aimed at the bastions of ignorance, superstition and mental servitude.”  

Badiou situates his work in the post-humanistic and secular age and sees in this the freeing of the human person. Badiou indicates his aims rhetorically, by asking: “[w]hat does ‘humanity’ signify in a non-humanist sense? The term cannot be founded by any objective predicative trait, which would be idealist or biologicist (and, in any case, irrelevant). By ‘humanity,’ I understand that which provides the support for procedures, or truth procedures…” Badiou argues that his understanding of truth’s continual manifestation for the subject is congruent with Saint Paul’s own theory.

Presumably, Saint Paul’s faith in the Transcendent and Jesus Christ’s divinity does not make his ideas necessarily incompatible with the thrust of Badiou’s philosophy. It seems accurate to say that Saint Paul believed that by participating in

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514 Jean-Jacques Lecercle perceives in Badiou’s interpretation of Saint Paul an underlining religious vision. Lecercle claims: “There is not only an ontology, there appears to be a theology in Badiou. For what is more “eventual” in his sense than the Resurrection? Does it not puncture the old situation, and change it for the good? Is it not undatable in terms of its encyclopedia? Does it not engineer encounters, provoke conversion? Is not faithfulness close to faith, as the French “fidélité” is close to “les fidèles”? (Badiou claims the word is borrowed from the category of love, but this smacks of Freudian denial.) Cannot every single term of his system of concepts be translated into religious terms, so that we shall have no difficulty in finding equivalents in Badiouese for terms like “conversion”, “grace,” “the elect”, and so on? Does not he himself recognize this by hailing St Paul as the archetypal figure of the subject of a process of truth?” See: Jean-Jacques Lecercle, “Cantor, Lacan, Mao, Beckett, même combat,” Radical Philosophy 93 (1999): 8. Peter Hallward also sees in Badiou’s “anti-philosophy” a nascent theological project as: “[t]he difference between religion and antiphilosophy is slight. Anti-philosophy is a rigorous and quasi-systematic extrapolation from an
the grace made available by Christ’s redemptive event one could begin to “\textit{subtract}” or distance themselves from the disorder sin wages against individual beings and Creation.\footnote{As Balthasar asks: “[h]ow can a method that proceeds by integrating points of view move toward a unique revelation that is independent of the event of creation?,” \textit{E}, 17.} An encounter with Jesus Christ offers the person of faith a radical event that allows one to experience an irruption of Transcendent truth and love in one’s life.

Badiou insists that the “grace” of truth’s disclosure is always a revolutionary act, or a “military peregrination” for Saint Paul.\footnote{Alain Badiou, \textit{Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism}, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), 19. Hereafter cited as \textit{The Foundation of Universalism}. See also: Ibid., 2 and 35 where Badiou distinguishes the work of Saint Paul and Marcion, given that for the former rupture between Christians and Jews was conceptual, whereas for the latter, the split was an ontological in nature. See also: \textit{Theology and Anti-Theology}, 140-43.} Consequently Badiou sees truth as working against all that attempts to arrest it in conventional representations.\footnote{The \textit{Foundation of Universalism}, 100. Badiou’s commitment to the overthrowing of the conventional is, Peter Hallward reminds us, a mathematical and not a religious act for Badiou, see: \textit{A Subject to Truth}, 23.} To do otherwise he suggests that the contingent imprisons what must remain dynamic in being and truth. Simon Critchley sees in Badiou’s use of Saint Paul reason to suggest that religion has a more expansive role in Badiou’s system than is usually recognized: “one might want to go further and claim that precisely because of the exemplary way in which the logic of the event plays itself out in relation to Paul, namely, that Paul’s notion of grace shows most clearly the subjectivity of the event, religion is perhaps the paradigm of essentially religious \textit{parti pris}. Antiphilosophy is religion in philosophical guise, argued on philosophical terrain,” \textit{A Subject to Truth}, 20. Likewise, the scholar Hollis Phelps rightly argues that Badiou does not remove himself fully from a theological context for: “Badiou’s use of theological language, in this sense, implicates him formally in the discourse of theology,” Hollis Phelps, \textit{Alain Badiou: Between Theology and Anti-Theology} (Durham: Acumen Press, 2013), 12. Hereafter cited as: \textit{Theology and Anti-Theology}.}
ethical action, a paradigm upon which the other four conditions [e.g. art, science, politics
and love] should be modeled. These conditions pattern truth, that is, offer a
paradigmatic estimation of truth’s universality as:

Paradigms obey not the logic of the metaphorical transfer of meaning but the
analogue logic of the example. Here we are not dealing with a signifier that is
extended to designate heterogeneous phenomena by virtue of the same semantic
structure; more akin to allegory than to metaphor, the paradigm is the singular
case that is isolated from its context only insofar as, by exhibiting its own
singularity, it makes intelligible a new ensemble, whose homogeneity it itself
constitutes.

Badiou argues that truth categorically reveals itself for the subject in the four
exclusive areas of art, science, politics and love. Truth has to be de-sutured from these
four conditions or paradigms in order to have some authority or objective appraisal over
these domains. Therefore, the means by which the subject derives truth seems to
equivocate the transcendental, Transcendent and the immanent. Here Badiou seems to be
aligned with Laruelle’s own approach, who writes that: “[t]he criterion of science or of
truth, if it is radically transcendental or immanent, annuls itself positively as criterion
manifests itself (to) itself as ‘immediate givens.” However, where other approaches to
the truth lead to general knowledge and its classification in law or accepted mores,

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518 Theology and Anti-Theology, 224. Translations altered.
519 Giorgio Agamben, The Signature of All Things: On Method (trans.) Luca
D’Isanto and Kevin Attell (New York: Zone Books, 2009), 18. See also: “that the
paradigm does not function as a part with respect to the whole, nor as a whole with
respect to the part, but as a part with respect to the part if both are under the same but one
is better known than the other,” Aristotle, Prior Analytics, 69a13-15.
520 Badiou takes these four approaches to subjective truth as archetypal as they
unambiguously support the principle of non-contradiction. Furthermore, these four areas
are compatible with being’s proposed multiplicity and hence the subject’s ongoing
capacity to enter into relationships. In this way, a subject can grasp each original
resurrection or reactivation of truth’s disclosure of another being by “subtracting” from
beings’ earlier appearances and representations.
521 Philosophy of Difference, 204.
Badiou maintains that these four conditions precipitate supplementary truths for the subject.\(^{522}\)

Badiou is not an insensitive reader of theology as evident in his work on Saint Paul. Although Badiou believes Saint Paul’s work and writings are based on a fable, namely that of the crucified Christ’s resurrection, he still finds in Saint Paul’s corpus a constructive dialogue partner for his own project of providing a new theory of the subject, truth’s disclosure in events and a way to dramatically balance the apparent contradiction of contingency and freedom in the world. Where theologians have traditionally seen Transcendence and monotheism as linked, Badiou claims that the Transcendent reduces to a finite experience and this demands in turn the mathematical depiction of Transcendence as immanent and universal (e.g., as *transcendent*).\(^{523}\)

Bruno Bosteels summarizes Badiou’s larger plan as follows:

> There is a very tenacious and profound link between the disentanglement of mathematics and philosophy and the preservation, in the inverted or diverted form of finitude, of a non-appropriable or unnamable horizon of immortal divinity…only by relating infinity back to a neutral banality, by inscribing eternity in the matheme alone, by simultaneously abandoning historicism and finitude does it become possible to think within a radically deconsecrated

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\(^{522}\) *Being and Event*, 340.

\(^{523}\) For Balthasar *transcendence* connotes a finite experience of the Transcendent and for Badiou the experience of a non-existing Transcendence or One. Moreover, for Balthasar the *transcendental* sets a finite being in cognitive relationship with the actual eternal Transcendent, in Badiou’s estimations the transcendental refers to a finite experience of a historically determined experience of a non-existing One. As Badiou notes: “[t]he word ‘transcendental’ is warranted here because it encapsulates my recasting, with respect to Being and Event, of the primitive notion of ‘situation’”, see: Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, (trans.) Alberto Toscano (New York: Continuum, 2009), 99. Hereafter cited as: *Logics of Worlds*. We highlight this interpretation of Badiou’s use of the concepts of transcendent and transcendental by employing a negation symbol, thus: -(*t*)ranscendent and –transcendental. Consequently, only an analogous sense can be made between Badiou and Balthasar’s use of the concepts of the transcendence and transcendental.
Badiou believes that the human person is metaphysically prepared to be consciously open to the truth. The discovery of truth is always a possibility for the subject given her relationship to being and being’s inseparable relationship to truth. As Badiou notes:

The crucial problem is truth. Once there is intuitive thinking (and the intelligibility of the axioms records that fact), one can give meaning to the question of the truth or falsity” of propositions authorized by this thinking. This sense stems precisely from the fact that the thinkable, in terms of the Idea, necessarily touches upon Being. “Truth” is never but the name by which Being and thought match up in a single process.

Paradoxically, truth expresses in the statistical and paradigmatic that demands the subject must constantly readjust how she views the world. Badiou brings out this cycle stating that: “[a] truth, in a first sense, is part of the world, because it is a set of consequences of the event in the world, and not outside. But in a second sense, we can say that a truth is like a negation of the world, because the event itself is subtracted from the rational or conventional laws of the world.” Badiou’s methodology is arranged to overthrow what might be labeled the ‘imperial given’. Badiou wages a philosophical war against the conventional and reductive. As Justin Clemens explains: “praxis of the conditions places them at the limits of law and logic, in the realm of the undecidable (regarding which a necessarily lawless decision must be made) and about the indiscernible (whereby two things that presently appear indistinguishable may turn out to be distinguishable.

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525 Briefings on Existence, 93.
according to new criteria generated in the course of the process itself).”

A philosophical decision is taken by Badiou to be “lawless” as it is seen to eliminate the “non-positional identity” of a being’s pre-existing identity at a given moment or ‘identity-in-the-instance: “[u]nder the effect of the law, thought disintegrates into powerlessness and endless cognition, because the subject (the dead Self) is disconnected from a limitless power: that of desire’s living automation.” The identity of a being accedes to the last positive affirmation in the world for the subject. The subject’s appraisal of another being or “other” is known only in its last transcendent or immanent content. Similarly, for Laruelle, the experience of alterity or the “Other” prohibits the existence of a hierarchy of Being or any final “semi-dialectization of a being’s appearance or reversal under the name of difféance.”

Being’s liaison with the truth is strengthened, Badiou argues, given a subject’s adroitness in entering into relations that are differential or subtractive to one’s preexisting correspondences: “[t]he undecidable is that which subtracts itself from a supposedly exhaustive classification of statements, realized according to the values ascribed to them by a norm. I am unable to decide any assignable value for this statement, in spite of the fact that the norm of assignation exists only on the assumption of its complete efficacy.” The subtraction of one’s subjective review or—one might say—opinion of being is only possible given the presumption that a distance exists within and between

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527 See: Key Concepts, 32.
528 Universalism, 83.
530 See: Theoretical Writings, 104. In the following chapter we will re-address these ontological capacities with Balthasar’s understanding of being as kenotic.
beings. A subject’s conscious possession of being is seamless because she can mentally \textit{subtract} all inconsistent representations from what poses as unchanging truth in the world.\footnote{Badiou is quick to add that the truth’s subversive qualities externalizes in the subject’s own conscious hold on truth. This characteristic of a being’s relationship to truth must not be the sole criteria for one’s decisions. Epistemological “perversion”, Badiou warns, results when one forgets that truth and being interpenetrate. Badiou further adds that this stand leads to the postmodern tendency to claim that truth functions to highlight the differential at the cost of actual being. Such eviscerations of the truth unleash those “catastrophic pronouncements” of postmodernity based solely on the differential at exclusion of the truth that being is an actual and substantial multiplicity. Failing to keep the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of truth and being in synchronization results, Badiou assures us, in a “barbaric” faith. See: Maria Papastephanou, ‘The Philosopher, the Sophist, the Undercurrent and Alain Badiou’, \textit{Speculations}, Vol. 2 (2010): 49-85.} A subject’s \textit{subtractive} or—one might say—analytical capacities give her a way to understand the truth’s inevitable dawn in every relational difference and being in the world. Ultimately, truth actualizes as love for love. As Badiou states, this “leads to the idea that you can experience the world from the perspective of difference.”\footnote{Alain Badiou, \textit{In Praise of Love} (with Nicolas Truong and trans. Peter Bush), (Paris: Flammarion S.A., 2012), 17. Hereafter cited as \textit{Praise}.}

It is my contention that there are yet unexplained points of intersection concerning Badiou and Balthasar’s employment of these themes in their respective metaphysical systems. After setting out the basis for Badiou’s theory of being we will show how this applies to his understanding of the subject, subject-object relationships and the human person’s relationship to truth and love.\footnote{For Badiou truth is generated within the subject as she co-generates the truth in an event. In this way knowledge for Badiou exists outside of empirical and transcendental norms, that is the analytic or phenomenological approach.}

The chapter will be divided into nine parts that detail Badiou’s use of the themes of: (1) Mathematical Ontology, (2) Multiplicity, (3) The Count as One, (4) Set Theory, (5) Mathematical Subtraction, Multiplicity and Difference, (6) The Empty Set and
Ontological Void, (7) Infinity, (8) Zermelo-Fraenkel Axiomatic Theory (with special attention given to Badiou’s perceived use of the, (a.) Axiom of Extensionality, (b.) Axiom of Separation, (c.) Power Set Axiom, (d.) Axiom of Foundation, (e.) Axiom of Choice). In part two we turn to how Badiou’s mathematical ontology is present in the world by exploring the themes of (9) Ontology and Topology, (10) Site and Event and (11) Truth and Love.\(^5\)

Under the heading *Mathematical Ontology* Badiou’s preference for a numeric basis for his metaphysics will be explored.\(^5\) Badiou’s “Pythagorization” of being argues that no “primordial unity” or “all-inclusive total multiple” exists that definitely encompasses being as it remains for Badiou a multiplicity of multiplicity for: “it is historically pronounced that every ‘object’ is reducible to a pure multiplicity, itself built on the unpresentation of the void: the part called set theory.”\(^6\) The void functions analogously to the way theologians such as Nyssa looked to the concept of space. Of the void, Badiou summarizes: “[i]t is simply what is not there, but what is necessary for anything to be there.”\(^7\) The void is not anterior to being but like space can be a principle of being without exhausting its universal presence.\(^8\) For Nyssa, space is seen as a “receptacle” for all material being.\(^9\) Being’s relationship to space is determined by Creation’s preexisting relationship to the Divine who: “has circumscribed each being

\(^5\) See: *Appendix One*.
\(^6\) See: *Being and Event*, 4.
\(^8\) *Being and Event*, 50.
\(^9\) If this reading is correct, caution may be necessary in classifying Badiou as a meontologist, see: *Continental Philosophy*, 16.
\(^9\) See: *CE.*, I, II, (PG) 365 D. See also: ibid., 9, 11, (PG) 801 D.
within its own proper dimensions, by giving it a suitable rhythm as a limit, so to speak, so that it may be included in the rightful harmony of the universe." For Badiou, any attempt to center reality is acted against by the void’s insistent besieging of a being’s appearance. As the void presents to being in a non-material manner, Badiou’s theory seems to necessitate the operation of a virtual conception of the mathematical. In this section we will explain how mathematics is to Badiou’s mind the best conceptual system for representing being and its operations. Mathematics, Badiou claims, is a: “singular site of thinking, whose events and procedures must be retraced from within the philosophy act.”

Under the heading *Multiplicity* we outline two of Badiou’s fundamental tenets concerning being, namely that being is actual and multiple. The adicity or numeration of being is potentially unlimited as Badiou writes: “[i]n sum: the multiple is the regime of presentation; the one, in respect to presentation, is an operational result; being is what presents (itself). On this basis, being is neither one (because only presentation itself is pertinent to the count-as-one), nor multiple (because the multiple is *solely* the regime of presentation).” Being is seen as multiple given its preexisting internal relationship

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540 Ibid., 9; II, (PG) 820C.
541 Laruelle is more explicit about how the virtual has an unavoidable role in one’s understanding of being, even if it is predicated as a philosophical method, see: *Philosophy of Difference*, 205.
542 *Logics of Worlds*, 244. We will detail the role site and event play in Badiou’s system under the sub-heading *Site and Event.*
543 Badiou does not define a multiple as to do such would introduce a property or identity that would undermine its inherent predication in multiplicity. See: *Being and Event*, 29, 44-45 and 95-103. Briefly stated, Balthasar believes being is composite given its grounding in essence-esse, relationship, finitude and the ability to enter into accidental and non-inhering correspondences. Therefore, Balthasar and Badiou both advocate the fundamental multiplicity and excessiveness of actual being.
544 *Being and Event*, 24. By the term “count-as-one” we return to the conception
with the “void” and the “One”.\textsuperscript{545} Where the void is taken to be “existing”, the One is taken to be a notional construct that can never be held to be real and actual for Badiou.\textsuperscript{546} The One must be taken as nominal as the void is singular and unique.\textsuperscript{547} The One is taken by Badiou as a “structural retroaction” that is, a trace of the count that reflects in the multiplicity of being and the void for “the name of the void is a pure proper name, which indicates itself, which does not bestow any index of difference within what it refers to, and which auto-declares itself in the form of the multiple, despite there being nothing which is numbered by it.”\textsuperscript{548} The proliferation and circularity of a being whose transcendency remains in lateral relationship to the void and non-existing One is paradoxical: “[w]ithin the framework of ontology, however, the circularity can be undone, and deployed as hierarchy and stratification. This, moreover, is one of the most

\textsuperscript{545} The void is never present without being, see: \textit{Being and Event}, 188.

\textsuperscript{546} Being is taken to be in a subtractive relationship to other beings. Badiou looks to Kant for his own conceptualization of the void. Kant’s “refusal to concede anything to the aesthetic prestige of the ontologies of presence,” see: \textit{Being and Event}, 140. Kant’s “subtractive” radicality translates under Badiou’s genus into a receptive epistemic subject and an object that is not holographic but is in a sense nothing, see: \textit{Being and Event}, 139. Badiou argues that all beings are in a fundamental relationship to the void. The void is taken as a dialectical constant for being. In this way, the void is a catch-all for all that works fundamentally against being, for example: nothingness, non-being, death, sin, etc. Cosmologically the void serves a similar philosophical function as \textit{diastema} does in Balthasar’s work. For Balthasar the space between Creation and created is an inviolable boundary for finite being, whereas the void for Badiou is a point that finite being and thought cannot bridge.

\textsuperscript{547} See: \textit{Being and Event}, 66-67.

\textsuperscript{548} \textit{Being and Event}, 59. See also: Ibid., 90. Paradoxically the void is taken a priori as existing whereas being for Badiou does not seem to address or evoke the question: ‘What is it to exist’? See: \textit{FG}, 117.
profound characteristics of this region of thought; it always stratifies successive constructions starting from the point of the void.”

In *The Count as One*, we set out why Badiou holds that being is multiple, namely he proposes that being is in an algebraic relationship with a mythical “One”. Badiou’s One shares many of the characteristics of Balthasar’s theological account of the Divine Transcendent. There are, however, at least two points that separate the two thinkers. For Badiou the One does not exist beyond its function as a mental construction as he never envisages the One as actually Transcendent. More specifically it will be shown that being is a multiple because of being’s notional “[subtraction]” or “distancing” from this unattainable One. In the first chapter we postulated that the term [subtraction] could be employed to describe how a finite being participates in the Ur-kenotic event analogously and apophatically. We use it here to describe how Badiou conceives a finite being’s continual relationship to a mythical One and all other relationships she enters into in the world as they are seen as non-inhering and hence potentially “[subtracted]” or removed. Like Ur-kenosis a finite being’s [subtractive] or apophatic relationship to the One leads to something greater than the sum or “count-as-one” of original terms or complex beings. Badiou sees multiplicity as ‘consistent’ and characteristic of a particular being and as a principle of ‘inconsistency’ operating in reality as a whole:

The multiple evidently splits apart here: ‘multiple’ is indeed said of presentation, in that it is retroactively apprehended as non-one as soon as being-one is a result. Yet ‘multiple’ is also said of the composition of the count, that is, the multiple as ‘several-ones’ counted by the action of structure. There is the multiplicity of inertia, that of presentation, and there is also the multiplicity of composition

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549 *Being and Event*, 376.

550 The particular being is of utmost importance as the concept of nature is underplayed by Badiou who believes that: “nature does not exist…There are only some natural beings,” *Being and Event*, 140.
which is that of number and the effect of structure.\textsuperscript{551}

In \textit{Set Theory} we look at how Badiou explicitly defines a being’s numerous associations mathematically.\textsuperscript{552} Central to a being’s individual identity are the “set” of one’s actual and potential correspondences to other beings for: “there is neither definition nor concept of a set in set theory. What there is in its place is a fundamental relation—‘belonging’—as well as a series of logical operators, and nine axioms stating how they may be used together.”\textsuperscript{553} The mathematical set has an existence outside of the members it includes. In this way, it can be seen to be a self-reifying event that justifies its existence outside the members it chooses to include. Set Theory offers specific rules for how one can produce subsets from an existing set. The critics Oliver Feltham and Justin Clemens explain the central tenets of set theory, stating:

First, a set is a multiple of multiples called elements. However, there is no fundamental difference between the elements and sets, since every element of a set is itself a set. Second, there is no set of sets; that is, there is no ultimate set, which includes all the different types of set found in set theory. Such a set would have to thereby include itself, which is expressly forbidden, on pain of paradox, by one of set theory’s axioms, that of foundation. In set theory there is an infinity of infinite types of infinite sets.\textsuperscript{554}

From any one set a number of subsets can be generated given their \textit{subtractive} relationship to a theoretic universal set for: “any set…can be constructed by adding elements to the space between brackets…defined by restriction on the set of all possible

\textsuperscript{551} Being and Event, 25. The natural and numeric are interchangeable descriptive discourses for being.
\textsuperscript{552} See: Being and Event, 499 and Alain Badiou, Number and Numbers (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2008), 44.
\textsuperscript{553} Infinite Thought, 11. The production of subsets provides Badiou with a way to begin to investigate the arborescent nature of a being’s relationship with itself and other beings. Cantor explains that an element, member or ‘aggregate’ [\textit{Menge}] as a ‘collection’ into the whole [\textit{Zusammenfassung su einem Ganzen}], see: Georg Cantor, Contributions to the Founding of the Theory of Transfinite Numbers (New York, NY: Dover, 1915), 85.
\textsuperscript{554} Infinite Thought, 11.
Key for Badiou’s claim that being is multiple is his interpretation of the empty set as a descriptive for the expansion and limitation of mathematical sets. In *The Empty Set and Ontological Void* the metaphysical implications of Badiou’s theory that a mathematical empty set can be seen as an adequate descriptor of the perceived void—the halting point of infinite regress (*point d’arrêt*), existing within being. The void is a positive affirmation for being, albeit one that is realized in a negative manner to one’s historical situation. Badiou’s conception of the void can be likened to a causal force that works towards some perceived default or normative state. In this analogy the void works to encode being with what may be considered normative. The empty set confirms that there are no intrinsic elements or members in a mathematical set—any number or

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555 *CTMU*, 26. We can speculate given Badiou’s theory of the void’s infinite differing that an empty set would also exist with an infinite number of iterations.

556 A being’s continual relationship to the void actualizes a being’s internal “in-differing”. Badiou’s in-differing offers a way to understand much of what was framed by the idea of ontological difference by Balthasar. Of special interest in Badiou’s metaphysics is the claim that a void exists at the heart of being. The void here can be thought analogous to the space existing between esse and essence in Balthasar’s metaphysics. The subject, Balthasar believes, exists as a finite being by infinitely exteriorizing this meeting point within being. Balthasar conceives ontological difference as a positive force for being as it ultimately mirrors the mysterious exchange of Ur-kenosis—unlike Badiou’s void, which is never in relationship to an actual Transcendent Being. See: *Being and Event*, 28-30 and 52-59. For Balthasar the theoretically infinite regress implied by the continual re-visiting of a being’s dialectical relationship is finally answered in Jesus Christ’s relationship to death and Hell. Further, Jesus Christ is able to enter into infinitely negative events given the eternal love of the mystery of Ur-kenosis. We return to these themes in Chapter Five.

variable can theoretically belong to a set.\footnote{558} Similarly, the empty set symbolically represents how a being’s primal relationship to an ontological void is taken by Badiou as a means to constitute a being’s ultimate limitation or its annihilation [néantisé].\footnote{559} The null or empty set alone is expansive enough to communicate \textit{a priori} the full range of a being’s relationships.

The section titled \textbf{Infinity} draws out Badiou’s quantification of infinity as suitable for describing the undeniable multiplicity of being. Setting an infinite series in a recursive relationship with itself becomes a way for Badiou to explain how numbers or beings can be: “called upon, for its own purposes, to think its thought.”\footnote{560} Starting with a number or a singular point or term, Badiou sets out to explain how an infinite set occurs given the repetitive bridging between terms without exhaustion or entropy.\footnote{561} The mathematical idea of the infinite is used by Badiou to understand how a being is actually grounded in unlimited relationships is self-reflective.\footnote{562} Consequently, from the

\footnote{558 See: \textit{Manifesto of Philosophy}, 95.} \footnote{559 \textit{Logics of Worlds}, 267.} \footnote{560 \textit{Briefings on Existence}, 51. We will see in Chapters Six and Seven how Balthasar differs from Badiou concerning the nature of number as he follows Aquinas’ lead in distinguishing between a material definition of number based on its quantification and division and formal demarcations founded on number’s qualitative aspects, see: S. Th. I, q. 30, a. 3 and TL1, 56.} \footnote{561 See: \textit{Continental Philosophy}, 99-100.} \footnote{562 Badiou’s disqualification of a potential infinity rests in large part, on his reading of the works of the mathematicians Georg Cantor (1845-1918), Paul Cohen (1934-2007) and the philosopher Hegel. He notes that Hegel saw before anyone else: “ultimately, mathematics proposes a new concept of the infinite. And on this basis of the concept, it allows for an immanentization of the infinite, separating it from the One of theology,” \textit{Theoretical Writings}, 18. Badiou stresses that infinity releases reason from the “ambit of finitude” and the non-denumerable infinite set that lead: “to irresolvable and ultimately sterile controversies because [they] mistakenly [invoke] existence in an absolute rather than merely theory-relative sense,” ibid., 7.}
subjective perspective the infinite is quantifiable by judgment.\footnote{563 See: \textit{Being and Event}, 142-49 and 151-60.} The terms of an infinite series are never fully determined or known ‘Others’. Complex relationships can be reduced to an equation of the relationship between two points or numbers at the expense of the whole system. However, if each number or being exists in a unique and adaptive relationship to the One and the void it seems that the infinite set not only presents the ongoing development of a numeric series but also, the internally infinite and \textit{subtractive} relationships every number or being has to the One and the void. An adequate theory of the infinite must provide, Badiou argues, not only a qualitative or subjective judgment on quantitative or actual infinity, but must also recognize that this “quantitative” re-representation of being infinitely proliferates inside all unlimited series.\footnote{564 See: \textit{Being and Event}, 163-64, 168 and 169-70.}

The mathematical status of the infinite raises for Badiou the question of a being’s relationship to the fictional construct of absolute unity and Transcendence conveyed by the concept of the One. This theme is taken up in \textit{Mathematical Subtraction}, \textit{Multiplicity and Difference}. The premising of the One does not nullify that being is multiple and this forces a philosophical decision, as Badiou states: ‘[w]e find ourselves on the brink of a decision, a decision to break with the arcana of the one and the multiple in which philosophy is born and buried, a phoenix of its own sophistic consumption. The decision can take no other form than the following: the one is not.’\footnote{565 \textit{Being and Event}, 23. The relationship between the One and the (non-)One are oppositional but only analogous thought of as in a “dialectical” relationship. The One is like any subjective appropriation of truth in a given situation is unmediated. The relationship between the One and (non-)One and the subject’s relationship to the event is perhaps better described in terms of mimeses or rivalry. This complex situation questions Badiou’s adoption of anti-philosophical principles and demands greater attention than we can afford here. See: \textit{Theology and Anti-Theology}, 150. The disconnect existing between}
the One and (non-)One sets out for Badiou the means to better understand a being’s relationship to the formulation of universal difference or Difference. At the local level the relationship between One and (non-)One becomes evident in the problem of the void’s own presentation in the world. Badiou likens the presentation of the void to the “presentational occurrence of inconsistency as such, or the ruin of the One”. Differences in the world can be seen as non-relational manifestations of being’s underlining relationship to the void.

In Zermelo-Fraenkel Axiomatic Theory we will develop some of the implications of axiomatic theory relative to Badiou’s theory of being. Badiou sees the Zermelo-Fraenkel Axiomatic Theory (henceforth ZFC) as useful in this regard as it supports a way to mathematically reconcile Set Theory and theories of actual infinity. According to ZFC axiomatic theory a number can be counted in a group as a set on the condition that it’s counting is consistent with ZFC’s axiomatic definition of a set.

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566 While the concept of the One’s own reflective relationship with its opposite or (non)One differs from Balthasar’s belief that the ONE’s self-reflection is Ur-kenotic and tri-personal (ONE 3), they can be set into a beneficial conversation. Both thinkers reject the idea that difference can be globally actualized in the world but believe that difference inevitably structures all being.

567 Being and Event, 93.

568 All beings are defined subtractively by Badiou insofar as they are they exist in relationship to lack or a “nodal topos” that results from a being’s relationship to the One, see: Logics of Worlds, 133.


570 Fabio Gironi states that: “[t]here are only two axioms that postulate the existence of some set and the remaining axioms postulate something of the self-evident properties of the set in question. As Fabio Gironi explains: “ZFC axiomatisation employs
the scholars Feltham and Clemens explain: “[f]or Badiou these axioms constitute a decision in thought, a starting point. The axioms themselves, of course, are not pure historical beginnings since they are the result of a series of reformulations made over the first few decades of set theory: these reformulations were designed to prevent the occurrence of logical inconsistency with the domain of set theory.” In other words, axiomatic theory provides a way to understand how numbers, and by extension being, can be put into quantified relations in sets and subsets and further how numbers and beings can be understood as infinitely self-reflexive as a “horizontal correlative” of the “historicity of finitude”. Thus, the Axiom of Extensionality, the Axiom of Separation, the Power Set Axiom and the Axiom of Choice are used by Badiou to focus on number and being as immanent and multiple yet open to new relationships and metaphysically organized to encounter chance events in the world. For, as Fabio Gironi points out: “Axioms, in mathematics as elsewhere, are a matter of pure choice, posing unquestionable logico-architectonic constraints on all that which inferentially follows, yet are incapable of self-justification.”

Two sets are equal if they have the same members or elements. Likewise, Badiou holds that two elements of an object are compatible if and only if the degree or

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first-order logic wherein the existential quantifier figures only twice in the list of axioms, to establish the existence of the empty set and of the infinite set, while all other axioms employ the universal quantifier. Herein, for Badiou, lies the unique conceptual power of set theory, for what it avoids doing is to offer any definition of a set,” FG, 24.

571 Infinite Thought, 14.
quantification of their identity is equal to the conjunction or intersection of their existences. The axiom of extensionality argues that: “every element of a set is also an element of a set and the inverse is true, [that is], … sets are indistinguishable and therefore identical. Consequently, in set theory ontology, the regime of identity and difference is founded upon extension, not quality.”

Badiou takes the power set axiom as a meta-ontological claim that proves that the elements of an initial set can be grouped together to form another set that is larger than the original set. As Fabio Gironi notes: “Badiou adopts an extensional specification (as opposed to intensional) of sets, that is, one that defines the conditions of membership to a set merely by referring to the actual members of the set (whatever their nature), rather than in terms of some specific predicate or distinctive feature that characterizes its elements.” A power set numerates all the elements and hence accounts for the mathematical principal of inclusion.

Mathematical inclusion states that:

A multiple will be said to be ‘natural’ (also called normal, ordinal, or transitive) if every element of this set is also a subset or part (that is, if then), and if every element of is itself natural in this way…This doubling of belonging and inclusion guarantees that there is nothing uncounted or unsecured in natural multiples, which might contradict their internal consistency and concatenation.

The axiom of choice is employed by Badiou to prove that every set can be well ordered. Badiou claims to use this to explain how being’s quantification in face of the

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574 In Infinite Thought, 14.
575 Ibid., 14. See also: “if $\langle \cdot \rangle$ is a set then there exists a set $p(\langle \cdot \rangle)$ which consists of all the subsets or parts of $\langle \cdot \rangle$,” Jason Barker, Alain Badiou: A Critical Introduction (Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2002), 154.
576 FG, 158.
577 See: Being and Event, 81-84.
unknown is an adequate depiction for later developments of free association by the subject. Consequently, Feltham and Clemens comment that: “Badiou makes a distinction between ontology proper, that is the formal language of set theory, and the discourse of meta-ontology, that is, the translation of set theory’s axioms and theorems into philosophical terms. Thus for every set-theoretical term, there is an equivalent in the discourse of philosophy.”

The segment **Ontology and Topology** synthesizes the earlier parameters that Badiou has set out for being. These metaphysical principles preamble being’s necessary existence as an actual extensional body in the world. Although Badiou argues for a correlation between the intelligible and sensible, he further stresses that this correspondence remains immanent to each subject and betrays no larger Transcendent plan. Denying the Transcendent’s ordering of Reality does not mean postmoderns reject a being’s *transcendental* structure insofar as it can appear to and be represented by the subject. For, as Meillassoux states: “non-metaphysical speculation consists, in the first place, in stating that the thing in itself is nothing other than the facticity of the transcendental form of representation.” According to Badiou, the “transcendental indexation” of being always occurs in conjunction with its own immanent and finite presence. Therefore, a being appears in the world only insofar as it is identical to some element of its own being, not that of the Transcendent. A being’s *transcendental* properties remain symmetrical to its own medium of communication. By setting one being in association with another being comparative relationships of identity, similarity,

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579 Ibid., 15. For Badiou the relationship between the formal language of set theory and actual being is not exact but most properly accounts for the multiplicity of being.

580 *After Finitude*, 103.
alterity, opposition, or homologation can be ascertained. Consequently, mathematics can set out the formal definition of a being and the nature of its relationship with other beings. What this model cannot account for, according to Badiou, is a logical way to attribute to a being some relationship with an existing Transcendent Being. However, as has been shown in chapter two there is a logical need for assuming the existence of the Transcendent, even if the affirmation of the Transcendent presents in its negation.\footnote{The polar relationship between the Transcendent and (non)Transcendent thus reflects in the that of the factual-counterfactual relation in immanent being, see: Peter Menzies, “Difference-Making in Context, in Causation and Counterfactuals (eds.) J. Collins, N. Hall and L.A. Paul (Boston: M.I.T. Press, 2004), 139-80 and Joseph Halpern and Judea Paul, “Causes and Explanations: A Structural Model Approach—Part One: Cause,” in British Journal for the Philosophy of Science 56 (2005), 843-87.}

Indeed, Badiou’s system demands a phantom notion of the Transcendent as a logical placeholder. In opposition to Badiou’s hypothesis, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger sees in the beauty of the being and the discipline of mathematics proof that an alignment exists between finite being and an existing Transcendent:

If nature is really structured with a mathematical language and mathematics invented by man can manage to understand it, this demonstrates something extraordinary. The objective structure of the universe and the intellectual structure of the human being coincide. The subjective reason and the objectified reason in nature are identical. In the end it is ‘one’ reason that links both and invites us to look to a unique creative intelligence.\footnote{Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, ‘Message of His Holiness Benedict XVI to Archbishop Rino Fisichella,’ Online, www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/point-messages/2009/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20091126_fischella-telescopio_en.html. (accessed 1 May, 2009). Quoted in FG, 48.}

In the \textit{Site and Event} we expand upon how the formal configuration of being are known in the world. The site and later the event give the subject a way to better understand another being’s relationship to the void and the One.\footnote{Badiou recognizes his debt to Jacques Lacan in his own formulations}
in this “in-existing gap” between the senseless reality of the void and the One and the sensual reality of being as material and historical.  

The event is counted twice, that is, once as a presented multiple, and once as a multiple presented in its own presentation. The second count or self-determination of a being is possible with the void’s inevitable disappearance and transformation by the subject into a ‘linguistic trace’ or perhaps an intuitive memory.

The chapter concludes with **Truth and Love** by outlining the critical role of truth and love in Badiou’s system. The mathematical count for Badiou delegates how two people are called to consciously find truth in the fact that their desire for unity can never eradicate the differences that separate them. The lover recreates the world’s truth as a single project. Love is seen as immanent and actual relationship between two persons made possible by a “non-relational” (‘non-rapport’) correspondence to a non-existing Transcendent ONE.

(1) **Mathematical Ontology**

Badiou does not equate being with mathematics although he sees mathematics as *sui generis* to being’s critique. Badiou’s work hopes to address previous inadequate

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585 See: *Being and Event*, 182 and 189.


587 Love is that specific quest for the truth that asks: “what kind of world does one see when one experiences it from the point of view of two and not one?”, *Praise*, 22. See also: *Logics of Worlds*, 40 and 127.
approaches to mathematics. Christopher Norris:

Badiou’s major claim…is that philosophy of mathematics has sold mathematics grievously short by focusing on questions like: What is mathematical knowledge? How can we be certain that we have it?…It has thus been prevented from raising questions with regard to the primary (ontological as opposed to epistemological) issue of truth as that which might always surpass—and perhaps, in consequence of some future advance, eventually be known to have surpassed—a given, temporally indexed state of knowledge or present-best belief concerning it.  

For Badiou, mathematics is not simply a representational or symbolic mirroring of being, but rather a way to be sensitive to being’s fundamental multiplicity and actuality. Badiou argues for mathematics’ affinity to being as this discipline preeminently makes truth out of “the pure multiple.” Given the inherent multiplicity of being and its isomorphic relationship to mathematics, Badiou believes that ontology is one of two sciences that cannot be understood hierarchically. Where philosophy is judged only to speak of being “meta-ontologically”, Badiou claims that mathematics pronounces the universal and hence communicates being qua being.  

Metaphysics, he continues, is born alongside mathematical deduction because being is: “inscribed or written as logos, [as] exactly [as] mathematics itself.” The numeric purchase of the ontological endows mathematics with a trans-disciplinary ambit lacking in those areas of study with a more

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590 Physics is the other science that Badiou takes to elude hierarchical organization. Like ontology, the study of Physics depends on mathematics and human experience that is taken to be universally valid, see: Alain Badiou, ‘Philosophy, Sciences, Mathematics: Interview with Alain Badiou,’ in Collapse I (2007): 17-19.  
591 See: Being and Event, 8. See also: Briefings on Existence, 40-41, Theoretical Writings, 4.  
592 The allegiance of the existential and mathematical demands for Badiou a Platonist rectification that re-focuses the real, see: Briefings on Existence, 50, 107-10 and Theoretical Writings, 173.
restrictive domain focus. More precisely, mathematics’ elucidation of being is advantageous because as an epistemological system it advances a profound commentary on the ideas of relationship, difference, one and multiplicity.

Mathematics has the power to signify, represent and act as a mirror for being given its own grounding in difference or in Badiou’s terminology— “in-differing”. Mathematics sees as valid the systematic employment of difference to identify individual terms. As a system, mathematics attests to this use of difference by the fact that as “signifying order [mathematics] can envelope the strata of its discourse.” The in-differing of mathematics as a field of study is related to its innovative capacities; it is this characteristic that make mathematics adaptable in a cross-discipline fashion, as Ray Brassier explains: “[w]hat renders formal systems productive is their stratification understood as the differential network through which mathematical symbols and operators are assigned a signifying function and variously combined produce distinct statements.” The systematic division of mathematics into sub-specialties further corroborates how being relates to difference from a variety of perspectives. Badiou calls

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593 See: Infinite Thought, 58-68 and Alain Badiou, Manifesto for Philosophy, (trans.) Norman Madarasz (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999), 135. On the material being seen as a determination in the domain of potential infinite possible presentations, see: Being and Event, 127.
594 See: Infinite Thought, 181. Fabio Gironi points out that this methodological revolution finds support in the work of such thinkers as Paul Dirac, see: The Role of Mathematics in Physical Sciences: Interdisciplinary and Philosophical Aspects, (eds.) Giovanni Boniolo, Paolo Budinich, Majda Trobok (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 91.
595 A Subject to Truth, 32. Following in the steps of Kurt Gödel, Badiou admits that the increasing complexity of mathematical models and the theorems upon which such models are built does not suggest mathematics will one day furnish an equation that unifies and explains all being. This characteristic openness is necessary given the logical parameters of any formal system.
our attention to the fact that the fundamental units of mathematics—numbers, like—those of being, are amenable to forming a relationship with difference.

The incompleteness epitomized in mathematics proportions to being’s needed latitude. Accordingly, mathematics is not seen by Badiou to be conducive to fully defining being in a singular formal equation or even reducing being by the introduction of: “a property, identity, or unity under the name of some predicate.”597 Mathematics takes into consideration being’s fundamental multiplicity as homologous to its own relationship with difference. For Badiou acknowledging the disadvantages of mathematics in no way undermines its explanatory power. As he sees it, mathematical models are conclusive because their incompleteness makes them adaptable to the variations of being. This anomaly of mutual evolvement prevails upon Badiou’s charge that: “to speak of a model is to exclude the possibility of a formal language being continuous.”598 Not surprisingly, Badiou emphasizes that any linguistic or mathematical representations of being allude to the fractional nature of their discourse.599

Being also emerges for Badiou in unavoidable friction given its numinal and phenomenal characteristics that exist in dialectical relationship with the historical.600

597 Post-Continental Philosophy, 92. See also: Being and Event, 204-06.
599 While any formal language is marked with elision and elusion, mathematics is superior to the task of elucidating being. Badiou is against the ‘romantic notion’ that works to hand “over the whole of thought to one generic condition,” Alain Badiou, A Manifesto for Philosophy, (trans.) Norman Madarasz (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), 61.
600 For Badiou, the dialectic’s presence in history takes mathematical mediation as
Critics have questioned if Badiou’s mathematical ontology fails to give proper attention to being’s empirical conditions in favor of an unsupportable pure conception of being:

[T]he very possibility of simultaneously being a materialist (as Badiou professes to be) and (as Badiou allegedly does) accepting a clear-cut distinction between the ontological and the ontic. Authentic materialism, especially a materialism with a relation to dialectical thinking, must resign itself to the messiness of a theoretical account of the instances and types of being conditioned by the empirical results of such ontic fields as the natural sciences. A materialist should be deeply suspicious of the cleanliness of any ontology of pure being in and of itself.  

Of this relationship Badiou states: “which is presupposed or assumed [is] an authoritarian gesture…and [this] principle (that which is at once originary, a beginning and illuminatingly authoritative, a command) in one and the same gesture, [being] breaks with the sensible and posits the intelligible.”

Badiou sees a non-mathematical description of the fracture between being and its philosophical representation as wanting in natural language systems. Non-computational languages, Badiou declares, only superficially coordinate and depict being as they lean towards logical imprecision,

its model: he writes that: “mathematics is a metaxu: its topology, the site of its thinking, situates it in an intermediary position,” *Theoretical Writings*, 31.


Ibid, 30-31. For an overview of Plato’s influence on Badiou’s understanding of the One’s relationship to truth, see: *Key Concepts*, 113.

As Hollis Phelps clarifies: “Poetic language for Badiou is non-objective, in the sense that it “is neither a description nor an expression ” but “an operation” (*Handbook of Inaesthetics*, 29). To claim the contrary would be to lapse back into a hermeneutical stance, which Badiou otherwise consistently seeks to avoid. Otherwise put, language, when understood in poetic terms as related to truth, is not so much metaphorical or hermeneutical as it is directly inscriptive of the being of the process with which it is concerned. As Badiou puts it, “Language is the very being of truth via the combination of current finite inquiries and the future anterior of a generic infinity” (*Being and Event*, 399),” *Theology and Anti-theology*, 129. Abbreviations changed to make consistent with paper other citations.
aesthetic and metaphoric flourish:

The linguistic turn is the philosophically instituted essential correlation between two things. On the one hand, there is the computational equating of mathematics and logic, which is subtracted from thought and slid over to the benefit of a blind and technical power of the rule. On the other, one finds the arch-aesthetic appeal to the pacific and enlightened power of the poem.\textsuperscript{604}

Where mathematical language utilizes a rigorous definition of being and measurable difference, everyday language often relies on specious assessments that percolate meaning through use of: “disobjectivation, disorientation, interruption and isolation.”\textsuperscript{605}

Badiou judges that natural language especially misleads when its portrayal of immanent being cultivates an equivocation of virtual or nominal characterization of corporeal beings. This bi-figuration of the real and its description mistakenly warrants for some the belief that they have access to the Transcendent. However, all experiences of Transcendence are circumscribed by finite limitation. This approach to the Divine is discussed in earlier chapters under the term transcedence.\textsuperscript{606} At the primordial juncture each number and being is conditioned by an implied relationship to the idea of Absolute

\textsuperscript{604} Briefings on Existence, 109. See also: Theory of Subject, 158-168. Even though natural language is seen as a secondary way to approach being given its “anthropomorphic subjectivism”, like Balthasar, Badiou has a high regard for the poetic and dramatic. Badiou states that: “I was convinced that theatre was the most appropriate form of artistic expression of everything pertaining to conflict, through the figure of the dialogue, and to opposition;” see: ‘Un operator théâtral’, Théâtre/Public 129 (May 1996), 52. For an immanent view of language see: See: Jacques Lacan, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis (ed.) Jacques-Alain Miller, (trans.) Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 198.

\textsuperscript{605} Briefings on Existence, 109. See also: Logics of Worlds, 47-48. Badiou does not reject poetry insofar as the poetic “feeds on the topological dimensions of language” in order to break up all “ordinary prose” and supremely communicate the meaning of the void in an event. See also: Theory of the Subject, 159, 303 and Post-Continental Philosophy, 84-85.

\textsuperscript{606} Badiou rejects Kant’s distinction between general and transcendental logic, see: Being and Event, 524.
Unity or in Badiou’s idiom, the “One”. Badiou argues that mathematical thought rationally gauges and limits being against all factious claims of the Transcendent as: “[i]t ends up subordinating existential judgment to finite and controllable linguistic protocols. Let us say any kind of existence is underpinned by an algorithm allowing a case that it is the matter to be effectively reached.”

Given these limitations a beneficial collaborative and symbiotic relationship subsists between them, so Badiou declares: “logic is mathematized in the shape of a syntax or a formal theory, its linguistic connection is primordial.” Mathematics and being are taken by Badiou to be formally intelligible antecedent to their symbolic or linguistic representation. Given this anterior relationship a fluid exchange can be further proposed between the logical and ontological. To wit, a concrete Transcendent Being jeopardizes what Badiou takes to be incontrovertible fact, that is, that being is formally and substantially heterogeneous in relationship to a mythic One.

(2) Multiplicity

A reciprocal identification of being and number applies given the variegated nature of their existence. Sean Bowden explains Badiou’s understanding of multiplicity and one as follows:

Any presented concrete thing must be one. A thing is, after all, this thing. Secondly, however, presentation itself is multiple, which is to say that what can be

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607 Under the heading “The Count as One” a more detailed discussion will be given to Badiou’s use of the concept of One.
608 Briefings on Existence, 55.
609 Briefings on Existence, 112.
610 There exists a logical co-variance of number and being’s infinite multiplicities in Badiou’s writings. While the relationship between number and being is not exact we will assume the differences between them do not outweigh the advantages of presuming at time their equivocation. See: Theoretical Writings, 27 and Being and Event, 42.
presented is presentable in multiple and variable ways. When it is asked whether being is one or multiple, therefore, one comes to an impasse. For, on the one hand, if being is one, then the multiple cannot be. On the other hand, if presentation is multiple and there cannot be an access to being outside of all presentation, then the multiple must be. But if the multiple is, then being is not equivalent to the one. And yet there is a presentation of this multiple only if what is presented is one. Badiou then says that this deadlock can only be broken by declaring that the one, strictly speaking, is not: oneness is rather only a ‘result’, a multiplicity which has been ‘counted for one’.

Being is malleable or “multiple” and can therefore exist in a variety situations.

Multiplicity by means of relational “in-differing” is constituent of being and so also a compass for reality as a whole. John Mullarkey concisely describes Badiou’s hermeneutic of multiplicity, stating: “[t]he only thing that all beings have in common, their lowest common denominator so to speak, is that they exist as multiple, that they are not alone. Ironically, then, the one thing true of all is that there is not one thing but many, and that there is no category that captures everything other than this meta-category.”

The multiplicity of being requires that each being be equiponderate to the denotative act that decides “upon the undecidable” that is the fundamental truth of its being. Being only momentarily brackets its indiscriminate infrastructure, further connoting reality’s extant relationship to difference. The individual and cumulative effects of being’s alterations confirm for Badiou that a “quantum” uncertainty both regulates the universe and is the source of the dilemma of its ontological ‘wavering’:

There are certain things, statements, configurations or discursive fragments whose valence is not decidable in terms of the encyclopedia. They comprise everything

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612 Post-Continental Philosophy, 86.
613 See: Being and Event, 33 for Badiou’s dependence on Plato in his own formulations of this theme. Interpreting Paul Cohen’s work on the Continuum Hypothesis, Badiou sees “undecidability” as infinite and continuous in Reality. See also: Briefings on Existence, 92.
whose status remains constitutively uncertain; everything that elicits a ‘maybe, maybe not’; everything whose status can be endlessly debated according to the rule of non-decision, which is itself encyclopedic; everything about which knowledge enjoins us not to decide.  

The internal metaphysical heterogeneity of being broadens out in reality in its geometric arrangements. A being’s spatial configurations allow for the continuous inauguration of new associations in the world that foment novel insights into being itself. The relational interdependence of a being’s complex mathematical architecture legitimize its actualization: “[t]he consistency of interdependence is the elementary form, barely set apart from the algebra, of that which must be pushed all the way to the point of conflictual consistency, heterogeneous consistency, the consistency that is independent of all interdependence.”  

The “pure” difference of the multiple gives being its heterogeneous determination in reality. The multiplicity of a particular being mathematically quantifies in the world, as: “nothing is presentable in a situation otherwise than under the effect of structure, that is, under the form of the one and its composition in consistent multiplicities.”  

(3) The Count as One

Badiou proposes that a being’s multiplicity follows from its interminable

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614 Ibid, 35.
615 See: Theory of the Subject, 232 and 246.
616 Being and Event, 52. Reality, Badiou argues, is always understood in its localized presentation in being. See: Logics of Worlds, 227, 252-54, 261and Theory of Subject, 140-41. Ultimately the tension between individual ontological differences and the grouping and deployment of all beings in reality only finds resolution in subjective thought of some mediation of Transcendence as: “The transcendental can bring forth intra-worldly identities from absolute ontological differences,” Logics in Worlds, 123. For Balthasar the Transcendent is beyond finite physical and cognitive reach given the absolute distance between the Creator and created. However, the Transcendent is believed to be actual and known analogously through apophasis. While Badiou does not believe in an actual Transcendent his system still demands its conceptual premising. We will again discuss these issues in Chapter Five.
relationship and concomitance with the idea of the One. A being’s relationship to this mythic One presupposes simultaneously a relationship to the void. Consequently, for Badiou the One can be seen to have the nom de plume the “count-as-one”. A being’s relationship to the One proves for Badiou that being is multiple and hence can be mathematically bracketed or put into a set. A finite being’s metaphysical partition is made possible by its “\textit{subtraction}” from a non-existent One. That we can employ the colloquialism \textit{subtraction} from the first chapters in relation to Badiou’s “count-as-one” and Balthasar’s concept of kenosis enigmatically testifies to a being’s unity and unlimited distention by means of metaphysical subduction. In other words, being is multiple and “substantial” or real given its \textit{subtractive} relationship to a “pure combinatorial legislation of the One” made possible by axiomatic application of making present the infinite. A being is only analogously completely substantial because its counting does not fully synthesize the totality of what a being is:

Yet the one and the multiple do not form a ‘unity of contraries’, since the first is not whilst the second is the very form of any presentation of being.

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618 The non-existing One is “counted” or a metaphysical “additive” to subjective identity. However, as the subject is also in relationship to the “void” she can never equate herself with the One.

619 Operationally, the ‘count-as-one’ can be taken to be equivalent to \{\}, meaning “take the set of”, see: Ricardo L. Nirenberg and David Nirenberg, “Badiou’s Number: A Critique of Mathematics as Ontology” \textit{Critical Inquiry} 37 (Summer 2011): 591. The relationship of being to an non-existing Transcendent One is mathematically revealed for Badiou in the fundamental theorem that any number over one is either prime or the product of multiple primes. The creation of a composite number from two or more primes sets out a model for how multiple beings can have a single point of reference they share without sacrificing their individual identities, see: \textit{The Logics of Worlds}, 13 and \textit{Being and Event}, 29.

620 See: \textit{Briefings on Existence}, 125. On the subtractive’s modeling on the mathematical, see \textit{Theoretical Writings}, xv, 8 and \textit{Manifesto for Philosophy}, 62.
Axiomatization is required such that the multiple, left to the implications of its coming rule, be delivered without concept, that is, without implying the being-of-the-one.\textsuperscript{621}

The metaphysical algebraic substratum of being’s \textit{subtraction} enriches being’s compulsory metaphysical multiplicity and its particular representation or situation in the world. The count-for-one establishes a being’s historical situation or structure in the world and “[a] structure determines what belongs and does not belong to the situation by counting various multiplicities as \textit{elements} of the situation.”\textsuperscript{622} The inconsistent multiplicity or undecidability of being provokes Badiou to look towards a situation in order to explicate a being’s genealogy. Totality in all its forms is unattainable as the whole is for Badiou “vanishing causes” (\textit{terme évanovissant}).\textsuperscript{623} Being is envisaged by Badiou as a local reification or intermittent resolve of a continuing dialogue between an ever-changing being and an omnipresent but apocryphal One. It is a being’s relationship to this figment of the mind that ratifies the relative “consistency” or “inconsistency” of finite being.\textsuperscript{624} This validation of being takes place imperceptibly at the incorporeal level of being.

A being’s consistency is presupposed in the world given its ongoing relationship with the One that points to being’s “inconsistency” or interim annotation of being’s “repetitive identity”. The relationship between the inconsistent and consistent establishes

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{621} Being and Event, 43.
\item \textsuperscript{622} Infinite Thought, 8. See also: ibid., 9-10.
\item \textsuperscript{623} See: Theory of the Subject, 62-64. Totality is seen as a vanishing cause (\textit{evanouissement terme évanovissant}) fainting.
\item \textsuperscript{624} Consistency is here broadly understood as non-contradiction. Given that all being is multiple, Badiou to be logically consistent must state that the One is multiple if it is taken to exist. The One is in a certain sense inconceivable for: “[w]hat is counted as one is not the concept of the multiple; there is no inscribable thought of what a one-multiple is,” Being and Event, 44. See also: Being and Event, 41-42 and Infinite Thought, 15.
\end{itemize}
a being’s identity: “the inconsistent multiple is actually unthinkable as such…

‘inconsistency’ simply states that, because all thought presumes a situation that can have a consistent identity, then an event, being what ruptures a situation with inconsistency, is unrepresentable, at least for normal thought.” A being’s inconsistency contextualizes for Badiou a being’s intrinsic freedom, that is, its awaiting quantification of “what-is-not-being-qua-being”.

Given this dynamic Badiou claims that the event always speaks of the “exception”. The relative “consistency” of a being in no way bears upon its coherence as an entity, as a being’s relationship with the One is such that the count-as-one accommodates a being’s inconsistency as a prelude to its “inevitable” consistency.

The pure multiplicity of being is abeyant to every presentation of being as “consistent”. Being is the “multiple-without-one” that is, being preserves in subtractive collusion with the One at all times. The One is an observational constant for a being’s continual identity as a multiple of multiples that further allows one: “to think multiple-presentation regardless of time (which is founded by intervention), and space (which is a singular construction, relative to certain types of presentation).” Badiou proposes that the spatiotemporal infinitely orders a being in its representation.

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625 Being and Event, 34. See also ibid., xii-xiii.
626 See: Being and Event, 173.
627 See: Logics of Worlds, 360.
628 See: Being and Event, 25. The representation or consistency of being does not override a being’s more primitive multiplicity or “inconsistency”, see: Being and Event, 57-59, 69 and Theory of the Subject, 140. On the Hegelian elements of Badiou’s position see: Clayton Crockett, Deleuze Beyond Badiou: Ontology, Multiplicity, and Event (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2013), 124.
629 The appellations ‘consistent’ and ‘inconsistent’ are therefore indicators of an “advent”, “pure supplement”, “the unforeseeable and disconcerting addition”, or perennial metaphysical “event”. The consistency and inconsistency of a being is therefore equally expressed by a being’s ‘logic’ and its ‘appearance’, see: Logics of Worlds, 101 and Theoretical Writings, 112.
630 Infinite Thought, 17. See also: Being and Event, 95-99.
As the multiplicity of being and the One are presupposed, their corresponding is a differing of difference. It is this relationship that a being “eradicates” as a way to symbolically subvert the One. This supplementation is temporary as there can be no end to a being’s disruption of the One, as: “there is no graspable inconsistency which would be subtracted from the count and thus a-structured.” The One eventually supersedes its definition by finite being. There is no way to circumvent the antagonistic relationship of finite being and the One because, Badiou presupposes, the opposition between them is inherent.

The relationship between finite beings and the One proposed by Badiou differs from Balthasar’s claim that finite being is fundamentally in a non-violent relationship with an Ur-kenotic Triune—One (ONE $\downarrow 3$). While both thinkers assume a relationship between created beings and some concept of the uncreated One, for Balthasar this relationship is Transcendent but analogous and harmonious to each being’s underlining structure and overall aims. In this way, Balthasar establishes a real relationship between the unparalleled Ur-kenotic event of the Triune Persons and every finite being. Further, it is not trivial that both thinkers interpret difference and \textit{subtraction} as instrumental to the positive and additive components of being. For both Badiou and Balthasar, being never concludes in dissipation or reduction although it communicates itself by means of kenosis or \textit{subtraction}. As Alex Ling notes, Badiou’s mathematical \textit{subtraction} of being’s

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631 See: \textit{Logics of Worlds}, 118.
632 Alain Badiou, \textit{Being and Event}, 52. See also: “Whatever name is given to it, as soon as a positivity of difference is registered, as soon as one refuses to posit that difference is nothing but the negation of identity, we are dealing with the fact with a transcendental disposition,” \textit{Logics of Worlds}, 121. See also: ibid., 128 and 135.
633 We will detail the violence implied in Badiou’s system in the second part of this chapter.
multiplicity elicits the exponential—or in Balthasarian theological terms the “magis”—for it: “concurrently implies that the one and the multiple can quite happily be at the same time both different and the same.”\(^6\) Simply put, Badiou writes: “that any situation (any presented multiple) admits sub-situations, as much as any situation is itself a sub-situation of another situation (\textit{ad infinitum}).”\(^5\) Balthasar would doubtless agree with the gist of Badiou’s theory of being’s multiplicity and excessiveness, but with, at the minimum, the caveat that the differences and similarities of finite being’s relationship to the One find a perfect communication in the incarnate person of Jesus Christ.\(^6\)

Even though Badiou denies an actual existence to the One, its phantom existence is taken as a necessary logical variable in his explanation of finite identity. He writes that because “[p]resentation is reciprocal with ‘inconsistent multiplicity’ as ‘the One is not presented” and this allows for the presentation of being to be consistently multiple.\(^7\) As noted previously, the “inconsistency” or metaphysical mutability of being lingers with a being’s differential confirmation and opposition in its relationship to the One. If this synchronism of the chimera of multiplicity’s identity in being and the fabrication of non-existence as the One did not carry forward being would end unqualifiedly as Absolute. The non-existing One postures as pure identity for finite beings, Badiou reasons, as a finite being can only logically moor its multiplicity and change to the apparitional One.

\(^6\) Alex Ling, \textit{Badiou and Cinema} (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, Ltd., 2011), 60.
\(^5\) See: \textit{Key Concepts}, 50. See also: “The axiom of the power-set says that there is a set of all subsets of an initial set, termed the power set. In meta-ontological terms, the power-set is the state of a situation. This means that every multiple already counted as one, is counted again at the level of its sub-multiples: the state is thus a second count-for-one,” \textit{Infinite Thought}, 18.
\(^6\) This distinction is not perfunctory on Balthasar or any other believer’s part, however, we wait until Chapter Five to rough out some of the rudimentary conclusions that follow from this premise.
\(^7\) See: \textit{Being and Event}, 519.
If finite being was anchored to an absolutely unified One or Being, it could never get beyond representing itself as a chaotic multiplicity.\textsuperscript{638} The existence of an Absolute Being would, thereby, force finite beings into a state of radical contingency.\textsuperscript{639} Balthasar avoids such conclusions given his understanding of Ur-kenosis role in making finite freedom possible. Restricting the Transcendent to a concept immanent to a being’s mental and sensible experiences presents a way for Badiou to avoid the difficult questions of super-contingency and hard determinism suggested by the existence of an actual Transcendent Being. The accumulation of individual beings and their coincidental relationships in reality recounts for Badiou that all beings remain in relationship to an imaginary One.

Quentin Meillassoux (1967-) concurs with Badiou insofar as he alleges that the idea of the One’s non-existence proxies finite autonomy, whereas a genuinely existing Absolute Being would, as a matter of intellectual course, expunge finite freedom by compelling beings into a state of unadulterated contingency. However, as Badiou and Meillassoux are unable to logically discard the idea of the One, both are led to advocate some formulation of Absolute Being or the virtual existence of the One. Making being’s independence expedient on a notional One parleys Meillassoux’s protestation that the perceived incongruity created by Absolute Being behooves finite beings to have faith albeit an ironic one that witnesses to the non-existence of the One. Appropriate to such a faith, Meillassoux encourages, is an “atheistic hope” in the existence of a pseudo-delusive One. Confident in the logical need for this spiritual nihilism, Meillassoux reassures us it

\textsuperscript{638} See: \textit{Being and Event}, 397.

\textsuperscript{639} Badiou rejects a traditionally conceived analogy of being as he believes such schemas do not bridge the finite and Transcendent but imprison the finite in a world without autonomy.
is a way by which one can live one’s daily life with integrity:

The virtualizing power of time lets itself be known, or is phenomenalized, when there emerges a novelty that defeats all continuity between the past and the present. Every ‘miracle’ thus becomes the manifestation of the inexistence of God, in so far as every radical rupture of the present in relation to the past becomes the manifestation of the absence of any order capable of overseeing the chaotic power of becoming.\textsuperscript{640}

To Badiou’s mind, finite being’s relationship to a spurious One does not oblige the present be lived as a recollected experience of the eschatological promise of an illusionary avatar. Rather, he proposes that the imaginary One’s contract with finite being is simply an existential instance of the logical artifice of being’s experiences of the enumeration of such concepts as universality, totality or infinity. Although the One is taken to be illusionary, it acts as a bulwark against all that is negative or differential and theoretically encircles finite being precisely because it seems to serve as a synonym for Being as represented in the generic subset’s relationship to an all-encompassing universal set.\textsuperscript{641} Badiou proposes that this relationship can be mathematically expressed, for:

[t]his means that for every expression \(F(x)\) there exist terms in the generic subset which, when substituted for \(x\), yield a statement with a certain value, and that there are other terms in the same set which, when substituted for \(x\), yield a statement with a different value. The generic subset is such precisely because, given any expression \(F(x)\), it is subtracted from every selection and construction authorized by that expression in the universe \(U\). The generic subset, we might say, contains a little bit of everything, so that no predicate ever collects together all its terms. The generic subset is subtracted from predicated by excess.\textsuperscript{642}


\textsuperscript{641} The generic subset is only presented at the level of inclusion, and, unlike all other subsets, it cannot be known via its properties. To show that a generic set actually exists, Cohen develops a procedure whereby one adds it to the existing ground model as a type of supplement, thereby forming a new set. Within this new set, the generic multiple will exist at the level of belonging, or in meta-ontological terms, the presentation. The new supplemented set provides the ontological schema of a historical situation, which has undergone wholesale change.

\textsuperscript{642} \textit{Theoretical Writings}, 107. The generic set will thus be shown to be analogous
The One has a universal lien on being and so is philosophically transposed as an immanent Transcendence or *transcendence* in reality.\(^{643}\)

The genealogy of this all-encompassing and generic allotment of the One summons for Badiou his reading of the writings of Saint Paul. Dovetailing and suturing his exceptional vision with that of Saint Paul, he writes: “[t]he One is only insofar as it is for all: such is the maxim of universality when it has its root in the event. Monotheism can be understood only by taking into consideration the whole of humanity. Unless addressed to all, the One crumbles and disappears.”\(^{644}\) Like zero’s relationship to an empty set, Badiou’s One theoretically extracts from every instance of finite existence while persisting as *transcendent* to it: “‘[z]ero exists’ is inevitable a first assertion; the very one that fixes an existence from which all others will proceed…Number comes first here: it is that point of being upon which the exercise of the concept depends. Number, as number or nothing, or zero, surveys every text to its latent being. The void is not a production of thought, because it is from its existence that thought proceeds.”\(^{645}\) To that end, the One is a simulacrum of the Transcendent implied at all times and concurrently as: “dead at the heart of every presentation.”\(^{646}\) The mysterious absence or “death” of the One provides for being the leeway to evaluate objectively what is often seen to be

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\(^{643}\) Transcendence presents as immanent in reality. Badiou’s understanding of Transcendence distinguishes him from Balthasar’s views. Badiou’s comprehension of Transcendence bears some resemblance to a finite being’s apophatic grasp of the Divine. Even though Badiou denies the Divine and would not see his methodological approach as apophatic, his use of *transcendent* is an approximation of this concept.

\(^{644}\) *The Foundation of Universalism*, 76.


\(^{646}\) See: *Being and Event*, 149. Contrarily, Balthasar states that the Transcendent can be represented in being and Creation given the space between the Divine Persons allows all spatial and relational events to be understood as positive factors.
conventional, dogmatic and contingent.

To most readers, there is little that recommends a natural correspondence in the way Badiou and Saint Paul enquire about the One or God. Badiou denies the One any actual existence, making any further collations with traditionally understood Transcendence appear to be a questionable point. Consequently, Badiou’s One does not appear to be sympathetic to either Saint Paul’s faith in God or our proposed reading of Balthasar’s theology of a Transcendent Ur-kenotic Trinitarian God (ONE | 3). However, a deeper reading of Badiou brings to light several fertile meeting points. Most important for our purposes is how Badiou’s understanding of the One’s self-reflectivity influences finite being.

François Laruelle highlights how one’s self-reflection leads to some sense of a real and total foreclosure of being. If Laruelle is correct, the One’s reflection of its own non-being in the (non-)One relationship allows for only a virtual relationship “outside” its own self-conscious movement. The One’s thought of its own destruction bears on how finite beings understand their own relationship to non-being. Laruelle’s theory of the workings of the One’s self-reflectivity or conscious imaging of its eradication is helpful in critiquing Badiou’s views. Laruelle reasons that the One’s self-conscious differentiation results in a “virtual” thought. For Laruelle this dialectic introduces a “unilaterality” that suspends or invalidates the One. He states that this relationship is: “a mode of the One’s being-foreclosed, either real and not effectuated (‘uni-laterality’) or transcendental and effectuated by the occasion of philosophical ‘nothingness’”.

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647 Badiou raises several provocative points concerning the revolutionary effect Transcendence should have for transcendental understandings of human freedom, religious doctrine and secular power structures. In the following chapter we will venture some thoughts concerning these themes.
‘unilaterality’). It bears witness to the primary of (real) foreclosure over (philosophical) negations.”

Badiou argues that the One can be put in a defining relationship with its own negation, the (non-)One. Badiou takes the One’s dialectical relationship to its own (non-)One as an authentication of a finite beings’ own relationship to non-being, nothingness, and death. Badiou thematically consolidates these three negative or deviatory apparitions of finite being into his idea of the “void”. The void ontologically disposes being to be aware that non-being is the logical antipode of one’s existence. Simply put the void is the engine that delineates being as multiple and actual just as the One is -(t)ranscendent and universal reality given its antithetical imagining in the (non-)One. In Badiou’s count-as-One of the One in relationship to (non-)One and Balthasar’s understanding of Ur-kenosis it is plausible to believe an analogous use of the concept of transcendence in play.

Neither Badiou nor Balthasar believes that an unmediated experience of the One is metaphysically credible. Presumably Badiou would see in finite being’s dialectical complementing of inescapable immanence and the requisite ontological specter of

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649 As stated in Chapter One Balthasar is able to conceive of the One’s self-reflection of its own obliteration as a positive event of the Divine Persons’ conscious awareness of their kenotic relationships. As a finite being Jesus Christ consciously grasps the question of death and Hell’s relationship to the Divine’s eternal life.

650 The void circumscribes a margin, restriction or boundary for beings and this aids in their intellectual appropriation by the subject.

651 Following his mentor Plato, Badiou agrees that: “[t]he universal of a sensible object is its participation in the idea,” see: *Logics of Worlds*, 301-02. On how this helps determine Badiou’s understanding of the relationship between the qualitative, quantitative and infinity, see also: *Being and Event*, 168-170.
Transcendence, an inalterable polemic against those who believe that it is possible Jesus had a relationship with an existing “Transcendent”, the “One” or the “Father”.\(^{652}\) However, in our rendering, both Badiou’s “(non-)One of the ONE” and Balthasar’s presentation of the crucified Christ (1/GOD) cultivate, methodologically, a \textit{subtractive} or kenotic prolongation of finite being. Despite the fact Badiou has not broadened his consideration of the One’s reflexive relationship to the (non-)One to include Jesus Christ’s experience of death and Hell (1/GOD), such a move can be made without sacrificing the coherence of his philosophical vision.

The practical application of Badiou’s conceptualization of the mathematical idea of “count-as-one” is evident in his views on subjective reflectivity. According to Badiou, the idea of the “count” is necessary for how a being relates to other beings and objects in the world. Thus, the subject becomes more cognate of how her relationships to the void and One shape her understanding of the role of Transcendence, Absolute Difference, and relative differences in the constitution of her own being. Badiou develops Paul Cohen’s theory of mathematical “forcing” by putting its quantification of infinity in theoretic dialogue with the subject’s potential relations and desires. Paul Cohen’s concept of “forcing” concerns the extending of an existing logical structure of an existing theory.\(^{653}\)

\(^{652}\) Badiou’s promotion of an actual \textit{transcendence} over an assumed Transcendence is logically consistent with his mathematical ontology. However, if Balthasar is correct, Jesus’ relationship to the One or the Father is possible given his Divine-human nature includes both real and non-inhering relationships and divine and human natures in concert. Further, if one gives credence to Jesus’ kenotic acceptance of human nature all finite beings are provided a way to enter into relationship with the Divine given our human nature. We will return to these questions in more detail in Chapter Five.

\(^{653}\) The generic set that results for Cohen with his forcing method is seen as analogical to Badiou’s understanding of generic subsets modeled on his mathematical
As Fabio Gironi explains: “Badiou will formalize this infinite generic procedure of truth, the mediating process between the stasis of ontology and the dynamism of change, by exploiting Paul Cohen’s notion of forcing, a mathematical procedure rigorously proving the possibility of constructing a proof for the truth or falsity of an undecidable proposition by immanently deploying an extension of a situation wherein such a proposition is either true or false. Specifically, forcing was devised by Cohen (1966) to prove the independence of the continuum hypothesis (and the axiom of choice) from the axioms of ZFC set theory.”

Badiou can be seen as a son of the Cartesian revolution that took human thought as its starting point rather than “external” beings. In contrast, Balthasar sees in finite freedom the necessary unraveling of any formal system for: “...the existence of alien but always personal freedom intersects the two concepts of ‘transcendental’ and ‘categorical’. It can neither be captured by reflection nor arranged in a rubric that assumes its direct availability.” Likewise, it is precisely because God is infinite without a terminus that limits Godself’s perfection that finite beings can only conceive of God’s infinite nature apophatically.

Where Balthasar understands subjective intention in terms of a receptive posture to the Divine, Badiou sees subjective forcing as proof of the intrinsic and intentional power of subjective being.

ontology. For Badiou, Cohen’s mathematical “forcing” parleys into his own understanding of subjective “choice”.

654 FG, 131.


656 GL 4, 76.

657 See: SCG, I, Chp. 43.
(4) Set Theory

Not every arbitrary collection of terms or beings constitutes a mathematical set in the sense with which Badiou is concerned. Membership in a mathematical set is regulated by a specific equation or established criteria that determines what belongs and what does not belong in a set. An element or being’s relationship to a set determines its value above any prior determinations for: “there is no other nondefined primitive term or value possible for the variables apart from sets. Hence, every element of a set is itself a set. This accomplishes the idea that every multiple is a multiple of multiples, with no

658 Group membership is a process of collectivism for Badiou. The strict rules employed in postulating the characteristics of a set do not on first view account for paradoxes involving self-reflexivity. Bertrand Russell offers a well-known example of this with his set composed of sets that are not members of themselves, thereby generating an antimony, for if the set is a member of itself it isn’t and vice versa. However, the Zermelo-Fraenkel Axiom System (ZFC) parameterization of Set Theory refuses to regard such paradox-generating sets as well formed, that is, as proper mathematical sets. See: “Simply put, if there was a set of all numbers, and if this were indeed a set, there would be a number greater than the number that measures the set,” Tzuchien Tho, “What is Post-Cantorian Thought? Transfinitude and the Conditions of Philosophy” in Badiou and Philosophy (ed.) Sean Bowden and Simon Duffy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 30, Jean Van Heijenoort (ed.). A set is thus: “composed of terms which have nothing in common that could be remarked, save belonging to this situation; which, strictly speaking, is its being, qua being ... It is rightfully declared generic, because, if one wishes to qualify it, all one can say is that its elements are ... [This is] the truth of the entire situation, insofar as the sense of the indiscernible is that of exhibiting as one-multiple the very being of what belongs insofar as it belongs,” Being and Event, 338-39. See also: From Frege to Gödel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 113-17, Being and Event, 339, Alain Badiou, Conditions (trans.) Steven Corcoran (New York, NY: Continuum, 2008), 135-38 and Etienne Balibar, ‘The History of Truth: Alain Badiou in French Philosophy’, in Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy,(ed.) Peter Hallward, (New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004), 30 and Key Concepts, 53.

659 Set Theory allows one to conceive and represent the multiplicity of being as a number’s confinement to a larger grouping that makes no claims to being a universal set, the representation of all being or the absolutely unified One, see: Badiou, Deleuze: The Clamor of Being (Minneapolis, MI: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 3. See: Appendix One.
reference to units of any kind.” Mathematical belonging or inclusion describes how an element can be part or a subset of a set. The principles of inclusion and exclusion used to establish set membership are taken by Badiou to be comparable to a being’s ability to enter into and out of relationships with other beings given some determined metaphysical postulates: “[t]hat is, set theory tends to focus on objects (sets and elements), while logic tends to focus on attributes, or informational ‘boundary constraints’ that objects must satisfy. Thus, set theory ultimately defines sets in terms of the objects they contain, while logic tends to define them ‘from the outside in’ on the intersecting boundary constraints to which they conform. The difference hinges on the univalent not factor…on which complementation and intersection, but not union are, directly or indirectly defined.”

Recognizing that rules must be set out governing the membership of each set, it is of course, possible that a set can be infinitely expanded, but this move does not necessarily lead to a universal or generic set. Similarly, an unlimited number of subsets can be constructed by subtracting from an original set. Furthermore, equivalence can be shown to preserve between the original set and its subsets. The puzzle of equivalence between members of a set and subsets in Set Theory is explained as follows:

We are accustomed to thinking of a set as being “larger” than any of its proper subsets, but if we adopt the notion of equivalence as the criterion for equal size of sets, then we are inescapably led to conclude that sometimes a set and a proper subset of that set may have the same number of members. On the other hand, if

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660 Briefings on Existence, 41.
661 See: Being and Event, 82.
662 CTMU, 26. See also: Being and Event, 29, 367-71 and Logics of Worlds, 208 where Badiou defines the appearance of a term or a being as follows: “[g]iven a world and a function of appearing whose values lie in the transcendental of this world, we will call ‘existence’ of a being x which appears in this world the transcendental degree assigned to the self-identity of x.” The mathematical set provides an analogy for a Transcendent “home” for beings or elements of a set.
663 See: Appendix One.
we were to agree that a set is always “larger” than a proper subset of itself, we would have to accept the puzzling consequence that sets of different size can be put into one-to-one correspondence. Either way the situation seems paradoxical.664

The augmentation of a particular being or number by means of the creation of a subset is taken by Badiou to prove mathematically the exorbitance of truth and being. Set Theory, in kind, aids Badiou in developing his own views on truth and being’s surplus meaning where: “the generic is that subtraction from the predicative constructions of language that the universe allows through its own infinity. The generic is ultimately the superabundance of being such as it is withdrawn from the grasp of language, once an excess of determinations engenders an effect of indeterminacy.”665 This conception of the generic as inconsistent depends in part on Cantor’s displacement of a unified or singular notion of the infinite.666 Cantor’s determination of the infinite created the “space” to think about the infinite in a new way.667 To whit, Badiou concludes that: “the generic is infinite subtraction from the subsumption of the multiple beneath the One of

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664 “Equal sets” are sets having the same members; whereas “equivalent sets” are sets having the same number of members. See: Robert Wall, Introduction to Mathematical Linguistics (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, INC., 1972), 175-76. Hereafter cited as: Mathematical Linguistics. Such differs from standard interpretations of set theory holds that if A is a proper set of B, there must be at least one element in B that is not in A, but all elements of A must be in B, so they can’t actually be the same size. Badiou’s counter-intuitive position can be taken as consistent with his understanding of the One, the void and the subject being “equivalent” partners in the operation he terms the “count-as-one”.

665 Theoretical Writings, 107.

666 Cantor mathematically determined that there was more than one type of infinity. In a similar way Badiou develops the idea of the generic beyond its common mathematical definition.

the concept.” Thus, a being’s potential membership in a set or the affinity accessible among sets and their subsets mathematically pre-figures in being’s multiplicity and truth’s endless relaying of this infinite evolution. By increasing the number of subsets an addendum to a set’s membership can be confirmed and incongruously no subtracting from a numerically determined set should be possible. This paradox of Set Theory reinforces, for Badiou, the idea that being is intrinsically multiple:

I cannot, in general, designate a single one of these representatives; the result being that the delegation itself is a multiple with indistinct contours. In particular, determining how it differs from another multiple (by the axiom of extensionality) is essentially impracticable, because I would have to isolate at least one element which did not figure in the other multiple and I have no guarantee of success in such an enterprise. This type of oblique in-extensionality of the delegation indicates the anonymity of the principle of representatives.

In reference to Set Theory Badiou presupposes that being can be determined and, given its irremediable exuberance, remain indeterminate; and hence, “one cannot refer to a supposed inclusion of the event in order to conclude in its belonging.” The mathematical event, for Badiou, quantifies the undecidable, indiscernible and generic by predicking the unnamable and hence, giving it meaning. So taken, the mathematical set shows being to be given and yet also unexecuted. Being is both an unavoidable matter of existence and an unknown truth that unfailingly delegates the vanguard. To this end, John Mullarkey states that for Badiou: “[q]uantity, size or ‘cardinality’ has its own set of paradoxes that are generative: they can create genuine, unpredictable novelties or events.” The unending inundation of the truth that results from the change being

\[\text{same}\]
undergoes with the construction of new subsets from an existing set also anticipates what remains unstated for being. Being, truth and its representation always exist in a triangular relationship. John Mullarkey clarifies the ambiguity of Set Theory exclusion in Badiou’s work when he writes: “[s]o when a multiple is counted, so too, inadvertently so to speak, are the sub-multiples of that multiple. In as much, then, as those sub-multiples reside within the situation without actually being represented (to the state) as belonging to it, they are said to be ‘included’ in it. They are present in the state but not represented. They are included but do not belong.”672

Set Theory states that sets can be devised from their subsets such that there will be found at least one element not belonging to the original set.673 Badiou seems to take the definition of a proper subset and work backwards into a how the subset relates to its most comprehensive expression as a set. Because being and non-being exist in permanent relationship no final “count” of a finite being can be gauged in theory or reality. Badiou works to distance himself from the claim that this relationship depends on an actual existing Transcendent being or onto-theological act—a move he charges Cantor in making:

Cantor’s thought thus wavers between onto-theology—for which the absolute is thought as a supreme infinite being, thus as trans-mathematical, in-numerable, as a form of the one so radical that no multiple can consists therein—and mathematical ontology, in which consistency provides a theory of inconsistency, in that which proves an obstacle to it (paradoxical multiplicity) is its point of impossibility, and thus, quite simply, is not. Consequently, it fixes the point of

members, while equivalent sets have the same number of members. Equal sets are, therefore, necessarily equivalent but the converse is, in general, not true. Further, nothing is said in the definition of equivalence about the exact nature of the one-to-one correspondence between the sets—only that one exists,” see: Mathematical Linguistics, 175.

672 Post-Continental Philosophy, 91.
673 See: Logics of Worlds, 10.
non-being from whence it can be established that there is a presentation of being.\textsuperscript{674}

Badiou sees in this characteristic of Set Theory a semblance of how relations manifest and remain dormant in the world for a being. Badiou calls attention to these factors stating: “there are always sub-multiples which, despite being included in a situation as compositions of multiplies, cannot be counted in the situation as terms, and which therefore do not exist.”\textsuperscript{675} Badiou aphoristically recalls the lack of being (\textit{manqué}) and the hiddenness of being as: “that-which-is-not-being” [\textit{ce-qui-n’est-pas-l’être-en-tant-que-être}].\textsuperscript{676} A set is infinitely productive because it is based on a being, which is itself infinite in light of its \textit{Subtraction} from the One.\textsuperscript{677} There is no one set that adequately contains all the properties of being. Badiou professes this fact, stating:

It is absolutely possible to formalize the idea of a subset of the set, which is completely defined by some property. We are completely at the general level. Suppose we search to define the subset of the set. Suppose that this subset of the set is absolutely constructible by means of language. The elements of the subset are all defined by the same property. It is absolutely possible to clearly define that sort of construction. We can clearly define what constitutes the subset of a set which is completely defined by a specific property…We can say that the

\textsuperscript{674} \textit{Being and Event}, 42. See also: “Cantor…believed in the absolute truth of his set theory because it has been revealed to him…from God directly. Thus he may have seen himself not only as God’s messenger, accurately recording and transmitting the newly revealed theory of the transfinite numbers but was God’s ambassador as well. In fact Cantor did regard his work as a sacred mission…He had been given faith in the necessary truth of his mathematical discoveries by virtue of their having coming from, and their being part of, God’s infinite wisdom. In return, Cantor hoped to aid the Church in correctly understanding the problem of infinity…”[i]t is surprising that his deep religious convictions have received so little attention in discussions of his development of set theory,” Joseph Warren Dauben, \textit{Georg Cantor: His Mathematics and Philosophy of the Infinite} (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 232. We assume that Badiou’s critique of Cantor’s approach is also applicable to Balthasar. We return to this issue in the last chapters of the present work.

\textsuperscript{675} \textit{Being and Event}, 97.

\textsuperscript{676} \textit{Being and Event}, 193.

\textsuperscript{677} See: \textit{Manifesto for Philosophy}, 103-07.

The construction of a mathematical set proves for Badiou that beings can manifest new properties, aspects and strands that allow one to enter into new relationships.\footnote{The ability to enter into relationship initiates moral reverberations, see: Alain Badiou, \textit{Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil}, (trans.) Peter Hallward, (London: Verso Press, 2001), 106, 115 and Alain Badiou and Farbien Tarby, \textit{Philosophy and Event} (trans.) Louise Burchill (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013), 115-116. However, at this stage the being communicates the unity of opposites or contraries in a dialect relationship. These different sides of dialect are simply aspects, “tendency slope” or “\textit{versant}”.}

A being’s predication in a set’s membership and its relative autonomy, mathematically, remains because difference or the \textit{subtractive} quantifies specific facets of being. Recalling that the Transcendent only serves as a provision for an encompassing set or \textit{transcendent} set is, for Badiou, proof of a being’s endless multiplicity or ‘freedom’ to face the indiscernible and unnamable in reality.\footnote{\textit{Theoretical Writings}, 113.} The structure of the set acts as a “Transcendent” observer for the terms of the set.\footnote{See: \textit{Logics of Worlds}, 278, and 289-293.} The way one structures the relationships among beings limits being itself, as Badiou writes: “no multiple is capable of forming-a-one out of everything it includes.”\footnote{Being and Event, 85. See also: \textit{Post-Continental Philosophy}, 84 and \textit{The Subject of Change}, 16.}

Mathematical subtraction can bring a particular “count” of a set’s membership but it can never represent the entire truth or an all-encompassing set. Balthasar avoids this limitation by premising a supra-Transcendent Ur-kenotic Being whose actual existence limits or quantifies all reality. The truth represented in the set is universally valid but this does not mean that what is mapped out in the set explains being \textit{in totalitate}.
(5) Mathematical Subtraction and Metaphysical Difference

Badiou asserts that the interconnection between the concept of a universal set and the parameters for inclusion into a given set is profitably imported as a template to better understand being’s relationship with the allegorical One. However, this mythic marriage only consummates for Badiou in an actual being. Badiou’s position suggests that some concept of the virtual is unavoidable as subjective freedom is impossible without some account of difference and in-differing in being. Consequently, a subject’s predication of a being leaves some things indiscernible:

[t]he verifying trajectory goes on, investing the situation through successive indifferences. Little by little, what takes shape behind these acts begins to delineate the contour of a subset of the situation—or of the universe wherein the eventual axiom verifies its effects. This subset is clearly infinite and remains beyond the reach of completion. Nevertheless, it is possible to state that if it is completed, it will ineluctably be a generic subset.

Since the material and relational characteristics of a term or being are isomorphic to its mathematical demonstration and material appearance, Badiou states that: “‘atomic logic’ [is] the theory of the relations which are thinkable between the elements of an object…What we are moving towards is the retroaction of appearing in being.”

Subjective grasp of the language of mathematics and reality exist in a relationship of

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683 Tzuchien Tho points out that Badiou’s identification of set theory in terms of axiomatic theory is non-polar as it premises a separation between ontology and philosophy that allows for the historical localization of being. He writes that: “[i]n this series of localizations, the localization of the consistent multiples within the inconsistent absolute multiples, the localization of axiomatic set theory with the historicity of its grounds, we gather a more precise picture of Badiou’s relationship with Cantor,” Tzuchien Tho, “What is Post-Cantorian Thought? Transfinitude and the Conditions of Philosophy” in Badiou and Philosophy (ed.) Sean Bowden and Simon Duffy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 35.

684 Theoretical Writings, 113.

685 Logics of Worlds, 221. On the separation of being in an ontological situation and its appearance in the world, see: FG, 41.
Shifting our focus from a being’s metaphysical grounding to that of an actual material being forces the illusive relationship of being and One into the background. A mathematical set provides Badiou with a way to construct theoretically a way to identify being locally. The identity of any one term in a mathematical set typifies how a being can be substantially present in her relationships in the world. Oliver Feltham summarizes the gist of Badiou’s designs in his synopsis: “set theory ontology may be said to be an ontology of immanence, retaining being within its inscriptions.” A being’s appearance is not possible without its continuing relationship to the non-existing One. The mathematical set logically holds its terms in existence just as a subject is seen to “hold” beings in existence by observing them.

Badiou’s metaphysic prohibits an encyclopedic application of Difference. As the relationship to (non-)One is never fully revealed, it is impossible for Difference to be exhibited globally. Difference is ubiquitous but can only be recognized insofar as it assigns in a particular being. However, from a particular being’s relational capacities one can hypothetically also see how the One’s non-inhering relationship is seen to configure

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686 CTMU, 25.
687 Oliver Feltham, “Translator’s Preface”, in Alain Badiou, Being and Event (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005), xxiv.
688 Balthasar, and theologians like him, would probably make a distinction between Badiou’s “nominalist” accounts outlined above and his own “realist” and Christocentric approach to this question. Further, Balthasar would likely point out the One’s Transcendence precludes it “subcontracting” out its roles or functions. Therefore, a finite being will never be able to consciously understand the One-(non-)One relationship.
689 The use of a capital “D” is meant to point out the hypothetical universality of difference in Badiou’s work. As noted in Chapter One, for Balthasar all finite difference finds its limit in the absolute “negation” of Jesus Christ taking on responsibility for the Cross and his descent into Hell.
690 As Laruelle says, if the One’s relationship with the (non-)One were actual the foreclosure of being would follow.
with its own opposite in the (non-)One. Correspondingly, the idea of Difference exists in the penumbra of being without overshadowing the ancillary differences individual beings experience in the world.

Badiou illuminates the intricate and nebulous manner of an abstract Difference’s modification of being’s experience of differences by consulting how relations function in a mathematical set. Difference is found in the relationship existing among individual variables in a mathematical set. Without this differentiation, Ignacio Jane explains, a contradiction ensues, as the terms of a set become indistinguishable:

A multiplicity can be such that the assumption that all of its elements ‘are together’ leads to a contradiction, so that it is impossible to conceive of the multiplicity as a unity, as ‘one completed thing’. Such multiplicities I call absolutely infinite or inconsistent multiplicities…If on the other hand, the totality of the elements of a multiplicity can be thought of without contradiction as ‘being together’, so that they can be gathered together into ‘one thing’, I call it a consistent multiplicity or a ‘set’.

Difference’s “presence” in the set guarantees that individual identity is expandable by introducing new numbers acceptable to the parameters of belonging already determined by the set. Just as Ur-kenosis is pivotal to being in Balthasar, Difference metaphysically “engineers” being and truth in Badiou’s oeuvre. For both thinkers a being’s relationship to difference is accidental and non-inhering. However, difference is necessary for a being’s pursuit of truth: “[a] truth is a difference with the freedom of something which is beyond difference. It is not the suppression of difference

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691 See: Briefings on Existence, 98.
692 An argument can be made that if Difference is quantified by Set Theory an empty set results. This question will be taken up in the following section.
694 See: The Subject of Change, 17.
but the difference with something not reducible to the difference.”  

Where Balthasar suggests human freedom finds source in the Trinitarian Ur-konotic act of Creation and Jesus’ redemptive opening of space within reality to participate in his mission, Badiou argues that being’s additive relationship to the One exhibits the extrication of topological space from the idea of immeasurable Difference.

For Balthasar, a being’s surface appearance points to the changelessness of the Divine, as well as, the excitable manifold of a finite being. Denying an actual Transcendent, Badiou configures topological finite differences by means of a quadripartite distribution of the “one-more”, the “one-less”, the “finite” and the “infinite”. These “topoi” encode the ontology of appearance.

Difference distinguishes mathematical sets and the terms they contain. This “in-differing” gives beings or mathematical terms the freedom to relate in a set or reality. The in-differing of beings as a mathematical criterion frees up terms or beings within the set to promulgate their individual properties and introduce these into the world. This characteristic offers Badiou a way to better understand how mathematics illuminates a being’s freedom:

Freedom is absolutely under the condition of a generic set. We cannot be free in the constructable universe. You have your place. To have a place is not sufficient to be free. To be free is also to recognize another place and to eventually go to other places. The space must be generic for elementary freedom. When you are enclosed in a purely constructable universe, you are enclosed in something like madness.

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695 The Subject of Change, 16.
696 See: Theoretical Writings, 111.
697 Anindya Bhattacharyya, “Sets, Categories and Topoi: Approaches to Ontology”, in Badiou and Philosophy (ed.) Sean Bowden and Simon Duffy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 81-82. Later in the chapter we will explore the question of topology in terms of existing beings.
Badiou repudiates an essential reading of being since such a starting point either, in the end, denies being’s material basis or infers a final definition of being.\(^{699}\) However, if our interpretation of his philosophy of Set Theory is correct, some essential or relational differentiation of being is inescapable.

(6) The Empty Set, Difference and the Ontological Void

As outlined previously, Difference can be thought as a mathematical progenitor of the difference that is ascertainable between terms in a set or a being’s relationship in the world.\(^{700}\) The empty set gives Badiou a way to explain mathematically how spatial difference and identity can be categorized in way that guarantees a being’s freedom.\(^{701}\) The multiplicity or in-differing of being disallows for Badiou that a set with even a single term could be taken to be a universal set. However, the empty or null set displays what a set would look like if it contained Absolute Difference.\(^{702}\) The Empty Set Axiom states that there is at least one set without any elements.\(^{703}\) ZFC theory has the “ontological capacity” to “actively unfold the structure of nothing”.\(^{704}\) The empty set is theoretically open to be modified to accept any rules for set membership or any mathematical terms. The empty set best equips Badiou with a logical apparatus to conceptualize an all-

\(^{699}\) That is not say that Badiou does not see in the quantity-quality polarity a useful “fiction” when it comes to discriminating the exceptional status and autonomy of beings, see: Being and Event, 57.

\(^{700}\) As noted in Chapter One Badiou’s concepts of the void and empty set are taken to be analogous to Balthasar’s use of diastema and Absolute Difference’s relationship to Jesus Christ’s conscious appraisal of death and Hell.

\(^{701}\) See: Theoretical Writings, 55-58.

\(^{702}\) Absolute Difference is not equitable with the concepts of nothingness or non-being but rather, for Badiou, represents the results of the One’s conscious representation of the (non-)One.

\(^{703}\) The empty or nonempty set is denoted by \(\emptyset\) and the power set of \(\emptyset\) is \(\{\emptyset\}\). See also: Being and Event, 55, and 86-88.

\(^{704}\) Manifesto of Philosophy, 29.
encompassing set open to the pure spontaneity or inconsistency of being and any future “gestalt” of relational difference. In other words, the empty set seems to provide Badiou with a way to quantify how being relates to difference’s pure in-differing or the void. Badiou can thus claim that:

There is no question about it: the ‘first’ present multiplicity without concept has to be a multiple of nothing, because if it was a multiple of something, that something would then be in the position of the one. And it is necessary, thereafter, that the axiomatic rule solely authorizes compositions on the basis of this multiple-of-nothing, which is to say on the basis of the void.

This relationship seems to best represent the One’s relationship to the (non-)One. This modeling suggests to Badiou that the empty set has an infinite capacity to accept member(s). The null set is a mathematical envoy or metaphor for a being’s infinite relationship to the void. Kenneth A. Reynhout explains: “[t]he null-set axiom in set theory, the assertion that Ø exists, is the ontological decision for the void. In set theoretic

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705 The differing Badiou is advocating here is abstract and not the material differentiation of physical beings, see: Theoretical Writings, 53, 124 and 196. Badiou recognizes his debt to Spinoza in his formulations of how the purely multiple and inconsistent can nevertheless philosophically register as an understandable whole. Badiou explains Spinoza’s system as follows: “[a] composition of multiple individual (plura individua) is actually one and the same singular thing provided that these individuals contribute to one unique action, that is, insofar as they simultaneously cause a unique effect (unius effectus causa), see: Being and Event, 112.

706 Being and Event, 58. According to Hallward, Badiou mathematically derives the nature of the void’s relationship to being with a philosophical adaptation of Von Neumann ordinals. As Bowden explains of this process: “the unlimited production of new multiples begins, woven from the void in accordance with the laws of being (and particularly the power-set axiom). For, since the set, { }, there exists, one can consider its power set p { }, etc. This process can obviously be repeated indefinitely,” in Badiou and Philosophy (ed.) Sean Bowden and Simon Duffy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 48. See also: A Subject to Truth, 103.

707 See: Appendix One.

708 The empty set Z = {Ø} is adapted to “domicile” an infinite succession of terms for example: Z = {Ø, Ø…}. 
terms, the void is the fundamental set that contains no elements, on which all other consistent sets are built."\(^{709}\) From this perspective, Badiou can take an empty set to be a transliteration of being’s relationship to the void. The space between being and the void ‘subsidizes’ finite being as infinitely excessive or in the words of the scholar Clayton Crockett: “[t]he notion of the void is crucial for Badiou’s understanding of being, because the void allows for the excess of inclusion over belonging ‘inclusion is in irremediable excess of belonging.’”\(^{710}\) Because being is excessive in relationship to the void no one of its appearances completely define being. A chasm opens between inclusion and exclusion that speaks to the relationship of infinity to being-in-totality and the void that points to an ontological impasse disclosing the difference existing between the discrete and continuous.\(^{711}\) Consequently, there is no way for a being to arrest its relationship to the void in Badiou’s system any more than Balthasar believes that a finite being can end its relationship to ontological differing.\(^{712}\)

Even though the empty set and void indicate that no single appearance of being represents its full depths, nonetheless, they still legitimate for Badiou the entrusting of non-being, nothing and, conclusively, the void with some role every being’s eventual debut:

\(^{709}\) Hidden Void, 226. See also: “every thinkable being is drawn from operations first applied to the void alone. A multiple will be all the more complex the longer the operational chain which, on the basis of the void, leads to its determination,” Alain Badiou, Logics of Worlds, 112.

\(^{710}\) Clayton Crockett, Deleuze Beyond Badiou: Ontology, Multiplicity and Event (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2013), 109. See also: Being and Event, 77 and 85.

\(^{711}\) See: Being and Event, 279 and 281.

\(^{712}\) For Balthasar, Christ’s experience of death and Hell presents a greater negativity than a finite being experiences in her relationships to nothingness, non-being, the void or ontological difference. We return to this theme in Chapter Five.
The void is the ‘suture’ of being to presentation because it is the point through which a situation comes to be—the count-for-one—you by which being—as inconsistent multiplicity—is foreclosed from presentation. The void is ‘subtractive’ for two reasons. The first is that it is subtracted from presentation and, second, it does not participate in any of the qualities of the situation—although it is proper to the situation, it is as if all of the particularities of the situation are removed or subtracted from it. So for Badiou, every situation is ultimately founded on a void.\(^{713}\)

The void is the metaphysical “vacuum” of being—its point of rarefaction, a mandatory component to being’s materialization, and the means for its appearance and representation.\(^{714}\) In addition, the void and its coterie of negative and subtractive percepts act as a conceptual fence “around” material being.\(^{715}\) The phenomenal appearance and materialistic properties of being are all subsequent to the void. Along these lines Badiou proposes that the factors that contravene being set out a way for material being to neutralize its own relationship to all that is contrary to its existence.\(^{716}\)

\(^{713}\) Infinite Thought, 12. See also: Being and Event, 67-69 and Post-Continental Philosophy, 97. Badiou’s void shows some of the characteristics of Balthasar’s understanding of ontological difference. Like ontological difference, Badiou’s void is key in the metaphysical structuring of consciousness and freedom. In Chapter Five, we take up how Balthasar’s views of ontological difference vary from Badiou’s theory of the void.

\(^{714}\) The subject’s mental representation of a being’s appearance includes her own underlining relationships to the void. In this sense, the subject’s representation of another being is more correctly, Badiou notes, a re-representation. While it is beyond our scope here, one might add that for Balthasar one must also account for one’s logical or theological relationship to the Transcendent and thus every re-representation is actually a re-re-representation.

\(^{715}\) The material structure and symbolic order of a being are in a dialectic opposition to all negative forces. This meeting takes place in what Badiou calls the espace de placement, the “space of placement”. See: Theory of Subject, 76-77 and 184.

\(^{716}\) The provenance of being’s relationship to the void is whatever contradicts being, namely non-being or “inconsistent multiplicities”. This ontological event reverberates in zero’s status among other numbers. According to Badiou, “zero introduces neutrality and the void into the heart of number,” and presumably into being: “We are obliged to establish that an object is indeed the being-there of an ontologically determinate being; or that the logic of appearing does not exhaustively constitute the intelligibility of objects, which also presupposes an ontological halting point that is at the
Badiou looks to Plato’s inquiry into the problem of the one and the many for a guiding rationale and genealogy for his explanation of a subject’s proactive relationship to the void:

In Set Theory, the primitive name of Being is the void, the empty set. The whole hierarchy takes root in it. In a certain sense, it alone “is.” And the logic of difference implies that the void is unique. Indeed, it cannot differ from another since it contains no element (no local point) that can aver this difference. This combination of primitive naming by the simple absolute (or the in-different, which is the status of the One in the Parmenides) and of a foundational unity is indubitably Platonic.717

The void marks the ‘place’ of metaphysical transition where a being ceases to be a dissonant multiplicity and appears in the world as a well-defined creature.718 Given a subject’s ability to consciously understand this process working in her own being she has some capacity to interpret and mentally represent it. Badiou admits that in naming being a certain paradox results, for: “it becomes impossible to subtract oneself from the proper name if this subtraction’s uniqueness provides the basis for the propriety of a name. As a result, there would seem to be no proper of the proper, which is to say, no singularity of that which subtracts itself from all self-doubling through the name of its singularity.”719

basis of appearing as the determination of objects-in-the-world,” Logics of Worlds, 195. See also: Briefings on Existence, 125.

717 Briefings on Existence, 98. Scholars see Badiou’s reading of Plato as determinative to his approach to mathematics: “[t]hus far his radicalism is familiar and goes by the name of mathematical ‘realism’ or Platonism. Unlike mathematical ‘formalists’ like David Hilbert, for whom truth or falsity depends on the axiom system one chooses to deal with, just as, in a game, a certain move is allowed if it doesn’t violate the rules; unlike ‘intuitionists’ such as Henri Poincaré, L. E. J. Brouwer, or Hermann Weyl, who handle infinity with pincers and refrain from proofs by contradiction; unlike post-Tractatus Ludwig Wittgenstein, Badiou is a Platonist for whom the huge universe of set-theoretical objects is real,” Ricardo L. Nirenberg and David Nirenberg, “Badiou’s Number: A Critique of Mathematics as Ontology” Critical Inquiry 37 (Summer 2011): 584.

718 Being and Event, 94-95.

719 Theoretical Writings, 109. In Chapters Five and Six we suggest that
The unique acts as a category from which all beings can be causally organized. The unique staves off ambiguity at the local level and philosophically precludes the universal determination of Being to the degree individual beings are so harmonized they become indistinct.\(^\text{720}\) Therefore, the void makes known what “in-consists” in being’s relationship to the void as a “being of nothing” and a means by which self-reflectivity is made possible.\(^\text{721}\) A being presents herself by trying to be completely \textit{subtracting}, or distancing herself from the void with view to her own mental designs. However, some remnant of the void remains for Badiou as he ruminates: “every situation implies nothing of its all.”\(^\text{722}\) A being cannot be finally defined even as a self-reflective exercise.\(^\text{723}\) Badiou makes a careful distinction between the void and nothingness. Ontologically the subject is fixed by her relationship to the void, whereas a being’s \textit{subtraction} from the One patterns her intellectual apprehension of the idea of nothingness.\(^\text{724}\) Clearly though, a qualified sense of “nothingness” motivates Badiou’s whole project. As Fabio Gironi elucidates:

Balthasar’s understanding of Trinitarian kenosis offers a singular presentation of “subtraction” from which all further nominations of being can be derived.


\(^\text{721}\) See: \textit{Being and Event}, 54 and \textit{Logics of Worlds}, 324. Badiou sees in the writings of Saint Paul a similar process of approaching the given reality of Christ’s absence on earth. The French philosopher and the early man of faith have analogous problems, namely how absence must be read with view to the radical multiplicity of our existence. The void challenges the subject with having nothing but the “vanished event to face up to,” see: \textit{The Foundation of Universalism}, 58.

\(^\text{722}\) \textit{Being and Event}, 54. See also: Ibid, 55 and 68-69.

\(^\text{723}\) As set out in earlier chapters nihilism can finally be defeated as a being’s relationship to her own ontological difference includes some relationship to Jesus Christ’s finite ontological differing—a relationship that participates in the Transcendent Ur-kenotic Divine and hence final meaning.

\(^\text{724}\) \textit{Post-Continental Philosophy}, 96.
All philosophical thought develops from an *affirmation* of nothingness towards infinity. Such was the (arch-rationalist) founding gesture of Descartes (the philosopher from whom, second only to Plato, Badiou fashions much of his style and method): to begin with nothingness left behind by hyperbolic doubt and employ the mere affirmation of this nothingness as the cornerstone of an entire philosophical edifice. Unlike Descartes, however, Badiou (through set theory) is able to turn the *subjective* founding gesture into an *impersonal* (ontological), axiomatic inscription of the Void as the name (or the trace) of the ‘ordinary’ nothing or inconsistent multiplicity.  

Subjective experience merges these two strands of emptiness together. Neither are fully present or absent as the void threatens the subject’s annihilation while simultaneously giving her the means to covenant her existence in reality: “[t]he void is the name of being—of inconsistency—according to a situation, inasmuch as presentation gives us therein an unrepresentable access, thus non-access, to this access, in the mode of what is not-one, nor composable of ones; thus what is qualifiable within the situation solely as the errancy of nothing.” Balthasar would agree that being remains, in part, incomprehensible because it is a gift of God. Self-knowledge is *subtractive* but never nihilistic when one recognizes the person is an image of God. 

Theologians such as Balthasar speak to this truth in terms of the giftedness of Creation. Analogously Badiou writes that: “however exact the quantitative knowledge of a situation may be, one cannot, other than by an arbitrary decision, estimate by ‘how much’ its state exceeds it.” Because this process unfolds in subjective thought, Badiou argues, being never presupposes a “transcendental constitution” as traditionally

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725 *FG*, 26.  
726 *Being and Event*, 56. Balthasar appreciates the absence of the One in subjective experience not as an atheistic premise but as proof of the historical event of the Cross and its promise for humanity.  
727 *Being and Event*, 278. Badiou’s proof concerns his reading of Cantor’s theory of countable infinities. See also ibid, 150-160 on the mathematical basis of a theory of infinity that Badiou adapts to his own understanding of being’s excessiveness.
understood in various philosophical and theological systems, rather he sees the process of
the subject’s constituting as a temporal and material event for every being.\footnote{728} The site,
that is a being’s particular experience of the world, is a necessary trait of all being for
Badiou. Consequently, the site’s incomplete actualization in subjective thought points to
a being’s need for development. Therefore Badiou states: “[w]e will call \textit{fact} a site
whose intensity of existence is not maximal. We will call \textit{singularity} a site whose
intensity of existence is maximal.”\footnote{729} A being’s “count-as-one” takes into consideration
the totality of a being but this only appears in a polar relationship to a subject’s local and
global experiences of difference and the elusive One. Badiou sees the future as given but
prey to chance and the improbable.\footnote{730} The future must be brought into existence by
subjective choice as the transformation of a site into an event is an open-ended and global
process, but one that is always an interpretative and quantifiable act. Badiou speaks to
the subject’s role in terms of her “faithful” response and the unfolding of an event in
terms of being’s characteristic generic operational nature, writing that: “[w]hat the proper
name designates here is that the subject, as local situated configuration, is neither the

\footnote{728} See: \textit{A Subject of Truth}, 181-82 and \textit{Badiou and Žižek: Philosophy in the
Present}, (ed.) Peter Engelmann, (trans.) Peter Thomas and Alberto Toscano (Malden,
\footnote{729} \textit{The Logics of Worlds}, 372. The point where the transcendent and being \textit{qua}
being balance is termed by Badiou the “maximum”. He writes: “[t]he existence of a
maximum is worldly principle of stability. Appearing is never endlessly amendable;
there is no infinite ascension towards the light of being-there. The maximum of
appearance distributes unto the beings indexed to it, the calm and equitable certainty of
their worldliness. This is also because there is no Universe, only words. In each and
every world, the immanent existence of a maximal value of the transcendental signals
that this world is never the world,” see: \textit{Logics of World}, 139. For a religious reading of
the maximal see: \textit{The Foundation of Universalism}, 23.
\footnote{730} According to Badiou, the void makes possible the presentation of being and
hence subjectivity but the manner and timing of its orchestrations are its own. On the
influence of the concept of the clinamen on Badiou’s system, see: \textit{Theory of Subject}, 58-61.
intervention nor the operator of fidelity, but the advent of their Two, that is, the incorporation of the event into the situation in the mode of a generic procedure.”\textsuperscript{731} The coetaneous discrepancy between the void and subjective being diminishes when a being appears in the world. In the world a subject’s attention turns to the historical and material reality in which she finds herself. This “stabilization” happens at a particular “site”, as Badiou explains:

A site is an object of the world that globally falls under the laws of differentiation and identity that it locally assigns to its own elements. It makes itself appear. Examining the possible consequences of the existence of a site, we can infer a crucial distinction between a fact and an event. Broadly speaking, an event is a site, which is capable of making exist in a world the proper inexistent of the object that underlines the site. This tipping-over of the inapparent into appearing singularizes—in the retroaction of its logical implications—the event-site\textsuperscript{732}

Because there is a difference between situations and the being or context of the situations, the site supplies a local for the “redoublement” or re-representation and “intensification” of a being’s appearance by allowing her to enter into new relationships.\textsuperscript{733} The difference within being (e.g. in-differing) in its association with the void reappears in a being’s arrangement of a site: “[t]he consistency of presentation thus requires that all structure be doubled by a meta-structure which secures the former against any fixation of the void that is against any inconsistency.”\textsuperscript{734}

Difference is critical for Badiou’s understanding of a being’s ontological make-up and the way a subject consciously represents herself and other beings in the world.

\textsuperscript{731} Being and Event, 393.
\textsuperscript{732} Logics of Worlds, 452. See: Appendix One.
\textsuperscript{733} See: Being and Event, xxii-xiii, and Infinite Thought, 11-12.
\textsuperscript{734} Sean Bowden, “Badiou and Lautman”, in Badiou and Philosophy (ed.) Sean Bowden and Simon Duffy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 50. See also: Being and Event, 93-94
Post-Continental Philosophy, 86.
Consequently, difference is part of being’s universal experience although it never fully interiorizes or exteriorizes a finite being, a perceived object, or a subjective interpretation of the world. Indeed, like Balthasar, Badiou sees perception and scientific laws as statistical descriptions that can only point to the “objective regularity” of beings in the world. This in no way is meant to suggest that either thinker de-values being. The subject defines the beings she comes across in the world by means of relationships and this gives their own in-differing a value to the project of beings’ disclosure in the world. Badiou defines the object as: “an ontological category par excellence. It is fully logical, in that it designates being as being-there.” Difference or \textit{subtraction} is a logical construct that keeps separate each being’s unfolding, representation and appearance.\textsuperscript{735} Subsuming the difference between beings, a subject is given access to her own exceptional phenomenal appearing in the world. Badiou emphasizes that a being’s localization involves relations with at least one other being or metaphysical principle and therefore relation directly structures the “being of the multiple.”\textsuperscript{736}

The locale classifies, Badiou asserts, the event of a being’s subjective appearance because it takes the differences at the heart of being as a logical basis for being’s relationship with other beings in the world. The subject’s conscious awareness of these developments affects how she perceives the site or place where she exists in the world. Consciously recognizing the locale or site transforms such a space into an event for being’s full manifestation.\textsuperscript{737} The event ‘buries’ the occasion of the site, eviscerating its

\textsuperscript{735} Logics of Worlds, 220.
\textsuperscript{736} Being and Event, 41, 66-69 and Theory of the Subject, 68-71.
\textsuperscript{737} A subject’s relationship to an object is only known through retroaction and recollection, see: Logic of Worlds, 220-21.
\textsuperscript{738} On the intervention of the event into a site see: Being and Event, 204-207.
power over the subject, which frees her to take a more conscious reading of being:

I will term eventual site an entirely abnormal multiple; that is, a multiple such that none of its elements are presented in the situation. The site, itself, is presented, but ‘beneath’ it nothing from which it is composed is presented. As such, the site is not part of the situation. I will also say of such a multiple it is on the edge of the void, or foundational. 739

It is here that a being’s existential coherence takes shape or its way: “of numerating absolutely non-composed multiplicity” (e.g. a being’s relationship to the void) becomes a “totally disruptive occurrence”, that is, a lived event. 740 This process of oscillation and vacillation (battement) continues as a transcendent calculus of a being until it reaches a “maximum” density or singularity. 741 It is at this apex that the totality of a being’s relationships and intentions are subjectively embodied and consciously understood. At this mise en scène a being has a pseudo-transcendent experience of the world. Badiou claims that at this point being experiences an: “immanent cohesion of the world that

739 Being and Event, 175. See also: Being and Event, 179, 190, 284 and After Finitude, 86: “there is nothing beneath or beyond the gratuity of the given—nothing, except for the limitless and lawless power of its destruction, emergence, and preservation.”

740 See: Being and Event, 169, Briefings on Existence, 116, Theory of the Subject, 197, Infinite Thought, 21, Appendix One and Badiou’s translation of the question of multiplicity and void into one of choice and concept in Being and Event, 280, where he states that: “[i]t is as though, between the structure in which the immediacy of belonging is delivered, and the metastructure which counts as one the parts and regulates the inclusions, a chasm opens, whose filling in depends solely upon a conceptless choice.”

741 While the development of this question is beyond the purview of our current project, Badiou intimates that change and relationship are closely linked if not equitable from the historical point of view. This position distances him from thinkers such as Balthasar who even in the context of the Incarnation determine the historical in view of the Father’s “supra-transcendence”. More specifically, for Badiou, historical change mirrors a being’s transcendental potential: “[w]e now have at our disposal three distinct degrees of change: modification, which is ontologically neutral and transcendentally regular; the fact, which is ontologically supernumerary but existentially (and thus logically) weak; singularity; which is ontologically supernumerary and whose value of appearance (or of existence) is maximal,” see: Logics of Worlds, 372. See also: Ibid, 103 and 416.
springs from becoming-existent of the eventual trace, as a new birth beyond all the facts and markers of time.”  

In other words, at the event a being has the opportunity to take responsibility for the meaning the subject makes in the world.

An ‘eventual’ site is a symmetrical point medial to the subject’s metaphysical enhancing and her historical existence.  

The being is described as “tipping over” or “toppling” from its algebraic orientation and turns to historical orientation (basculement). Neither fully determined by her metaphysical grounding nor by the world’s influences a being begins to grow into subjectivity at the event. The dialectical relationship between being and event is relative to every being and this incurs a proportionate liberty and consciousness, for every being. As this unfolds respective to each being’s experience, a hierarchy in reality only prevails relatively and: “all laws, physical or biological or psychological, or juridical, are laws of appearing in the context of a singular world.”

According to Badiou, as a subject’s desires change and new historical circumstances present she can metaphorically create a new world. Even the fundamental laws of existence can be re-interpreted by the subject.

By her materiality the subject “[ubtracts” the void or her in-differing and the nothingness of other’s being’s intellectual understanding of their own relationships to the void.  

Although the void’s relationship to the One is necessary for a being’s

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742 See: Logics of the Worlds, 508.
744 Three Negations, 1880. See also: Infinite Thought, 27 and Theory of the Subject: “[p]rimacy does not mean ontological hierarchy, or pre-eminence, since there exists only matter,” 193.
745 Such a move has met with some criticism as it seems to imply an elitist manipulation of the “other” in Badiou’s thought.
metaphysical grounding it must be removed from directly influencing events in the world.\textsuperscript{746} Badiou thus safeguards that actual material beings are able to be free and conscious agents of chance in the world:

Putting God aside, I will maintain that it is the indiscernible that co-ordinates the subject as pure punctum in the process of verification. A subject is that which disappears between two indiscernibles, or that which is eclipsed through the subtraction of a difference without concept. This subject is that throw of the dice which does not abolish chance but effectuates it as verification of the axiom that grounds it. What was decided at the point of the undecidable event will proceed through this term, in which the local act of a truth is represented—without reason or marked difference, and indiscernible from its other. The subject, fragment of chance, crosses the distance between two terms. In this regard the subject of a truth is in effect genuinely in-different: the indifferent lover.\textsuperscript{747}

The One represents its continued existence to a being as an absence—a (non-)One. This dual relationship suggests that a weak and abstract notion of the Transcendent is necessary for Badiou’s understanding of finite existence.

The site is the place where a being’s relationship to the void and infinity is momentarily “suspended” or “interrupted” so as to signal being’s arrival. The multiplicity of a situation presupposes a new representation or appearance of being and this series of referential correspondences continues indefinitely for a being is infinite and participates in a local situation that is finite but open-ended.\textsuperscript{748} Badiou observes that:

There is an incommensurability between the finitude of its act and the infinity of

\textsuperscript{746} Strictly speaking, from a Christian point of view Badiou’s system leaves little leeway for a traditionally conceived sense of providence or the Transcendent. We will return to this matter of contention in Chapter Five.

\textsuperscript{747} Theoretical Writings, 113. See also: Being and Event, 191-98 and 212-22.

\textsuperscript{748} See: Alain Badiou, “Existence and Death” (trans.) Nina Powers and Alberto Toscano, Discourse24.1 (2002), 67 and Alain Badiou, Metapolitics, trans. J. Barker (London: Verso Press, 2005), 143. The indefinability of a set or any grouping of beings is open-ended because being is universal and hence platforms in generic qualities and quantifications, see: Logics of Worlds where Badiou writes that: “[i]t is necessary to think discontinuity as such, a discontinuity that cannot be reduced to any creative univocity, as indistinct or chaotic as the concept of such a univocity may be,” 362.
its being. This incommensurability is also what relates the verifying exposition of the eventual axiom to the infinite hypothesis of its completion; or what relates the indiscernible subtraction, which founds the subject, to the generic subtraction, wherein is anticipated the truth that the subject is a subject of. This is the relation between the almost nothing, the finite, and the almost everything, the Infinite. Whence the fact that ever truth is scarcely-said, since what is said about it is always tied to the local order of verification.\footnote{Theoretical Writings, 114.}

Oliver Feltham elaborates on this ongoing “suturing” and confession of being in Badiou’s thought by observing that: “for Badiou, there is thus an unassignable gap between presentation [belonging] and representation [inclusion]: there are incalculably more ways of re-presenting presented multiplicities than there are such multiples.”\footnote{Oliver Feltham, Alain Badiou: Live Theory (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008), 95.} Perhaps, in simpler terms we would add that being is excessive but created and finite. The immanent flourishing of beings in the world never completely eradicates the need for the Transcendent, albeit for Badiou, a Transcendent conceived in terms of the One’s deconstructive relationship to the (non-)One. It is this dialectic that further makes possible subjective discernment and freedom in the world. Indeed, Balthasar’s living Ur-kenotic Divine as realized in Jesus Christ’s descent into Hell and Badiou’s One(non-)One relationship are both are seen as theo-philosophical narratives that argue for the necessity of some Transcendent marker that infers created spaces in finite reality and the free subjective determination of finite beings. Badiou’s denial of an actual Transcendent being is necessary for the rational calculus his theory depends on.

\footnote{Just as the excessiveness of power set helps Badiou conceptualize the infinite, the empty set offers Badiou a way for him to understand the idea of the void. The void in Badiou’s system is seen to operate in a parallel fashion to kenotic and ontological difference and the distance separating the Divine from Creation in Balthasar’s work. In Chapter Five we will enumerate and analyze these topics in greater specification.}
(7) Infinity

As being is in an incessant bond with the void and synchronically believed to be materially stationed in the world, an anomaly of sorts emerges from Badiou’s treatment. Badiou has no doubts that a mathematical concept of infinity can answer any idiosyncrasies caused by being’s stepping into the world. More precisely, the mathematical concept of infinity explains a being’s relationship with the void and the One’s transcendent correspondences, that is, in horizontal and immanent relationships within reality. The continual and horizontal manifestation of truth calls to mind a postmodern lateral interpretation of the concept of epektasis—where the end of one finite ascent seamlessly becomes the beginning of another. However, Balthasar does not see in the postmodern position an authentic transcendental relation, as: “[t]he horizontal has a genuine tension only within the accompanying vertical tension.” Badiou writes that: “[t]here is no God. Which also means: the One is not. The multiple ‘without-one’—every multiple being in its turn nothing other than a multiple of multiples—is the law of being. The only stopping point is the void.” In this regard, Badiou tries to learn from the work of Georg Cantor (1845-1918). Developing earlier philosophical interpretations of the infinite as a non-existent or potential unending series, Cantor was able to mathematically delimitate and measure the infinite.

Badiou opines that the idea of an actual infinity is troublesome for most because its starting point is non-mathematical. He further risks that: “[i]n as much as the sphere of intelligibility instituted by the infinite manifestly poses no specific problems, neither in

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751 TD 1, 352.
753 See: Being and Event, 273-78.
the axiomatic intuition nor in the proof protocols, the grounds for worry are always extrinsic, psychological or empiricist."754 In these cursory understandings infinity is improperly reduced to an unending “historical envelopment of finitude” where: “[t]here is no infra-mathematical concept of infinity, only vague images of the ‘very large’.”755 It is fair to say that mathematical infinity also leads to many problems not the least being the so-called Continuum Hypothesis.756

Cantor arrives at an actual supra-finite or infinite by negatively deriving it from potential infinity.757 The difficult task Cantor set before himself in his attempt to connect hierarchical infinities is apparent when we look at the spatiotemporal continuum that is seen to organize our material universe. Likewise, there is much in quantum theory that calls for a discreteness in physics, but takes space-time as near neutral medium.758 The so-called spatiotemporal continuum may not be a chimera, but it does not fully account for probable and free events. One can define reality as a “unified extensible whole” with an infinite number of sub-divided distance parameters, but as Christopher Langan points

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754 Briefings on Existence, 95. See also: Being and Event, 249.
755 See: Theoretical Writings, 39 and Being and Event, 145-46.
756 In 1878 Georg Cantor set out the so-called Continuum Hypothesis problem that questions whether there exists an infinite set linking different infinite sets. The continuum hypothesis seems to provide Badiou with a way to measure the physical and geometric continuum and questions if: “the count-as-one of all possible subsets of the complete series of finite natural numbers, sufficient for a complete numerical description of the geometrical continuum—equivalent to 1, [is this] the smallest infinite natural multiple which directly succeeds and counts-as-one 0?”, Sean Bowden, “Badiou and Lautman” in Badiou and Philosophy (ed.) Sean Bowden and Simon Duffy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 52.
757 See: Peter Hallward, Badiou: A Subject to Truth (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 328ff.
758 The neutrality of space-time seems to be evident, for example, in Feynman’s analysis of positrons as electrons moving back in time. Feynman’s thought experiment is not to be taken literally, however, it may still be the case that a continuous space-time would be problematic given the parameters he has set out.
out, such a move has not answered how uncertainty functions in space-time.\textsuperscript{759}

Badiou charges that Christian dogma often fails to move beyond naive forecasts of the infinite. This perceived failure on the part of believers, he presses, leads one to confuse an inept notion of the infinite for a reasoned belief in a living Divine Transcendent Being.\textsuperscript{760} Strictly speaking, he charges that the Christian God is the conclusion of onto-theological inclinations that mistakenly meld potential and actual infinities and then call this prognosis ‘God’.\textsuperscript{761} Badiou’s censure of this predisposition argues that: “[t]he speculative possibility of Christianity was an attempt to think infinity as an attribute of the One-being whilst universally guarding ontological finitude, and reserving the ontical sense of finitude for the multiple. It is through the mediation of a supposition concerning the being of the One that these great thinkers were able to simultaneously turn the infinite (God) into a being, turn finite (Nature) into a being, and maintain a finite ontological substructure in both cases.”\textsuperscript{762}

If an actual ontological infinity exists in the world, it is not for Badiou to be found in the Incarnation of the Transcendent in the human flesh of Jesus Christ, but rather, in the fact that every being is concrete and infinitely multiple. Badiou supports this opinion, in part, based on Cantor’s success in “containing” actual infinity within a mathematical

\textsuperscript{759} See: \textit{CTMU}, 3-6.

\textsuperscript{760} Badiou would most likely take exception to Balthasar making just such a claim. On the infinite disclosed as a personal relationship with the Divine see: \textit{GL} 1, 328.

\textsuperscript{761} \textit{Being and Event}, 42 and 143. Badiou looks to Saint Paul for a theological take on these themes, and writes that: “one must in Paul’s logic, go so far as to says that the Christ-event testifies that God is not the god of Being. Paul prescribes an anticipatory critique of what Heidegger calls onto-theology, wherein God is thought of as a supreme being and this thought measures being.

\textsuperscript{762} \textit{Being and Event}, 144. Needless to say Badiou’s comments are polemic. However, it moves us away from our purposes here to comment on his understanding of the Church’s thinkers concerning mathematics.
set. Cantor introduces actual infinity through the computation of “transfinite” or “supra-finite” numbers in an ongoing sequence. Cantor then correlates infinite consecutive numbers to other never-ending strings of numbers. The relationship between these two sets is open to a demonstrated relationship. Thus actual infinity like a set or being is varied and produces new multiplicities that can be defined in a restrictive or subjective manner. In this way, the immeasurable continuum is quantified rather than essentially described.

A substantive infinite set becomes for Badiou a mathematical analogue for a being’s infinite proliferation of its interior measure of the void and One and the potentially unlimited external correspondences nascent to this relationship. The Axiom of Infinity verifies this interpretation for Badiou. Given Badiou’s developments of ZFC theory it is worthwhile briefly outlining the original definition of this axiom. The ZFC axiom of infinity guarantees the existence of at least one infinite set, which is defined as

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763 See: Being and Event, 42. The infinite is only momentarily “contained” as it never fully nullifies being’s continual change. The infinite thus forwards Badiou’s larger world vision. One can question if Badiou’s theory of the infinite does not serve to aid in the ongoing perfection of being as was argued by early thinkers, see: John Duns Scotus, Philosophical Writings (trans.) Allan Wolter (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1962), 80.
764 See: Being and Event, 142-149 and A Subject to Truth, 328ff.
765 A being’s correspondence to a particular site and later to an event introduces the question of inclusion’s relationship to sub-multiplicities or in other words self-reflectively. An event like a sub-multiple is seen to include itself and the set to which it belongs. Badiou is aware of the difficulty of his position, see: Being and Event, 81-85 and Theoretical Writings, 45-47, 100 and 126.
766 Mathematical axioms are fundamental assertions taken to be intuitively self-evident. See: Sean Bowden, “Badiou and Lautman” in Badiou and Philosophy (ed.) Sean Bowden and Simon Duffy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 51. See also: Being and Event, 155-59. According to Badiou, axiomatic systems share with Platonic philosophy two inter-related claims, one, that, truth is heterogeneous in the real and, two, that reason, properly construed, can give a constructive account of this multiplicity; see: Alain Badiou, Conditions (2008), 10-11. See also: Key Concepts, 30.
the set such that 0 is a member of it and from anything in it, its successor (e.g. 0 + 1, then 1 + 1, then 2 + 1, etc.) is in it—namely the set of positive natural numbers. The Axiom of Infinity claims that a set is infinite if and only if it is equivalent to all subsets it gives rise to. Similarly, Cantor takes as infinite the set of positive integers and zero, A = \{0, 1, 2, 3\}, as well as, the set B = \{1, 2, 3\} and maps the two sets in a one-to-one relationship.\(^{767}\) This mapping makes set B a proper subset of the set A and hence quantifiable. The members of sets A and B are unique but part of an infinite series of numeric relationships open, inferentially, to limitless topological and typological arrangements.\(^{768}\)

The generation of infinite subsets from a pre-existing infinite series raises the question of mathematical reflexivity.\(^{769}\) It seems counterintuitive to believe that one can intuit the reflexive symmetry resulting from putting infinite series into relationships; as Badiou puts forward: “[a] ‘crisis’ in mathematics arises when it is compelled to think its thought as the immanent multiplicity of its own unity.”\(^{770}\) However, Badiou’s postulate that being is infinitely multiple raises this difficult question about conscious reflexivity. Badiou accepts the mathematical demonstration of infinite reflexivity and sees in this

\(^{767}\) We will critique Badiou’s position from our reading of Balthasar in Chapter Five. Suffice it to say at this juncture that Balthasar proposes that the Spirit is the pure groundlessness and is in infinite relationships in the eternal Persons of the Trinity. Further, Balthasar sees the Trinitarian hypostases to ultimately qualify and quantify all lesser numeric “actual” infinities. Consequentially, finite creatures participate in actual infinity as a principle of their nature because this relationship takes as fact an existing relationship to the Jesus Christ and hence the Infinite Spirit.

\(^{768}\) See: Logics of Worlds, 374-376.

\(^{769}\) On the linguistic representation of infinite reflexivity see: Logics of Worlds, 68-69.

\(^{770}\) Briefings on Existence, 54. Mathematics does not demand the “translation of well-established philosophical or ontological concepts” as it stands on its own ontological merits, see: ibid, 40 and 59.
proof of the logical prerogative of being’s own relationship to the infinite.

The puzzle of infinite recursion and finite being’s communication of infinite multiplicity was clarified for Badiou in the work of Paul Cohen (1934-2007). Cohen’s insights into infinity introduced the idea that “forcing” was instrumental to the expansion of finite and infinite sets. Bowden sees in the extension of the infinite set Badiou’s reading of this intentional operation:

[e]ffective ‘ontological proof’ of the ‘un-measure’ of the continuum. But at the same time, as Badiou argues, this proof produces with ontology a ‘one’ account of inconsistent being qua being. How? In short, it constructs an infinite generic multiple by collecting, starting from the void, series of multiples attached to a supplementary, eventual signifier♀. But because it is not itself ‘discerned’, this generic multiple sets no limits to what it can rigorously collect…

Cohen argues that a generic set can be constructed outside of the ZFC axioms if it can later recognized as consistent with the ZFC model. Cohen’s idea of mathematical forcing becomes another way for Badiou to understand how a being can simultaneously move and remain in relationship to two expandable sets that can be infinitely enlarged by adding new terms to their set membership or by forcing between the two sets any number of new sets. The increase in sets naturally adds to the relationships existing between the sets. More interestingly, each new set and its members’ identities are given new criteria upon which they can be understood. Cohen’s concept of mathematical forcing suggests

771 See: Paul Cohen, Set Theory and the Continuum Hypothesis (New York, NY: Benjamin, 1966). As consciousness and a being’s social relations develop so too does her understanding of “forcing”. At its most pronounced forcing is seen by Badiou to mimic the Marxist’s idea of “purging”. Forcing hides an underlining relationship to the negative and violent, see: Theory of Subject, 4, 144, 170 and 273.

772 Sean Bowden, “Badiou and Lautman” in Badiou and Philosophy (ed.) Sean Bowden and Simon Duffy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 54. See also: Being and Event, 338-39 and 420-26. Badiou holds that one’s grasp of the infinite is actual but not the result of cognitive constructive acts as understood by mathematical finitism or intuitionism. The actual existing infinite is premised but only descriptively understood in terms of its multiplicity.
to Badiou a way to quantify how an infinite addition of relationships is logically self-reflexive to \textit{ZFC} modeling. He considers that: “forcing, which represents the infinitely generic character of truth in the future perfect, encounters its radical limit in the possibility that its power of all-saying in truth will result in a truth ultimately giving its own name to the unnamable.”

Cohen explains how an infinite set’s subsets can be calculated and maintained in reflexive relationship with the original set. In Cohen’s theory Badiou finds a way to understand how finite being is multiple and self-reflective. To achieve his aim Badiou infers that the measurement and survey of infinite sets in symbolic and logical denotations is commensurate to his intuitions of being. Thus, Cohen’s mathematical demonstration of how an actual infinity is rendered in its “incalculable” progression becomes a basis for Badiou’s forwarding that a being can be self-reflective and multifarious.

Badiou likens the mathematical representation of infinite sets and the ontological insofar as both involve descriptions of being as “universal” or non-ending and sequential. Given that the infinite speaks to the universal, total and eternal, Badiou argues that it exhausts the possibilities of natural language. However, given natural language’s commitment to being, it can metaphorically be seen to desire and clarify the mystery of infinity. Badiou sees in Cohen’s work the beginning of a bridging of the logical and poetic narratives of the infinite: “Cohen described the set as a set which is not constructible from the property of language. It is the same desire: the desire to think

\footnote{\textit{Theoretical Writings}, 115.}

\footnote{Cohen proved that at least in regards to its implicit use in the Continuum Hypothesis that the continuum remains axiomatically unprovable. Simply put this can be taken to mathematically validate the idea that being is infinitely multiple, “un-decidable” or undetermined. Therefore, the Continuum Hypothesis is “independent” from Zermelo-Fraenkel Axiomatic Theory and can be added to Set Theory without contradiction.}
something which is not reducible to the law of the world or the language of the law, and which is really an invention or creation because it is purely universal.”

Paul Cohen’s formulation of mathematical forcing also yielded for Badiou a metaphysical and mathematical foundation for subjective intention. Conscious thought differs from affective responses or the subconscious given the scope of its reliance on the recollected and historical. Temporal ‘cavities’ furnish a way for the subject to distinguish her current quantifications of other beings and her memories of these beings. Temporal sequencing of conscious thought gives the subject a mental snapshot of a being’s developing material form or topology. Likewise, temporal and spatial differences give the subject the means to reflect on her own existential and intellectual experiences and her retention of both. Of course, because being is universal it necessarily moves into the future regardless the situation in which she finds herself. To whit, Badiou writes that: “a relation is a connection between objective multiplicities—a function—that creates nothing in the register of intensities of existence, or in that of atomic localizations, which is not already prescribed by the regime of appearance of these multiplicities (by the objects whose ontological support they are).”

A being is fundamentally orientated to the future no matter its characteristic incalculable and improbable nature. The facticity of a being’s historical and material characteristics is a chronological experience for the subject in a changing world. As Badiou reasons: “[a]ppearing is always the transit of a world; in turn, the world logically regulates that which shows itself within it qua being-

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775 The Subject of Change, 19.
776 Logics of Worlds, 301. As noted earlier the only purely atomic set is the empty set. The concept of intensity refers to a being’s sense of her gravity or self-belonging given her participation in the transcendence’s horizontal operations, see: Logics of Worlds, 361. This is paramount to Badiou’s theory of subjectivity and a concern we return to in earnest in Chapter Five.
Jacques Lacan adds to how Badiou conceptualizes mathematical forcing as a hermeneutic to comprehending human intention and desire. Lacan believes that human desire puts a subject in an affective and dramatic relationship to a particular thought, place and being(s). Lacan labels this meeting of a subject’s infinite subconscious and historical situation “a torsion.” Torsion, like the event, is seen to advance dialectically the totality of all that historically makes up a subject through a certain sense of lack and difference. Badiou sees something of the destructive in the Lacian torsion as it: “designates a circularity without a unified plane, a discontinuous curve” that

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777 The Logics of Worlds, 116. See also: “If a topos accepts only a single empty object, and if its logic is classical, then it is a well pointed topos. What this means is that if you are in the reciprocity of Being and One, and your logic is classical, then your ontology of difference accepts that every difference is recognized in a point, and that there is no purely qualitative or global difference. This time, a complex dimension of the possible universe, that is, an admixture of Being (the void is one) and principle (the excluded middle), constrains a simple ontological feature, which is the status of Difference,” Alain Badiou, Briefings on Existence, 117.

778 Thought includes for Lacan some intuition of the totality found in every act of representation or signification (e.g. the phallus). For Lacan’s overview of the phallus see: Jacques Lacan, Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English, (trans.) Bruce Fink in collaboration with Héloïse Fink and Russell Grigg (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2006), 579.


780 It is to Lacan that Badiou attributes his reading of Hegelian subjectivity. Lacan’s dialectic achieves this for Badiou by expressing the “novel” in a tense relationship with the “precariousness of the One” that survives its obliteration “by the new” because its “essence is the division”. Lacan’s writing style mirrors the dialectic to which it describes. As Badiou writes: “the analyst’s experience as an educator beyond reproach, lies in the syntactical amphibology that Lacan will use relentlessly…as an operator by which the sentence, having neither recto nor verso; holds together the two sides of one and the same reversible blade,” see: Theory of the Subject, 114. It is left to future scholars to critique Badiou’s understanding of subjective disposition and truth beyond our own rudimentary outline.
enters/distributes the whole.”\textsuperscript{781} Badiou states that Lacan illuminates being’s relationship to the “ontology of the hole, of the nodal topos, and, consequently, of the being of lack.”\textsuperscript{782} For Lacan subjective judgment does not interrupt a being’s subconscious processes. Likewise, for Badiou subjective choice necessitates a being’s repetitive and innovative alignments and the interrelating of being to the void.\textsuperscript{783} The various interior movements of thought, impulse, emotion, etc., distribute and constitute a person in a non-hierarchical manner. There does not exist an equation that can outline this complex meeting of subconscious forces, past memories, future hopes and biological imperatives that make a subject who she is at any given moment. The boundary between a person’s interior life and the world is not easily defined or constrained to mathematical calculus. Furthermore, an imperfect harmony exists between the subject and object, because the subject can only excerpt a small portion of the subconscious response to the innumerable meaning of a being at any one time.\textsuperscript{784} Thus Badiou states that:

Thus, the forcing of the negative—of non-q—as opposed to the incompatibility induced by its implication, is the result of the fact that nothing in that which locates and encompasses the condition p forces the truth of q. Conceived of as a break, subjectivization certainly operates with a logic of forcing, The ‘No!’ of the revolt is not implied by the local conditions. It is forced by the Inexistence of an absolute constraint that would force submission to the immediate conditions in a transcendent way.\textsuperscript{785}

\textsuperscript{781} See: Theory of the Subject, 123.
\textsuperscript{782} The Theory of the Subject, 133.
\textsuperscript{783} See: Theory of the Subject, 170. Freud thus outlines the “unknown unknowns” (traumas that one can’t integrate) and those “unknown knowns”, that is, the subconscious.
\textsuperscript{784} See: Theory of the Subject, 197. As Badiou sees it: “What defines an algebraic species (a structure), which is that for which the mathematician reserves the key concepts of algebra, concerns the constraints upon the law of composition…Topology stems—via the requirements of analysis—from the need of a mathematical guarantee in order to grasp movement,” see: Theory of the Subject, 210.
\textsuperscript{785} Theory of the Subject, 273.
Calling to mind that *transcendence* is always local and immanent, Badiou is stressing that through subjective forcing one’s logical and affective perspectives bear on the perceived truth of another’s being. Although he denies an actual Transcendent Being, Badiou argues that the universality of being and truth gives the subject something of a godlike control over other beings. He explains: “[a] truth, forced according to the indiscernible produced by a procedure of fidelity, can definitely support supplementary veridical statements; this reflects the event in which the procedure originates being named in excess of the language of the situation, cannot ruin the situation.” Badiou balances dialectically the truth’s perceived emergence in the subject’s conscious and dispositional allegiance to an object and their anticipated severing when a fuller version of truth is obtainable. The subject’s duty to her views of an object or another being requires that they make use of the same *transcendent* and material substratum that never ceases to develop and challenge their assumptions about being.

Badiou argues that because being is universally present in reality it can be seen as an ontological metaphor for mathematical infinity. Indeed, Badiou deduces that if the infinite is seen as the metaphoric sum of all beings, it shares an intrinsic and *subtractive* relationship to the One. Extending this thought experiment, Badiou’s system allows us to theoretically deduct not only universal being and the infinite from the One but also from its opposite, the (non-)One. If the bond existing between infinite being and the One is indissoluble, as is the One’s relationship to the (non-)One, why can we not put being in

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786 *Being and Event*, 417. See also: Ibid, 406. It is important to clarify that “fidelity” as understood by Badiou differs greatly from its common usage with heavy affective overtones. Fidelity, as used by Badiou, is more easily understood as an algorithm, code or procedure that identifies multiples and hence relationships (connections) and gaps (non-connections) within a set of parameters, see: *Being and Event*, 232-239 and 330.
relationship with the (non-)One and Absolute Being? Consequently, universal being’s subtraction from the idea of the infinite provides a way to understand the extreme boundaries of the One and (non-)One. In this thought experiment a sense of how Badiou’s use of the problem of the Continuum Hypothesis can be employed to generate new ways to understand being. The relation that exists between the infinite series, being and the One, can be “forced” into a mutual reflexive relationship or nominated belonging.\(^7\) The scholar John Mullarkey comments on being’s coming to self-awareness as an event of infinite quantification:

The immanence Badiou works with rejects the finitude of our qualitative experiences in favor of a mathematical infinite founded on pure quantity. The worlds of qualitative belonging, of dwelling within the world, of bodily incarnation, must be made Spartan: Badiou’s works subtracts every quality from such worlds in search of their pure immeasure, the paradox of quantitative infinities.\(^8\)

The mirroring of successions of infinite series brings to light how the plethora of being grows from simple reflexivity into deeper senses of self-awareness by consciously availing itself to the infinite calibration of the void and One. It further suggests that being’s relationships to the One should be logically extended to include being’s relationship to the (non-)One or Absolute Being. It is clear that Badiou’s expands Cohen’s mathematical theory into areas clearly not envisioned by Cohen. It is left to future scholars to determine if this metaphysical reading of Cohen’s work is justified.

(8) Zermelo-Fraenkel Axiomatic Theory

Zermelo-Fraenkel Axiomatic Theory offers a way to logically evaluate the claims

\(^7\) In the first instance, the forcing of truth brings or disrupts subjective opinion at a subconscious level because “discontinuity” is paradigmatic to every situation, see: *Theoretical Writings*, 30.

\(^8\) *Post-Continental Philosophy*, 83.
made in various studies in infinity and Set Theory. The ZFC system meets these criteria by covering the nine themes of: (1) extensionality, (2) the null or empty set, (3) subsets, (4) union, (5) separation, (6) replacement, (7) foundation, (8) infinity and, (9) choice.\textsuperscript{789} Badiou adapts ZFC to measure his own interpretations of being.\textsuperscript{790} The ZFC system supports Badiou’s ambition to lay out a mathematical and logical basis for a being portrayed as infinitely changing.\textsuperscript{791}

\textit{ZFC} assists Badiou in his desire to quantify being and hence “noetically” describe or legislate the ideas of multiplicity or the infinite properties of being.\textsuperscript{792} More specifically, \textit{ZFC} axiomatic system gives Badiou the means to intellectually quantify or represent being; a being that is infinitely changing. He states: “[i]t is clear that only an axiom system can structure a situation in which what is presented is presentation. It alone avoids having to make a one out of the multiple, leaving the latter as what is implicit in the regulated consequences through which it manifests itself as “multiple”.\textsuperscript{793} The computation of the infinite property of being and its ability to enter into an unlimited number of relations simultaneously are represented logically in \textit{ZFC Theory}.\textsuperscript{794} \textit{ZFC} Theory provides an intuitive way to account for being’s universality and multiplicity. \textit{ZFC} also offers the means to make logical deductions about these insights. Presuming


\textsuperscript{790} Hereafter the Zermelo-Fraenkel Axiomatic Theory will be cited as ZF.


\textsuperscript{792} See: \textit{Being and Event}, 59.

\textsuperscript{793} See: \textit{Being and Event}, 30. See also: \textit{A Subject to Truth}, 278 and \textit{Hidden Void}, 228-229.

\textsuperscript{794} On the infinity of Nature and the infinity of being, see: \textit{Being and Event}, 143-46.
the characteristics of finite being it infers something of the Transcendent or One’s
implicit pressure. Badiou muses:

The theory [ZF system] thus posits that what it presents—its terms—within the
axiomatic articulation, and whose concept it does not deliver, is always of the
type ‘set’; that what belongs to a multiple is always multiple; and that being an
‘element’ is not a status of being, an intrinsic quality, but the simple relation, to-
be-element-of, through which multiplicity can be presented by another
multiplicity. By the uniformity of its variables, the theory indicates, without
definition, that it does not speak of the one, and that all that it presents, in the
implicitness of its rules, is multiple.795

Badiou believes that the Axioms of Extensionality and Choice give special focus
to his understanding of a being’s appearance in the world. The Axiom of Extensionality
bolsters mathematical rules for inclusion and exclusion that reinforce Badiou’s own
theory of how beings relate. The Axiom of Extensionality asserts that two sets are equal
if and only if they have the same members.796 The ZFC axiomatization of infinity also
offers a way to set forth being as a progression (e.g. n + 1) that opens a being up to new
self-reflectivity and external relationships and, hence, to previously unknown truths.797
An axiomatic system achieves this end as: “[r]ecursive definition and inductive proof
have a similar logical structure, from a finite number of propositions initially an infinite
number of additional propositions are derivable by repeated operations of a specified set

795 Being and Event, 44-45.
796 This axiom can be elaborated to state that: for any sets X and Y, X equals Y if
and only if X is a subset of Y and Y is a subset of X. See: Appendix One.
797 Strictly speaking we here refer to a power set that states for any set A, a sert B
is a member of the Power Set of A if and only if B is a subset of A and all subsets of A
are members of the Power Set A, see Mathematical Linguistics, 8. Group membership
is a process of collectivism. In any set, Badiou argues, the act of counting the set must be
included when one numerates the members of a set given the ever-presence of the void
for: “the void insists within the situation by virtue of its own structuring principle,
inasmuch as, in its ‘operational transparency’, the count itself fails to be counted, which
means the recount literally involves ‘counting the count’, being the (successional) count
by which the (voided) count is itself counted,” see: Key Concepts, 53.
of rules.” Given the perceived relationship between the void, being and the One Badiou argues that a suitable account for all finite and transcendental relations are given a theoretic basis by this axiom.

The Axiom of Choice is an analytic tool promoting Badiou’s theory of how a being disposes itself in relationship to an array of probable outcomes. The Axiom of Choice states that given “any set of mutually disjoint non-empty sets, there exists at least one set that contains exactly one element in common with each of the non-empty sets.”

The Axiom of Choice allows Badiou to refrain from approaching ontological decision or choice from a purely subjective or “constructivist point to view”. According to Badiou, when bereft of mathematics a subject’s decision: “ends up subordinating existential judgments to finite and controllable linguistic protocols” and from this false starting point an incorrect appraisal of being and the Transcendent results. The Axiom of Choice prompts a logical descriptive norm for explaining a being’s relationship to other beings. A precise relationship obtains between finite beings by assuming that the infinite and the Transcendent can be understood as being in a non-hierarchical existence that partially furrows the totality of its existence into localized immanent sites. In other

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798 *Mathematical Linguistics*, 197.
799 It is important to remember for Badiou that transcendental relationships never extend a being outside the finite world.
802 See: *Briefings on Existence*, 55. We take Badiou’s rejection of constructivist mathematics to point to the fact that he sees such approaches as inadequate as linguistic descriptions of being.
words, the Axiom of Choice assumes that all beings and relationships can be recognized but not all finally defined. Badiou summarizes this dynamic communication, stating that: “[t]he axiom of choice actually amounts to admitting an absolutely indeterminate infinite set whose existence is asserted albeit remaining linguistically indefinable. On the other hand, as a process, it is unconstructable.” The Axiom of Choice provides a template to help one to decide upon what exists and hence “bind” one’s thought to a particular presentation of being without denying being its fundamental multiplicity and freedom.

Badiou proffers that the problem of being’s multiplicity is taken up by mathematics in the study of probability, because for probability to be mathematically meaningful it must be causally interpreted. Peter Hallward argues that the Axiom of Choice is incorporated by Badiou to validate his synthesis of two ostensibly contradictory notions, namely, that being is in perpetuum a multiplicity that through relational difference “converts” into self-conscious subjective identity. Absolute probability entails the specification of an intrinsically coherent “global” model that Badiou finds in mathematics.

The improbable determines, in part, how a being is represented in the world. The

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803 Ibid, 52. See also: Being and Event, 28. Badiou argues any problems associated with the subjective construction of truth and being resolve given the distinction made between truth and knowledge. On how the void’s structuring by set theory and ZF leads to an uncertainty that cannot be overcome, see: Quentin Meillassoux, After Finitude, (preface) Alain Badiou, (trans.) Ray Brassier (New York: Continuum, 2011), 105.

804 Briefings on Existence, 57. Badiou draws on Kant’s distinction between ‘pure originary apperception’ (the function of unity) and the system of categories (the function of the synthetic) for his own foundations of the relationship between axiomatic thought and freedom, see: Theoretical Writings, 136.

805 For a theory of how a mathematical model can predicated on probability with view to the special case of Quantum Mechanics, see: CTMU, 20-28.
Axiom of Choice offers a way to synthesize the human person’s capacity to “force” or interpret her environs without denying the improbable ongoing currency in the world:

> Intervention is purely a matter of yes or no, it did happen or it did not happen, and this yes or no applies only to the existence of the event rather than to its alleged (and always debatable) ‘meaning’ or manner.\(^{806}\)

The Axiom of Choice provides a decisional architecture that Badiou uses to understand the preliminary structure of a being faced with an infinite number of potential relationships or chance events.\(^{807}\) The collusion of force and chance constantly repeat for the subject. Badiou resorts to the image of gambling to narrate how a being’s multiplicity is relationally free by integrating the external causal forces introduced in the world.\(^{808}\) In the gesture of throwing dice, Badiou reflects, the fundamental characteristics of choice for being are outlined: “the emblem of chance to that of necessity, the erratic multiple of the event to the legible retroaction of the count.”\(^{809}\) The event is erratic because it is completely unpredictable.\(^{810}\) It should be noted that Badiou is quick to point out that the metaphoric gambler is not to be equated with God or some other transcendent marker—immanent reality “throws” chance at being. Badiou states that the sum of thrown dice (e.g. as a metaphor for human choice) is never eliminated as this would entail at a deeper

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\(^{806}\) *A Subject to Truth*, 125. Mathematically speaking identity is a problem because it denotes the equating of quantities that are being infinitely determined by a being’s internal and external relationship. Badiou stabilizes this ever-modifying relationship through the mathematics of probability.

\(^{807}\) See: *Briefings on Existence*, 95.

\(^{808}\) The intentional and subjective aspects of being will be addressed in more detail in Chapter Five. Further, at this stage a being’s metaphysical commitment to “forcing” a choice and external event is minimal and closely aligned to Cohen’s understanding.

\(^{809}\) *Being and Event*, 193.

\(^{810}\) *Infinite Thought*, 20.
level that a being’s free encounter with the void and One no longer existed. 811

A being’s relationship to the One is retrospect to any probable “count” of the being’s situation in the world. 812 The “count” as an act of gambling is not simply a notional or relational act but something that points to the metaphorical structure and material nature of being. 813 The subject can rationally isolate or ‘cognitively’ disregard this underlining obligation to the “‘non denumerable, impredicable, [and] uncontrollable’ quiddity of her being.” 814 If our analysis of Badiou’s theory is correct, non-inhering relations metaphysically undergird a being’s subconscious relationships to the void, One and “providence”. The unique genesis of chance in the world gives a being the opportunity to make clear her subconscious relationships and the subject’s intended desires. A being creates a “world” that confirms the dialectical pooling of her unique meeting of the void and chance. 815 As relations are deemed accidental, they serve the dual objectives of conserving both a being’s future appearance and her concurrent but hidden assignation by the void. 816

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811 The gambler is a metaphor for the number of parameters that independently weigh in on a given set. As this number can only be determined retroactively as a “count” the predicative power of human action is limited, see also Being and Event, 53.

812 See: Being and Event, 197-98, where Badiou reduces this complex undertaking to the imperative: “Decide from the standpoint of the undecidable.”

813 Badiou’s understanding of chance finds origin in the concept of the “clinamen”, proposed by Lucretius as the random process of atoms fallings into the void.

814 See: The Foundation of Universalism, 76. In contrast to Badiou, Balthasar believes that finite change can only occur in non-inhering relations if an actual Transcendent Being grounds such relationships. We return to this question of relations and Transcendence in Balthasar in Chapter Six.

815 It must be remembered that dialectics always remains a “program or initiation” that is qualified by mathematics’ “pre-existing procedure”. On the dialectical creation of “worlds”, see: Theoretical Writings, 29 and Logics of Worlds, 306-308.

816 Logics of Worlds, 302. See also: Ibid, 223, 311 and 363 where Badiou says that: “a site is a multiple which happens to behave in the world in the same way with regard to itself as it does with regard to its elements [e.g. its materiality], so that it is the
Only a weak comparison holds between Badiou’s understanding of chance and freedom’s relationship to the One and the void, and Balthasar’s argument that finite freedom and creativity initiates in “spaces” made possible by the absolutely other of Trinitarian Ur-kenosis. However, in regards to the probable, both Badiou and Balthasar distance themselves from explanations that derive from purely empirical or idealistic methodologies. Further, both thinkers agree that a being is metaphysically ordered to be free and conscious and this entails that being is in some way receptive to chance or “providence” in its unanticipated relationships with other beings and events in the world. Kurt Gödel’s theories of how the subject’s sensual and intuitive capacities are paired with the consistency of mathematics are developed beyond Badiou’s own, as they allows us to have some certainty about empirical consistency and the existence of the One. Gödel writes that:

[D]espite their remoteness from sense experience, we do have something like a perception also of the objects of set theory, as is seen from the fact that the axioms force themselves upon us as being true. I don’t see any reason why we should have less confidence in this kind of perception, i.e., in mathematical intuition, than in sense perception, which induces us to build up physical theories and to expect that future sense perceptions will agree with them, and moreover, to believe that a question not decidable now has meaning and may be decided in the future.  

The “One” is an ‘invariant point’ for the subject’s cognition of reality. It is left to future scholars to ascertain if Badiou’s mathematical ontology takes proper account of empirical being and Gödel’s estimation of the real in light of logical limitations.

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Part Two

Mathematical Beings in the World

(9) Ontology and Topology

Even though every being’s quantification is multiple and infinitely protractible, a being’s mathematical trajectory ends in an actual manifold or topology. A being’s intensity and movement are mutual because: “[s]pace tells matter how to move. Matter tells space how to curve.”\(^{818}\) Mathematics makes certain that the interior “essential” truth of being precipitates a topological calibration of being.\(^{819}\) Therefore, Badiou writes that: “[b]asically, a topological space is given by a distinction, with respect to the subsets of a multiple, between a subset and its interior.”\(^{820}\) Badiou diagrams the subject-object relationship as a geometric circle broken by evolutionary vectors that are meant to show and hence list a subject’s most recent relationships to beings and truths. In Badiou’s theoretical model points of intersection in the circle portion the subject’s mental representations of objects and the influences of causal material and historical effects found in an event. Thus these junction nodes represent the conceptual and relational factors of a subject’s view of other beings as a topological “torsion” in his mathematical diagram. In other words, the “gravity” of other beings and the subject’s prototypical


\(^{819}\) See: *A Subject of Truth*, 76-78. The mathematical configuring of a set in light of its determination by the criteria of “equality”, “equivalence” or “transitivity” grounds Badiou’s later material explanations of being’s geometric relationship to the other beings and the event. Badiou claims transitivity: “represents the maximum possible equilibrium between belonging and inclusion…[i]t is the ontological schema for normality,” *Being and Event*, 524. See also: *Theoretical Writings*, 175.

\(^{820}\) *Logics of Worlds*, 411.
thoughts concerning these beings “weigh down” or “constellate” their meeting points, stretching the line they share.\textsuperscript{821} The circle attempts to account for these new points by transforming into a variety of other geometric figures and shapes that “make room” for the new relationships.\textsuperscript{822} The interactions of a subject and object create unique topologies that disclose truth: “[a] point, which dualizes the infinite, concentrates the appearing of a truth in a place of the world. Points deploy the topology of the appearing of the True.”\textsuperscript{823} The universality of being as multiple corresponds to finite thought’s concerning an infinite dialectical and historical conveying of being. Badiou writes:

What can I say about such a being, with respect to its localization—with respect to its situation of being—is that its identity to such and such a being of this situation or world is minimal, that is nil according to the transcendental of this world. Appearing, that is the local or worldly attestation of a being, is logical through and through, which is to say relational. It follows that the non-apparent conveys a nil degree of relation, and never a non-being pure and simple.\textsuperscript{824}

An actual being is thus conceived as a: “pure manifold, as a manifold without-one.”\textsuperscript{825} Because the boundary of a topological structure is taken as zero, the algebraic

\textsuperscript{821} Being is divulged in the world in what Badiou terms “sites”. At these sites beings begin to historically manifest in the world outside of the theoretical confines of the system of mathematics. At the site a being enters into relationships with other beings and this brings to the fore the event of her sentient nature. Consciousness endorses a being’s self-reflexive and self-reflective capacities and with these a more profound sense of freedom develops for the subject. In this alteration, Badiou argues, a being can now be spoken of as a subject and the site as an event. See: and Event, 184-190 and on the topological excess see: Logics of Worlds, 261.

\textsuperscript{822} See: Theory of the Subject, 123.

\textsuperscript{823} A being’s perceptions localize or construe other beings or objects into “neighborhoods” given their own topological frame of reference in the world. With the congregating of topologically independent beings in the world, one can now evaluate their relationships and their existence as subjects and objects. See: Logics of Worlds, 409 and Theory of the Subject, 211.

\textsuperscript{824} Logics of Worlds, 124.

\textsuperscript{825} An infinite topology results when infinite numbers are employed to create a point or series of points around an x, y, and z grid. The singularity of a black hole, for example, would present an infinite point where the space-time continuum breaks down.
The topology of closed geometrical structures “embody a certain kind of self-cancellative” symmetry.\textsuperscript{826} This universal interior-exterior dialectic convinces Badiou that all actual beings are from a common source that denies a pre-existing hierarchical ordering of being as a whole.\textsuperscript{827} Although related, Balthasar’s understanding of the lacunae of ontological differences as opening a being up to the eternally existing God contrasts with Badiou’s understanding of a being’s topological relationship to its own in-existence.\textsuperscript{828} The One supports the multiplicity of subjective experience given its own attempted negation with the (non-)One. Dialectical and sequential change establishes an ongoing count for finite beings.\textsuperscript{829} A parallel can be made between the One-(non-)One

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We will see that Badiou uses this fact in his explanation of a being’s ontological judgment. At such a “point” the infinite depth of a being commits to a certain place in an infinite reality. A number is not for Badiou, John Mullarkey clarifies, a mere measure or quantity, an empirically conceived object or a perceptually objective register, it is rather, a “gesture of being”. For Badiou being’s in-existence or in-differing relationship to the void always presupposes the material. See: Post-Continental Philosophy, 83, Alain Badiou, Theoretical Writings, 67-80 and Being and Event, 124.\textsuperscript{826} See: CTMU, 5, 16 and 27-30.\textsuperscript{827} A subject consciously signifies and deploys an object given the differences accessible to them. Subjective truth invariably develops but is proportionate to every subject’s capacities for mathematical appropriation. Badiou argues that: “[w]e do not have the means to separate an extension from what occupies it, or a world from the objects of which it is composed. Being qua being is absolutely homogeneous: a mathematically thinkable, pure multiplicity. There is not the localizing being of worlds and the localized being of objects,” Alain Badiou, Second Manifesto for Philosophy (trans.) Louise Burchill (Malden, MA: Polity, 2011), 30.\textsuperscript{828} See: TD4, 138. The “in-existence” of being for Badiou seems to rewrite and develop what was traditionally conceived of in terms of ontological difference. Ontological difference as we see operative in Balthasar’s vision functions to inform a being’s essential grounding in its external body. The “in-existent” in Badiou’s metaphysical system does not forward the essential but is rather a representation of a being’s experience of the void as an actual being. As Badiou explains: “[a]tom is a concept of objectivity, hence of appearing, and its laws of difference are not the same of ontological difference”, see: Logics of Worlds, 251. The scholars Brassier and Toscano deny that ontological difference has any relevance to Badiou’s work see: Brassier and Toscano (2004), 9.\textsuperscript{829} See: Being and Event, 23-30. The use of intuition here is conceivable as a
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correspondence and a finite being’s interior differing relations and their resulting external configuration: “…‘the One is not’ means that it (a set or, equivalently, a situation) has no definition/independent existence but that it is identified merely as the resulting product of the operator of belonging, of a count-as-one which lists all those elements which belong to it.” Balthasar’s interpretation of a finite being’s relationship to the ONE looks to Bonaventure’s observation that the: “One signifies being relative to its numerality (conferrable), and being has unity on the basis of indivisibility form itself; ‘true’ signifies being insofar as it is knowledge…as the ‘good’ signifies being insofar as it is communicable…”

Badiou’s One is reductive in comparison to Balthasar’s understanding of the Divine. Consequently, for Badiou the subject is concomitant with an object given their reciprocal material and relational differences and their burgeoning cultivation by the void and One. The suturing of subject and object follows, in part, from the subject’s experience of “lack” given her relationship to the void—an ontological aperture common to all beings. An individual being is seen as an actual manifold that substracts from the void and its interior dimensions, for: “every object possesses, among its elements, an inexistent.”

Set theory defines each being given its potential inclusion or exclusion metaphor for the process of counting. For Badiou, subjective intuition is similar to a surreptitious ferrying in of one’s preconceived beliefs, see: Being and Event, 53. Even so, thinkers see in Badiou’s reading of Christianity an ironic path towards its renewal for a postmodern world, see: Ward, G. & B. Daniels 2008. “The Academy, the Polis, and the Resurgence of Religion: An Interview with Graham Ward”. The Other Journal 12, http://theotherjournal.com/2008/11/18/the-academy-the-polis-and-the-resurgence-of-religion-an-interview-with-graham-ward/ (accessed November 2012) and Theology and Anti-Theology, 125.

830 FG, 25.
831 Bonaventure, Brevil. 1.6, 5:21, 5a.
832 Logics of Worlds, 323. Badiou can be seen to inverse what we take to be
from a set and thus a value of true or false. Balthasar’s claim that human experience is fundamentally polar finds a metaphoric mathematical expression. Mathematically the polar can be universal for: “…reality must ultimately possess a stable two-valued object level distinction between that which it is and that which it is not maintaining the necessary informational boundaries between object, attributes and events.” The universalization of this process in Reality is symbolized as the One. Reality is believed to act as its own creator—a theory that Langan also advocates: “[w]hile the kind of theology that this entails neither requires nor supports the intercession of any “supernatural” being external to the real universe itself, it does support the existence of a supra physical being (the…global operator-designer) capable of bringing more to bear on localized physical contexts that meets the causal eye. And because the physical (directly observable) part of reality is logically inadequate to explain its own genesis, maintenance, evolution or consistency, it alone is incapable of properly containing the being in question.” Badiou argues that being is in relation to the void and the promise of a being’s continuous unity is made available in the idea of some Transcendent non-existing One that is laterally realized in Reality as a whole. The notion of the One actualizes Balthasar’s understanding of Jesus’ interior-exterior relations authorizing finite consciousness, freedom and ultimately a fidelity to the Transcendent God. See also: Alain Badiou, Deleuze: The Clamor of Being, trans. Louise Burchill (Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 52.

833 The conflating of the ontological and logical, the mathematical and the logical in Badiou’s theory of mathematical ontology demands further investigation beyond what can be provided in this study.

834 CTMU, 21.

835 CTMU, 38.

836 Badiou does not understand the One’s antithetical relationship from a proposed Transcendent viewpoint but rather, from the finite being’s relationship with non-being, for: “[i]n effect, the concept suited to the apparent will not be, in a given world, its negation, but what we will call its reverse,” Logics of Worlds, 107. This reverse of being
and draws being into a comprehensible identity. The inadequacies of Badiou’s abstraction of the Transcendent are answered in the force of one’s subjective choice or observations.

The One’s relationship with its antithesis of (non-)One substantiates the identity of the One for a being’s finite identity, as well as the identity of non-existence. As Badiou contemplates: “if the one is not...[then] nothing is.” As an atheist Badiou denies the existence of God and by extension any incarnation of God. We see in his work however, a valuable philosophical discussion of how “grace” or “statistical regularity” operates in Creation itself through being’s fundamental relationships to the One and

away from non-being confirms the fundamental role of relational difference for Badiou’s metaphysics. The void is closely associated with the concept of ontological difference. However, Badiou downplays the qualitative and virtual aspects of essential approaches to being. Being must be defined as actual. We put the One in philosophical conversation with the Transcendent and the ONE as found in Balthasar’s work. However, Badiou is adamant that the One is non-existent and immanent to finite being.

The law of the count points out in Badiou’s system that it is difference not homogeneity that forwards truth’s unveiling in historical becoming: “the question of revolution, which is also in some sense a revolution, a revolution for an audience, is a new idea because it affirms that the change in the world, it is a change for a set which is not but precisely defined,” see: Alain Badiou, The Subject of Change, 15.

See: CTMU, 42.

Being and Event, 36. A.J. Bartlett sees Plato’s influence on Badiou in his use of the subtractive, more specifically in the use of the subtractive that is established in the “aporetic” found in formal divisions between being and appearing, mathematics and poetry, truth and opinion, philosophy and sophistry. Badiou, like Plato, believes in the formal demonstration of what constitutes philosophical discourse as a practice of separation, division and invention, see: Key Concepts, 107. From our own reading of Balthasar, Badiou and Deleuze it seems appropriate to see a possible coherence in Balthasar’s understanding of Divine Form (Gestalt), Badiou’s specter of one and Deleuze’s understanding of the virtual and representational. Although it is beyond our particular scope, Deleuze’s idea of the virtual seems compatible with some aspects of Balthasar’s understanding of the Divine Form (Gestalt). On Deleuze’s understanding of the relationship between representation and difference see: Gilles Deleuze, Difference and Repetition (trans.), Paul Patton (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1994), 117.
(non)One.\textsuperscript{840} The dialectical relationship between the One and (non-)One stages “grace” in distinction to the law’s more static approach:

The law ties salvation to particularity and difference, to finitude and limit. The law, both ontologically and politically, is ‘statist’ in orientation, in that it ‘enumerates, names, and controls the parts of the situation’ (\textit{Foundations of Universalism}, 76). Grace, in contrast, is ‘nondenumerable, unpredictable, uncontrollable’; it is ‘that which occurs without being couched in any predicate, that which happens to everyone without an assignable reason. Grace is the opposite of law insofar as it is what comes without being due’ (\textit{Foundations of Universalism}, 76–77).\textsuperscript{841}

One can speculate that Balthasar would be suspicious of Badiou’s proposal that a person ideally exists in relationship to a non-existing \textit{transcendent} One.\textsuperscript{842} A being develops given its relationship to a non-existing One because Badiou denies the existence of an actual One and this shapes being as immanently \textit{transcendent}.\textsuperscript{843} Further, the subject is able to actualize the \textit{transcendent} in her personal topology through cognitive

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{840} On the question of Badiou employing a Christian paradigm see: Oliver Marchart, \textit{Post-Foundational Political Thought} (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), 124 and \textit{Theology and Anti-Theology}, 124-25.
  \item \textsuperscript{841} \textit{Theology and Anti-Theology}, 148. Citations changed to make consistent with rest of the paper.
  \item \textsuperscript{842} The \textit{transcendent} here is horizontal or immanent in the world is configured by three constellating factors: (1) the minimum content of a being arises in its dialectical relationship with non-appearance, (2) the multiplicity of beings is taken for granted and (3) a world or horizon is given in which any number of beings can appear, see: \textit{Logics of Worlds}, 103. By inverting the above steps Badiou’s manner of approach concerning abstract mathematical topologies becomes more apparent. Badiou claims that non-Euclidean geometors indicate how thought can “force” beyond the sensual and arrive at transcendent truth, see: \textit{Infinite Thought}, 23 and \textit{Logics of Worlds}, 200-01.
  \item \textsuperscript{843} According to Badiou, change is neither ontological nor transcendental, see: \textit{Logics of Worlds}, 119 and 357. We shall look at a very simplified view of change in this thesis. For a more in-depth critique see: Ian Graham Ronald Shaw, “Sites, truths and the logics of worlds: Alain Badiou and human geography”, \textit{Transactions of the Institute of British Geography} vol. 35, Issue 3 (July 2010): 431-442. Ian Graham Ronald Shaw identifies three specific types of change in Badiou’s writing: (1) ontologically neutral and transcendentally ordered change or modifications, (2) existentially insubstantial existential or ontologically supernumerary change or fact, and, (3) the densely appearing change of the ontologically supernumerary.
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acts given her relationships to the void and other beings in the world. For Badiou the appearing of an existing being is a direct consequence of the operations of the transcendental.844

According to Badiou, the site preambles the event of the subject’s arrival. Badiou summarizes: “[a] body, in its totality, is what gathers together those terms of the site which are maximally engaged in a kind of ontological alliance with the new appearance of an in-existent, which acts as a trace of the event.” The subject distinguishes objects through her mental representations of them.846 The transcend serves subjective consciousness with a logical constant that supports the population of a subject’s mind with mental images of other beings in the world and a sense of her own relative independence: “[a] multiple which is an object of this world—whose elements are indexed on the transcendental of the world—is a ‘site’ if it happens to count itself in the referential field of its own indexing.” The reformation of a site into an event puts various beings in conscious relationship, which, for Badiou suggests unavoidable conflict. The subject countermands other beings’ relationship to the void and their flourishing in the world to her own subjective criterions.848 The subject’s conscious acceptance of this dynamic widens her command of what takes place in a historical event

844 For our purposes the transcendental Badiou has in mind can better be expressed as transcendental.
845 Logics of Worlds, 470. See also: Ibid, 83 and 109-112.
846 The subject’s consciousness of other beings is fundamental to Badiou’s apprehension of an imaginary Transcendent as a transcendental indicator of subjective thought. However, unlike Badiou, Balthasar defines the transcendental as a subjective approximation made possible given the existence of eternal actual Transcendent Being or God.
847 Logics of Worlds, 363.
848 For Badiou the problem of “gaps” in the world can only be answered by subjective thought and action. The subject activates her identity in the world through her commitments to being.
for: “the multiple is the regime of presentation” for all beings.\textsuperscript{849}

Where Badiou categorizes proponents of an essentially based ontology such as Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) as “Platonist[s] of the virtual”, he believes his own mathematically-based method better explains how being is topological and historical.\textsuperscript{850} Badiou argues that: “[p]lurality is the ground of being in general,” and at the same time this ceaseless multiplicity exigently reveals itself in particular phenomenal beings.\textsuperscript{851} Badiou’s criticisms notwithstanding, there remains much in Deleuze’s work that resonates with Badiou’s own goals. For both thinkers ordinary empirical configurations of being must be radicalized. Like Badiou, Deleuze believes that the \textit{transcendental} is not traced or induced in the material or recognized in the phenomenon of sensual perception.

Deleuze stresses that interior numeric relations or intensive multiplicities give being its initial anatomy. These virtual relations coalesce into folds that further weave, “braid” or “plait” together to create manifolds: “…multiplicities that are extensive, divisible, and modular; unifiable, totalizable, organizuable; conscious, or preconscious, molecular, intensive multiplicities composed of particles that do not divide without changing in

\textsuperscript{849} See: \textit{Being and Event}, 24 and \textit{Hidden Void}, 224.

\textsuperscript{850} See: Deleuze, \textit{Difference and Repetition}, 46 and 69. A need to privilege the multiplicity of being seems to force Badiou’s hand concerning the virtual and interior. Such a position rejects Balthasar’s belief that the qualitative and personal relationships of the Trinitarian Persons present Absolute Truth. For Balthasar the quantified and material is infinitely reductive of the Pure Spirit of God. Balthasar’s view seems to overcome some of the pitfalls of Badiou’s material precepts.

\textsuperscript{851} Deleuze seems to confirm Badiou’s observation when he writes of being that it is: “[a] single and same voice of the whole thousand-voiced multiple, a single and same Ocean for all the drops, a single clamor of Being for all Beings,” see: Gilles Deleuze, \textit{Difference and Repetition}, (trans). Paul Patton (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1994), 304. It is left to scholars to evaluate whether Badiou’s criticisms of Deleuze are nuanced enough.
A being’s relations and attributions are conveyed spatially, whereas traditionally understood essential functions and operations are assumed by an expansive notion of time. The fold is a “complication of surface” that holds being to the immanent plane in a “universal texturology”. According to Deleuze, finite thought, memory and sensibility bring to immanent experience of an object a sense of the transcendent, because this reflex experience temporally and spatially individualizes being.

Badiou attempts to absolve himself of the charge that his mathematically derived stress on the quantitative dimensions of being simply substitutes, methodologically, one virtual being for another. The qualitative and quantitative scope of a topological manifold represents the extensive or external “spreading out” of a being’s internal and automatic ordering towards self-reflexivity. This is always a spontaneous act and, hence, outside the dictates of becoming, since: “[a]n event is never the concentration of vital continuity or the immanent intensification of a becoming. It is never coextensive with becoming.” Consequently, Badiou protests that a being’s univocal virtual topology must be subtracted from the void to make good on a prospective actual being and its future relationships.

Interior-exterior contact is possible, Badiou reminds us, when: “we consider the mathematical signifier as a symptom around which the reductive text, without knowing this at all, attempts an auto-analysis. That is, we take the mathematical text to be in the

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854 _Logics of Worlds_, 384. As topology is not co-existing with becoming, a being is always understood as excessive to any one of its appearances and one’s relationship with other beings, see: _Theory of the Subject_, 261 and 272. We return to this issue in the next chapter under the heading _The Subject and Object_.

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position of the analyst for some of its own words—as being symptomatic of itself.”

The interior and exterior are relative and thus Deleuze argues for what appears to be a non-hierarchical surface topology where: “the given is not in space; the space is in the given…extension, therefore, is only the quality of certain perceptions.” Collectively a being’s internal qualities or relationships directly lead to its extensive topological body. A being can never make known the full scope of its infinite grounding. Consequently, for Badiou, the appearance of a being and its final and complete truth differ as any one demonstration of its “virtual” multiplicity bears upon as yet unrealized relationships and their future confirmation. A being’s rendering takes place in future disclosures or in Badiou’s formulations—a “resurrection”. The term “resurrection” describes a being as a: “reappearance of an occulted truth in a different logic or world.” The subject must consciously design and re-design the world she lives in, as Badiou argues:

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855 Theory of the Subject, 148. See also: Briefings on Existence, 51.
857 See: Being and Event, 142-149.
858 See: Three Negations, 1881.
859 See: Logics of Worlds, 65, 70, 76 and 141-44 for Badiou’s recognition of Hegel for his formulations of “resurrection”. A being’s becoming is tied to appearance and finite relationships. This positioning also manifests a being’s relationship to the transcendance and will touch on some of the implications of Badiou’s proposed relationship between the temporal and transcendent.
860 Phelps points out that Badiou’s philosophical and subjective understanding of another being’s resurrection is inferred from Saint Paul’s faith in the historical resurrection of Jesus Christ. Badiou inverts Saint Paul’s understanding of Christ’s resurrection by making this historical event a universal principle of truth’s multitudinous communication in the worlds of art, politics, science or art that a subject finds herself musing over. Badiou says: “[t]hus, unlike effective truth procedures (science, art, politics, love), the Pauline break does not base itself upon the production of a universal. Its bearing, in a mythological context implacably reduced to a single point, a single statement (Christ is resurrected), pertains rather to the laws of universality in general.” See: Theology and Anti-theology, 130. See also: Foundations of Universalism, 108.
There is no Universe, only worlds. In each and every world, the immanent existence of a maximal value for the transcendental degrees signals that this world is never the world. A world’s power of localization is determinate: if a multiple appears in this world, there is an absolute degree of this appearance; this degree marks the being of being-there for a world.\textsuperscript{861}

The subject metaphorically ‘births’ another being into existence.\textsuperscript{862} However, whatever conception that a subject consciously has of another being it is only an interim or wayward point as being and its own differing are never found totally in any one appearance or historical event. Subject and object have a stake in a common “topological algebra” that orientates all being to the ‘equalizing’ or ‘democratic’ influences of difference.\textsuperscript{863} Subjective estimations of another being are as temporary as the void and relational differences induce change in all beings.

The subject consciously represents what she comes across in the world, as well as her own perceptions about her own identity. The event takes all of this into account as it is: “[c]onsidered as a multiple, [as] the event contains, besides the elements of its site, itself; thus being presented by the very presentation that it is.”\textsuperscript{864} John Mullarkey simplifies this multifaceted issue in Badiou’s thought, stating that:

\textsuperscript{861} Logics of Worlds, 139. See also, ibid, 194.

\textsuperscript{862} See: “We will call this destination, which reactivates a subject in another logic of its appearing-in-truth, resurrection. Of course, a resurrection presupposes a new world, which generates the context for a new event, a new trace, a new body—in short, a truth-procedure under whose rule the occulted fragment places itself after having been extracted from its occupation,” Logics of Worlds, 65. See also ibid, 416.

\textsuperscript{863} A horizontal equilibrium of being’s metaphysical foundations and topological appearances co-exist in the world but as a conscious choice by the subject: “[w]e linked this notion of point to that of decision. The point is ultimately a topological operator—a corporeal localization with regard to the transcendental—which simultaneously spaces out and conjoins the subjective (a truth procedure) and the objective (the multiplication that appear in a world),” see: Logics of Worlds, 399. Under the subsequent headings in the next chapter we will further explicate how Badiou conceives of subjective truth as conditional and universal.

\textsuperscript{864} Being and Event, 189.
An event concerns a situation whose internal multiplicities are no longer aligned according to their usual states of presentation or representation: something has ruptured, and the multiplicity becomes ‘inconsistent’ (from the point of view of the state counting it as one, trying to make it consistent). Indeed, their eventual being (as non-being) makes itself felt. The event is what is both an element of the situation and the situation itself. It no longer accords to either what belongs or is included, but now does something seemingly impossible (from the point of view of the state): paradoxically, it self-belongs.\textsuperscript{865}

Any one representation of being is transitory given its future de-centering by the truth of all being’s relationship to the void and chance’s role in the configuration of every historical event. Consequently, every truth procedure of the void breaks with the axiomatic principle that governs every situation and organizes the subject in this repetitive series.\textsuperscript{866} The mathematical representation of being is consistent with what Badiou sees as operating in Saint Paul’s theory of the subject’s free relationship to the law’s historical and universal actualization as: “[t]he law is what, by designating its object, delivers desire to its repetitive autonomy. Desire thereby attains its automatism in the form of a transgression.”\textsuperscript{867} Badiou argues that truth and being are universally found in reality and are infinitely rich. Consequently, a subject has a particular experience of truth and being. To clarify what must remain partially unsaid of being and truth Badiou turns to the resources made available in mathematical discourse. A being’s topological organization in the world derives from its mathematical configuration as infinite and as a member of a set in relationship:

What appears to be a dynamic operator, often borne by spatial or physical schemes, (if $y = f(x)$ will be said to “vary” as a function or the variations of $x$,

\textsuperscript{865} \textit{Post-Continental Philosophy}, 91.

\textsuperscript{866} Badiou grants that the full range of a being’s aggregations have an ontological status in every setting a being finds herself; however, not all of these factors are vocalized in each moment of a being’s existence. The multiplicity of being requires that truth is delineated sequentially for a subject. See: \textit{Being and Event}, 174.

\textsuperscript{867} \textit{The Foundations of Universalism}, 99.
etc.), is strictly dealt with in the set-theoretic framework as an actual manifold. The function’s manifold being is its graph, that is, a set whose elements are ordered pairs of the \((x, y)\) type. Any allusion to dynamics of “in variation” is eliminated.\(^\text{868}\)

Where each new appearance of being in the world predominantly suggests to Balthasar the receptive nature of being, for Badiou it highlights the underlining role of subjective consciousness to create worlds by means of [sets] or counting of the One. The concept of a being’s presentation and conscious re-representation by the subject is for Badiou part of the “primitive word” of being’s “meta-ontology”. The subject willfully epitomizes another being given her ability to mentally capture and imagine another being.\(^\text{869}\) This re-representation or double presenting of a being suggests to Badiou how a subject can be in simultaneous relationship to the void and the historical event of another being’s own “metaphysical” and historical grounding. Because a being is taken as multiple the latter considerations require that the event includes: “the forever infinite numbering of the gestures, things and words that co-existed with it.”\(^\text{870}\) Change or becoming, Badiou surmises, is neither “ontological” nor “transcendent” but a logical and contextual relationship between finite being and a fantastical One.\(^\text{871}\) A subject must think through each situation to answer the question: “what does an event interrupt, what does it preserve?”\(^\text{872}\)

A truth procedure interrupts repetition and can therefore not be supported by the

\(^{868}\) Briefings on Existence, 97. See also: “The concept of ‘limit,’ so affected by the experience of becoming, tending-toward and asymptotic, is brought back to the immanent characterization of a certain type of multiplicities…For any kind of actualization assumes several regimens of existence be granted (or at least two, potency and the act),” ibid., 97.

\(^{869}\) See: Being and Event, 27-29.

\(^{870}\) Being and Event, 180.

\(^{871}\) See: Logics of Worlds, 357.

\(^{872}\) The Foundation of Universalism, 23.
“abstract permanence” of the infinite proper to a unity of the count: “[n]umber will then appear as the mediation between Nature’s infinite prodigality of forms of being and that which we are in a position to traverse and to measure. It is that which, at least in a limited domain of its [existence], accords our thought the capacity to grasp and measure being qua natural being.”

What is valued in the world, Badiou states, is that which is counted or more precisely that which subtracts from the One as this allows the recounting or re-representation of all beings for the subject: “[a] term is normal if it is both presented in the situation and represented by the state of the situation. It is thus counted twice in its place: once by the structure (count-as-one) and once by the meta-structure (count-of-the-count)…Normality is an essential attribute of natural-being.”

(10) Site and Event

The subject can conceptually accredit the manifestation of other beings by distancing herself from the site of her own metaphysical structuring. In consciously acknowledging the differences found in the world the subject is invited to participate in

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873 Badiou illuminates how the abstract discipline of mathematics is undeniably tied to the political, see: Alain Badiou, Number and Numbers, (trans.) Robin Mackay (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2008), 109.

874 Given every being’s unique history and experience of differential change the One is especially important for the subject’s explication of being. Badiou attests: “[t]here is no center in the subjective twist. Without the anchorage of lack, the excess would be nothing but a leftist chimera, quickly reversed into its opposite: a philosophy of nature,” Theory of the Subject, 287. Badiou rejects classical or essential conceptions of human nature but he does see a benefit in genetically based explanations of human nature. The generic as nature offers a formal and abstract way in which to explore topology, see: Theory of the Subject, 272. The separation between the generic and the subject is possible given that their unity can be ascribed and hence held one might say “transcendentally” to their shared situation: “A generic part is identical to the whole situation in the following sense: the elements of this part—the components of a truth—have their being, or their belonging to the situation, as their only assignable property. The being of a truth is the genre of being of its being,” See: Logics of Worlds, 36. See also: Being and Event, 515-516, The Subject of Change, 23 and Infinite Thought, 24-25.
the transformative truth of beings’ relationship in what is called an event:

For the subtractive law is implacable: if real ontology is set up as mathematics by evading the norm of the One, unless this norm is reestablished globally there also ought to be a point wherein the ontological, hence mathematical field, is de-totalized or remains at a dead end. I have named this point the ‘event’.

Badiou writes: “[t]he strong singularity can thus be recognized by the fact that its consequence in the world is to make exist within it the proper in-existent of the object-site.” The scholar Bruno Bosteels explains that in the subject and society are gaps in structure, that is, there are fissures between the “real” and its impossible symbolization. A subject’s relationship to the void is part of her in-differing and supports her historical eruption in the world.

The subjection of other beings to the subject’s own aims gives logical and historical prominence to the underlining tensions found in Badiou’s theory of the subject’s interaction of the uncertainty of the future. Badiou sees this innate turbulence

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875 Briefings on Existence, 60. See also: Infinite Thought, 14-15.
876 The Logics of Worlds, 377. Badiou’s sense of the theoretical divide between subject and object leans on the earlier work Jacques Lacan who writes that: “[t]he subject is, as it were, internally excluded from its object,” see: Jacques Lacan, Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English, (trans.) Bruce Fink in collaboration with Héloïse Fink and Russell Grigg (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2006), 731.
878 Materialism operates as a unifying scission of a structure of reduplication and an effect of approximation. It posits the “Same”, plus its “remainder”. To say that materialism is dialectical is an understatement. Badiou terms “democratic materialism” the attempt to linguistically contain and hence reduce the ongoing drama of a subject’s activities in a given event and the truth of the event’s own pseudo-identity. Badiou’s “postulate of materialism” attempts to offer a way to move beyond naïve linguistic, empirical or idealistic explanations of this complicated relationship. See: Logics of Worlds, 322-24, 481 and Key Concepts, 39.
879 See: Theory of the Subject, 197.
as positive as it acknowledges that being is first and foremost free and: “[t]he real is what
the subject encounters, as its chance, its cause, and its consistency.” Sites are
harbingers of “violence” as they introduce “innovative spaces” for the subject to initiate
new affiliations and mental representations to replace previous ones. Subjective thought
“embodies” or “substantiates” other beings by consciously accepting their role in helping
narrate their own experiences and agendas. The subject’s ability to choose freely is
seen as commensurate with the “topological algebra” she shares with objects in the
world. Through philosophical decision the subject judges another being by attempting to
homogenize, qualify, quantify, idealize, and—in a word—influence it.

Where Badiou argues for a non-hierarchical reality given his description of beings
as materially and dialectically related, Balthasar claims that beings exist in the world in a
hierarchical scale that points to a being’s interior status—a state that includes a being’s
relationship to an analogous experience of Absolute Difference in the concepts of non-
being and nothingness. Mutuality entails differentiation of identity and hence an implicit
hierarchic arrangement for Balthasar. Badiou maintains that his non-hierarchical

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880 Theory of the Subject, 127.
881 As Absolute Truth is impossible to gauge at any one time for the subject,
Badiou testifies, perfect fidelity to truth is impossible. Unsurpassable division among
beings threatens as Badiou alleges: “[c]onsensus is the enemy of thought, for it claims we
share existence. In the most intimate dimension of thought, however, existence is
precisely what is not shared,” Briefings on Existence, 56. See also: Briefings on
Existence, 93.
882 No matter how dominant any one subjective interpretation of other beings and
the world is it can never anticipate the void’s introduction of inventive configurations of
being in the world. The event dialectically balances this complex play without totally
collapsing the subject’s view of the world in a single instance. Such a collapse is
prohibited, as it would suggest that the presentation of the void qua void is possible in the
world. A being’s dialectical relationship with the void includes its material
characteristics just as the essential differing presupposes a priori an esse for Balthasar.
Neither writer conceives of being outside of being’s own mediation in an event. See:
perspective: “lends privilege to indefinite zones, multiples subtracted from any
predicative gathering of thoughts, points of excess and subtractive donations. Say all
existence is caught in a wandering that works diagonally against the diverse assemblages
expected to surprise it.”883 In contrast, for Balthasar the ostensible chaos of relatively
free beings in Creation is metaphysically graded and organized by premising the
existence of an Absolute Difference existing between finite beings and the Divine.
Further, Balthasar believes that a finite being has a mediated experience of Absolute
Difference given her metaphysical structuring in ontological difference and relational
differences because Jesus Christ when kenotically encountered makes all negativity a
priori meaningful.884

According to Badiou, the subject is called to invest in the generic, that is, in what
remains “indiscernible”. In withholding one’s fidelity to a given event or possibility a
being is metaphorically neither ‘hot nor cold’ but exists, in Badiou’s jargon, in a state
of—“inconsistency”.885 Consequently, Badiou will forward that the: “minimal gesture of
fidelity, [is] tied to the encounter between a multiple of the situation and a vector of the
operator [that is the subject] of fidelity.”886 As Alex Ling explains: “[t]he paradox here is

883 Briefings on Existence, 55. See also: A Theory of the Subject, 170 and 197.
884 The event is properly an a-temporal occurrence that is known after the fact, like viewing one’s journey through the rear view mirror, see: Alberto Toscano, “To Have Done with the End of Philosophy”, in Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy Today, Vol. 9 (2000): 233.
885 An actual Transcendent Being or Idea, Badiou controverts, perverts a subject’s thoughts and therefore her own existence as: “[p]rimacy’ does not mean ontological hierarchy, or pre-eminence, since there exists only matter,” Theory of the Subject, 193.
886 Being and Event, 330. The event invites the subject’s participation and this:
intervention is the first moment of a process of fundamental change that Badiou terms a
‘fidelity’, or a ‘generic truth procedure’. A generic truth procedure is basically a praxis
consisting of a series of enquiries into the situation made by militants who act in fidelity
to the event,” Infinite Thought, 21. On the relationship between Badiou’s understanding
fundamental: the inconsistent being underlying all consistency is itself radically unknowable (inasmuch as all knowledge is necessarily ‘situated’) and to this effect any consideration of what precedes the situation is hopelessly compromised by its very situatedness.”

It is through conscious appropriation of an event that being is made a “consistent” subject. Badiou writes: “[a]n event is never the concentration of vital continuity or the immanent intensification of a becoming. It is never coextensive with becoming. On the contrary, it is a pure cut in becoming made by an object in the world, through that object’s auto-appearance; but it is also the supplementing of appearing through the upsurge of a trace: the old in-existent which has become an intense existence.”

(11) Truth and Love

The subject cannot pre-determine truth’s discharge in seeing another being because she does not exist prior to that being’s historical ingress in a world. Badiou claims that the subject’s measure of a historical being includes error or the “undecidable” as it involve something that remains “unmeasurable” in a being’s relationship to the truth.

The subject can, in Badiou’s schema, infinitely “force” some conscious ordering of fidelity and the Marxist concept of praxis see: ibid, 23.

As Hallward explains: “pure or inconsistent multiplicity is the very being of being: consistency is the attribute of a coherent presentation of such inconsistent multiplicity as a multiplicity, that is, as a coherent collecting of multiplicity into a unity, or one,” A Subject to Truth, 90. Because fidelity aids in the emergence of truth it is a meta-ontological practice closely aligned to Badiou’s reading of Cohen’s theory of forcing, see also: Infinite Thought, 24, Key Concepts, 50 and Being and Event, 25.

At first glance Badiou’s position seems consistent with our reading of Balthasar’s epistemology bearing in mind that Balthasar believes that one’s grasp of Absolute Truth is limited given our finite limitations and predisposition to sin. In both thinkers, truth’s quantification of knowledge is conducive to our limited ability to consciously take hold of the unconditional. However, Balthasar deviates from Badiou on
of the differences recognized in the world.\textsuperscript{890} The division between subject and object is an epistemological convention made by a subject to better take hold of the universal truth of being revealed in a given event.\textsuperscript{891} The subject justifies her mental “forcing” of other beings because being is universal.\textsuperscript{892} As Badiou summarizes: “[t]he excess, which is the topological law of subjectivization, induces a primacy of the universal over that which,

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this issue insofar as our relative experience of truth is only possible given the real and actual existence of Absolute Truth and the incarnated existence of Transcendence in Jesus Christ. See: \textit{Being and Event}, 429.

\textsuperscript{890} It is important to note that Badiou does not see conscious forcing in terms of any relationship to the Transcendent. Badiou writes that: “Transcendent thought believes that the determination of a multiple-point situated over and above ordinary measures will regulate and fix, ‘from above’, the wandering of excess. It is thinking that tolerates the indiscernible but as a transitory effect of an ignorance relative to some ‘supreme’ multiple. It therefore does not ratify excess and wandering as laws of being. It hopes for a complete language while admitting that we do not yet dispose of one. It is prophetic thinking,” \textit{A Manifesto for Philosophy}, 80-81. Ontological decisions here refer to an axiomatic generation of truth and consequently, the taking into consideration of multiplicity and infinity, see: \textit{Being and Event}, 148-49, 150-160 and 407. Subjective forcing can point to widespread violence in history. See: \textit{Theory of the Subject}, 142 where Badiou speaks to Bolshevik political order and the storming of the Bastille in these terms.

\textsuperscript{891} \textit{Briefings on Existence}, 94.

\textsuperscript{892} Clayton Crockett points out that Paul Cohen has mathematically established that a set contains the “minimum possible description and…possible application,” see also: Clayton Crockett, \textit{Deleuze Beyond Badiou: Ontology, Multiplicity, and Event} (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2013), 130 and \textit{Logics of Worlds}, 139 and 399-400. The subject involves herself in universal truth but this is for Badiou: “always the result of a great process that opens with an event,” for: “[m]ultiplicities that appear must be understood as highly complex networks of degrees of identity between their elements, parts and atoms. This what in \textit{Logics of Worlds}, I name ‘atomic logic’ and it forms the most subtle part of the theory of appearing. It demands an attention to the logic of qualities and not solely to the mathematicity of extensions. Beyond pure multiple-being, we have to think something like an ‘existential intensity’, Alain Badiou, \textit{Second Manifesto for Philosophy} (trans.) Louise Burchill (Malden, MA: Polity, 2011), 56-57. See also: Alain Badiou, “Universal Truths and the Question of Religion: Interview with A.S. Miller,” \textit{Journal of Philosophy and Scripture}, 1 (2005): 39, \textit{A Manifesto for Philosophy}, (trans.) Norman Madarasz (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), 80-81, \textit{Three Negations}, 1880 and \textit{Theory of the Subject}, 157.
from the existential, produced whatever was distinguished in the old world.\textsuperscript{893} Extensively quantified objects steadily resurrect or display themselves to a subject allowing her to have a greater sense of the differences and material elements existing in the world. In verifying the ‘concretion’ of other beings the subject “intensifies” her own substantial nature, which gives her the means to re-design the world in light of this recent experience. The continual resurrections of an object’s appearances are expedient to the subject as they afford her future impartations of truth in the world.\textsuperscript{894} However, as the reactivation of a being’s meaning is guaranteed as a part of its metaphysical structuring, Badiou argues that there is no need to establish a necessary and intrinsic linkage between the object’s future resurrections and a subject’s anticipation of these events.\textsuperscript{895} As Badiou assets: “[f]rom this point of view, hope has nothing to do with the future. It is a figure of the present subject, who is affected in return by the universality for which he works.”\textsuperscript{896} The subject’s dialectical based arrangement of being and truth always takes place in the present.

Being is ‘infinitely flexible’ insofar as it is able to appear in any historical event or subjectively created notional worlds. The density of truth fluctuates for subjects given the span of their own rational capacities. From this vantage Badiou supports his proclamation that: “[e]xistence governs difference.”\textsuperscript{897} Given the scalar properties of

\textsuperscript{893} \textit{Theory of the Subject}, 272. Here Badiou recognizes a confirmation in Jean-Paul Sartre’s earlier work on the relationship between revolution and subjectivity.

\textsuperscript{894} See: \textit{Logics of Worlds}, 65.

\textsuperscript{895} See: \textit{The Foundation of Universalism}, 96-97.

\textsuperscript{896} \textit{The Foundation of Universalism}, 97. Certainly, most theologians would find Badiou’s interpretation of Pauline hope as lacking given Saint Paul’s eschatology. However, as will be shown, an argument can be made that Badiou’s understanding of a personal experience of “hope” as a historical experience of grace is possible.

\textsuperscript{897} See: \textit{Logics of Worlds}, 210.
truth and its innate relationship to being Badiou argues that truth is relative to each subject. While every being is seen by Badiou to have an “auto-affection” for the infinite “inexistent multiplicity” of being as a whole, some people have a more profound sense of how this applies in the world.  

Badiou argues that love is an avenue for the human person to embrace truth through bodily and intellectual familiarity with difference and disunity. Both Badiou and Balthasar believe that love allows for the disclosure of truth in lovers’ complimentary structuring of their differences: “love contains an initial element that separates, dislocates and differentiates. You have Two. Love involves Two.” Love exemplifies the truth of being in the logic of the subtraction. In other words, for Badiou, lovers seek a union that remains elusive for: 

“[i]t is not for love’s sake that there are two counted from the vantage point of the third. In matters of love, the three is not (n’est pas), and the Two is subtracted from every count.” As Sigi Jottkandt explains: “[f]or Badiou, love must be 

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898 See: Logics of the Worlds, 103 for Badiou’s description of how a subject’s perception of other beings develops given their own ontological participation in the infinite.

899 Three Negations, 1882. For the Hegelian influence on Badiou’s understanding of being’s dialectical relationships see: Key Concepts, 143-44. Scholars have challenged Badiou given the apparent elitism of his system.


901 Logics of Worlds, 507-14. It is impossible to present more than a sketch of Badiou’s complex relationship to philosophy here, however, it is important to note that his approach favors a particular psychoanalytic reading. Badiou states: “my thread is going to be, as always, Lacan’s relation to philosophy and more to our purposes one that recognizes disparity in love. Ultimately, this is the only thing that interests me…”, Alain Badiou, “The Formulas of UEtourdit”, (trans.) Scott Saviano, Lacanian ink (Spring 2006): 81-2. See also: Praise, 39.

902 Praise, 28. See also: See: Theory of the Subject, 22 and Alain Badiou, Deleuze: The Clamor of Being, (trans.) Louise Burchill (Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Press, 2000), 53 and Alain Badiou, Second Manifesto for Philosophy (trans.) Louise Burchill (Malden, MA: Polity, 2011), 100 and Theory of the Subject, 207 where Badiou criticizes systems such as Deleuze’s for their “groundless liberation of flux”.

903 Alain Badiou, Conditions (trans.) Steven Corcoran (New York, NY:}
regarded in terms of an exceptional logic that simultaneously confirms the philosophical counting operation, while generating another number that is not a product of ordination."  

Mutual difference clears a path for lovers to move beyond anyone representation of being they may have had by premising what may be termed love’s unequalled perspective. Of love’s first-hand “founding” of worlds and visions of being, Badiou states:

The fact is she and I are now incorporated into this unique Subject, the Subject of love that views the panorama of the world through the prism of our difference, so this world can be conceived, be born, and not simply represent what fills my own individual gaze. Love is always of being present at the birth of the world.  

For Badiou the aleatory nature of love confirms in a subject’s transcendent and causally determined relationships to the temporal. In stating their love, the lovers rewrite the memory of their first happenstance meeting into an “assumption” of a necessary beginning—a move that gives a near “intolerable” weight to their temporal experience of their words.

The human subject is metaphysically prearranged to love and accept truth’s unanticipated initiations of “in-differing” and multiplicity. Love fights against physical

Continuum, 2008), 187.

904 Key Concepts, 73.

905 Praise, 26. Given love ideally gravitates the experience of two individuals although it does make, in Badiou’s estimations, room for children in its paradigm; it is not essentially ethical. The ethical comes to its own in the collective work of the political, see: “[t]he idea that love is exclusively fulfilled or enacted via the creation of a family universe is far from satisfactory”, however, the family’s collective dimension accord it the definition of “the State of love,” Praise, 33.

906 As Badiou expounds: “I really don’t like all these theological ruminations inspired by love…I can only see the ultimate revenge of One over Two. I believe there really is an encounter with the other, but an encounter is not an experience it is an event that remains quite opaque and only finds reality in its multiple resonances within the real world. Nor can I see love as an experience of “communion”, namely, an experience in which I forget myself on behalf of the other, that is a model in this world of what will finally lead me to the Almighty Other,” Praise, 43.
estrangement and “solitary consciousness” by creatively living the differences of one’s beloved as one’s own desires. For this reason, love always involves “a unique trust placed in chance” or risk.  

Badiou notes that: [t]he declaration of love marks the transition from chance to destiny, and that’s why it is so perilous and so burdened with a kind of horrifying stage fright.  

A lover contributes to her partner’s hidden hope that one day their experiences of difference and isolation will be consumed by the truth that loves ensures. Through their mutual assurances of a common life these differences become zones of coincidence and intersection. Vowed love bridges the chasm that exists between beings, making of their “two solitudes” some actualization of what the One promises. In this way, love repeatedly exposes ever-deeper truths of the infinite meaning of one’s beloved. Although love takes place in the momentary it “bodily” looks to the future: “[t]he ritual of bodies is then the material expression of the word, it communicates the idea that the promise to re-invent life will be fulfilled, initially in terms of the body.”

Love demands one risk “self-ubtraction” or self-giving. Love offers the subject a way to overcome narcissism. Badiou states: “[s]elfishness, [is] not any rival, [it is] love’s enemy. One could say: my love’s main enemy, the one I must defeat, is not the other, it is myself, the ‘myself’ that prefers identity to difference, that prefers to impose

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907 See: Praise, 17 and 68.  
908 Ibid, 43.  
909 The relationship between subject and object is without hope because each dawning of objective truth is not fully prompted by the subject as the subject reacts to an actual being. Lovers have hope because they can materially enter the future from a common obligation.  
910 See: Praise, 30-31 and 36.  
911 Ibid, 37. See also: Logics of Worlds, 451-54 where Badiou outlines his theory of the body’s natural capacity for the truth.
its world against the world re-constructed through the filter of difference.”

Love has a sacrificial dimension because lovers commit to the future through their bodies. Without a mutual pledging beyond the fleeting, love’s unifying tendencies diminish between beings as little solidarity accords from a repetitive and holographic nature that focuses on immediate pleasure or expedient egotistical calculus. In such cases love is not open to extending a being’s metaphysical reach but harbors a secret desire for autonomy and the automatic.

Badiou looks to Rom. 7:7-23 for an explanation of the negative effects of a “virtual” love. Badiou comments that like Saint Paul’s recognition of the human person’s unconscious and passive relationship to all that is deadening and deadly, a virtual depiction of love sets one in an unconscious relationship with non-being and death. Such a move Badiou reasons fixates one’s subconscious on sin and death rather than the truth. He writes that: “[a]ll of Paul’s thinking here points toward a theory of

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912 Praise, 60.

913 Badiou testifies that without the virtual convergence point of the void, a metaphysically counterfeit representation of being as holographic results. Further, since Badiou argues that being assimilates its non-inhering internal relationships by mathematical processes and discharges them in a being’s appearance and representation, the question of the virtual lingers. The evolution of the virtual is possible given its origin in mathematics, which is taken to be naturally recursive and reflexive. On subjective embodiment by topological algebraic and set construction, see: Theory of the Subject, 266.

914 The subject is in an unconscious relationship with death and non-being as both are two of an infinite number of being’s categorical possibilities of appearing. Death for Badiou is a category of the logic of appearance and not of ontology.

915 A subject is able to faithful to the world given her grounding in an event. The generic nature of truth demands for Badiou that the subject’s experience of the true remains particular and hence subtractive. Thus Badiou claims that “[e]vil is not disrespect for the name of the other, but rather the will to name at any price,” see: Being and Event, 335 and Theoretical Writings, 115. Given that love is taken as a condition of truth, one that always threatens to manifest virtually, it seems logical that Badiou, like Balthasar, intuits some relationship between the sinful and the virtual.
the subjective unconscious, structured through the opposition life/death. The law’s prohibition is that through which the desire of the object can realize itself ‘involuntarily,’ unconsciously—that is to say, as life of sin. As a result of which the subject, de-centered from this desire, crosses over to the side of death.”916 The hope for unity and totality ‘covenanted’ in genuine love transforms redundant and insubstantial relationships in the world.917

In its continual “re-counting”, love provides a way for lovers to move beyond the crude calculations of judging their own ego to be primarily or metaphysically in Badiou’s terms as “One”. As Badiou muses: “[t]here are points, tests, temptations and new appearances, and, each time, you must replay the “Two scene”, find the terms for a new declaration.”918 Human love is an invitation for human beings to enter more fully into a conscious struggle to hope and live for the One, the whole and the totality.919 However, as Badiou reasons: “every world contains—in an ontological sense—an inaccessible infinity of objects, it follows that every relation is universally exposed within it. In other


917 Badiou warns that his understanding of love’s “eternal” and transcendent properties in no way equates to a traditional portrayal of eternity or the Transcendence. Any move towards seeing love as the gateway to the Eternal Transcendent, Badiou argues, confuses onto-theological relations with human desires and this is a: “false love, which claims that the subject annihilates himself in a direct relation to the transcendence of the Other, [and this] is nothing more than narcissistic pretension,” *The Foundation of Universalism*, 90. As an atheist, Badiou refutes the idea that a relationship with Jesus Christ makes the grace available to believers to eventually obliterate death and sin. However, for Badiou, the person of Jesus Christ exemplifies how rational thinking benefits one in the overcoming of their egotistical desires, irrational inclinations and sinful habits.

918 *Praise*, 51.

919 See: *Key Concepts*, 161 and *Briefings on Existence*, 121.
words, as far as worlds are concerned, the logical completeness of appearing is a
consequence of ontological closure."\textsuperscript{920} Because the universal exists dialectically every
subjective experience of particular being is unfailingly intimated in every event. In the
next chapter we turn to how a speculative reading of Balthasar’s theory of kenosis offers
a way to answer or at least re-visit some of the principles of Badiou’s mathematical
metaphysics and its practical applications for a subject in the world.

\textsuperscript{920} \textit{Logics of Worlds}, 320.
Part III. A Speculative Synthesis

Chapter Five: Transcendence and Finite Consciousness

Introduction

According to Balthasar, the Transcendent’s love for Creation is behind all metaphysical determinations. He states that: “[t]he word of God must be written into the world of Being, the word of Being into the words of creatures which are exchanged as comprehensible words among existent creatures.”

Balthasar believes we are meant to constitute ourselves in relationship to Jesus Christ and by so doing our reason, will and desire analogously participate in the Trinity’s economic mission. Human longing flourishes (appetitum desiderium) in the renunciation of all that denies Divine agape. The finite creature transcendentally relates or returns to God (Angewiesenheit) and this move depends on her filial dependence on Christ. In transcendental action a person’s identity is embedded with Transcendent Love. This mimetic relationship is possible as love is not one of several conditions for truth as Badiou argues, but rather, the supreme and eternal life of the Divine Persons and the purpose of the finite creature. Christ’s mission renews all that is discordant in Creation through love. The reciprocal ordination of being and truth is possible, Balthasar further argues, because Trinitarian love sustains Creation, allowing created beings and truth to exist together as coincidentia oppositorum—a “difference-in-unity” and “unity-in-difference”: “[d]ifference is thus

\[^{921}\text{GL 5, 631. See also: TD 4, 59.}\]
\[^{922}\text{See: TD 2/2, 47, 487 and TD 3, 54 and 444.}\]
unity of itself, and identity is in itself determinate difference. It is not transformation into another, not relation to an other outside it: it has its other identity, within itself, just as identity, having entered into the determination of difference, has not lost itself in it as its other, but preserves itself in it, is its reflection-into-self and its movement.”

The relationship between finitude and difference is never its own goal. To this end, Balthasar remarks that: “the fundamental act of self-consciousness, in which spirit takes its own measure, ipso facto discloses the measure of being as a whole, in which one’s own being and consciousness are embedded. The truth about one being is imparted only with the simultaneous opening of the horizon of being as such.”

While Badiou takes reality to be isomorphic to its mathematical description, Balthasar sees Creation as mirroring the speech of the Father in the Divine Word. With the Incarnation the Divine Word becomes the language of self-discovery for beings and the model by which they come to freely communicate in the world. The limitless horizon of being that begins in self-reflectivity points the subject back into her own finite structuring:

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923 GL 1, 418. While we never reach inseparable unity we experience the duality of unity. See also: Dramatic Structure, 425, GL 7, 211 and E, 42. This tension holds given the person of Jesus Christ: “If Christ is to be the Unique One, then, when we look at his form, what must happen is that all other forms, in spite of their qualitative difference and even opposition, comes more and more to exhibit related characteristics, while he, who had seemed to be related to them and capable of being classified under the same general categories, now appears in ever greater isolation, incapable of being reduced to anything whatever,” GL 1, 489.

924 TL 1, 227. Thematically the relationship between being and truth, essence and esse communicates a being’s fundamental metaphysical polarity. Other polar relationships are found for being in the correspondences between the universal and particular, as well as the difference between finitude and infinity. Other polar structures open up external dialogical relations and are often conceptualized as the distinction between freedom and determination or the question of fact versus necessity. The unity of being is established in the congruence between internal and external expressions of polarity that is created when beings interact. Like Badiou, these various internal and external relationships appear for Balthasar in the world given a subject’s own “truth-attitude”.
The analysis of finite self-awareness does not fructify in merely the discovery of an empty, limitless horizon—that of being in general as a transcendental a priori enabling all finite knowledge; it also allows one to conclude, and express in a rigorous fashion, to the existence of an infinite awareness, as a condition of possibility for the finite subject.\footnote{TL 1, 258. See also: “the notion of being is immediately conceived at the moment when the intellect begins to act for the intellect is directed by nature to being,” J. A. Aerston, \textit{Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals: The Case of Thomas Aquinas} (Leiden, Netherlands: E.K. Brill, 1996), 183.}

A subject is able to take hold other beings and images given her own pre-existing unity of apperception.\footnote{See: \textit{E}, 48 and TL 1, 138-444 and 153.} The infinite is grasped as something ungraspable and in this tension an epistemic space opens for a finite being to conceptualize the inconceivable. Most postmodern thinkers disregard such a proposal as it suggests that conceptualization of the future is possible. It is true, for Balthasar that the intellect intuits both the future and a sense of totality for: “the supreme justification of all being in its essence as in its existence, the ‘forth-setting’ (\textit{Voraus-setzung}) to which every positing (\textit{Setzung}) at last lets itself return and without which all being and history would remain unintelligible and meaningless.”\footnote{TL 1, 117-118. On the supra-Transcendent ordering and a finite’s subject’s openness to the totality, see: \textit{TD} 4, 138 and TL 1, 219.} The experience of the unknown never eliminates the gratuitous event of a new experience of the Transcendent. Indeed, it is the very undergirding of the Transcendent in the supra-difference of Ur-kenosis that both assures the absolute nature of the Transcendent and paradoxically affords the means for its analogous revelation in finite being. An analogy of being and an analogy of knowing or faith are possible given their common apophatic intuition of the Absolute Difference of Ur-kenosis at heart of the relationship between the Divine Persons.

In what follows, we will show how Balthasar’s Ur-kenotic theory illumines the
way in which Transcendent Love in the person of Jesus Christ enables, in finite being, a free growth in conscious knowledge of being, truth and love. Expounding on a metaphysic centered in an Ur-kenotic love imparts a way to understand immanent relationships and differences within Creation as part of finite being’s underlining relationship to the Transcendent. Difference has its own method, genealogy and interpretation that finally make sense in relationship to Ur-kenotic difference. In the first section, *Methodological Approaches*, we station Balthasar’s kenotic approach amongst other epistemologies. Balthasar believes an Ur-kenotic and realist approach best explains the world for: “[a]ny departure from the precise rendering of the actual facts is also a departure from truth. It is not the function of the knowing mind to invent for itself some—perhaps better and nicer—world and to ignore the one that already exists. It has to say what it is. Its primary attitude is thus one of perfect objectivity.”

It is not permissible, Balthasar argues, to “project” a philosophical system onto being that fails in its analysis to account for the “fact” that a being’s relative independence is inseparable from Being in totality and that both find common ordering in reference to Transcendent love. Balthasar further distances himself from many current philosophical theories given his belief that beings exist in an essential-existential relationship and hence: “[w]e re-respond [ant-worten] with a word [Wort] that is spirit (the *verbum intellectus* or *cordis*), but also with a word that has always had its sensible correspondence, even if the vision of

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928 *TL* 1, 75. See also: Lonergan’s discussion on the order of discovery is compared to the hierarchy of being as one can move from an intuition of a thing and its appearance to essential grounding. This method can be put in conversation with such complex and abstract mathematical systems such as that of David Hilbert. It is beyond the scope of the thesis to further explore this issue. See: Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, (ed.) Frederick Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: Lonergan Research Institute or Regis College, University of Toronto Press, 1992), 27-50.
insight into reality as such precedes this answer (‘simplex intuitus intellectus … nondum habet rationem verbi’ [The simple gaze of the mind … does not yet possess the meaning of the word], De veritate I, 27, 2, 1). 929

Surprising to many contemporaries is Balthasar’s claim that even non-conscious beings have a relative intentionality given their essential ordering. Philosophical positivism and Idealism do not, to Balthasar’s mind, sufficiently render a being’s critical essential nature. Brassier sums up the risk of idealistic systems when he states that: “[c]onceptual idealism emphasizes the normative valence of knowing at the cost of eliding the metaphysical autonomy of the in-itself.” 930 Human consciousness and freedom only comport in a material body, Balthasar ventures, given the potential development of her non-appearing essential properties. Thus beings are taken by Balthasar to exist in a state of essential and existential emergence. In contrast, the Divine has a non-mediated experience of the “Other”. The Divine continually looks into the interior of the non-divine for as Balthasar states: “There are an infinite number of things that man does not know that have always been true because they are grounded in the fact that the absolute Spirit has measured them, even if some might be known and judged as true for accidental reasons.” 931 Theologically, all freedom is inseparable from a concept of self-possession and this stability is made possible because of the Transcendent. 932

929 E, 79.
930 Ray Brassier, ‘Concepts and Objects’ in Speculative Realism, 49 in The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism, (eds.) Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek and Graham Harman (Melbourne: re.press, 2011). Hereafter cited as “Speculative Realism.” Badiou agrees that Idealism eclipses or de-centers the subject and can be categorized under three broad areas: religious idealism, humanist idealism, and linguistic idealism, see: Theory of the Subject, 103 and 188.
931 E, 82.
932 See: TD 2, 220ff.
In his *Essential Nature and Ontological Difference*, Balthasar undertakes a more in-depth study of the essential and differential sides of being. A being’s unremitting essential differentiation leads Balthasar to define beings in terms of their plenitude or fundamental essential multiplicity. The reification of the essential and existential in being is simultaneously “self-cancellative” of previous embodiments and productive of ever-new appearances, for created being: “only realizes natures in so far as it realizes itself in natures. In itself, it has no subsistence but inheres in natures: *esse non est subsistens sed inhaereus*…It is only in them that it comes to ‘standing’ and subsistence.”933 The Ur-kenotic Divine’s Transcendent and economic commitment to Creation allows God to act as a participator in and observer of being. The Ur-kenotic Transcendent acts as a metaphysical “third” that unifies a person’s essential and existential attributes as well as her “ek-static” trajectory towards the Transcendent.934

A being’s essential differing is an interminable ontological elision, an interior point of non-subsistence that makes possible, Balthasar expostulates, a finite being’s participation in the eternal signification of the Transcendent in the person of Jesus Christ and being itself. The asymmetric correspondence between the Transcendent and finite being finds its perfect unity in the person of Jesus Christ who: “[a]s a man assumed into God, Christ, necessarily participates in the self-consciousness of the eternal Son in his eternal processions from the Father and his return to him, and this becomes reflected in the human self-consciousness of Christ to the extent that he experiences this self-consciousness of the Son *interius intimo suo* and that he possesses it by opening himself

933 *GL* 4, 403.
934 The *ek*-static here refers to the human person’s natural capacity to enter into relationship with other beings in the world and ultimately with the Divine.
Prior to Jesus Christ’s Incarnation the inter-play of interior essential differing and external relationships were both in an asymmetric relationship to the Transcendent. With Jesus Christ the interior non-subsistent essential relationships of finite beings are given a definitive Transcendent orientation at the metaphysical level, for: “[t]he paradox of the spiritual creature [is that it] is ordained beyond itself by the innermost reality of its nature to a goal that is unreachable for it and that can only be given as a gift of grace.”936 A finite immanence does not find resolution in the infinite quantification of the material, but rather, in the essential’s transcedent trajectory. Finite being’s essential-existential unity emulates Jesus Christ’s own essential experience of his human nature, for as Balthasar attests: “the ascent of human nature into God must be more deeply grounded in the descent of God into human nature. Only then does the inclusion of the redemption of the many within the uniqueness of Christ become intelligible.”937 Christ redeems all adverse essential relationships, namely, sin, death and the threat of Hell’s chaos, by incarnating as fully human and offering grace to the totality of Creation.938

In the section *Spatiotemporal Continuum and Being* an overview is given of the metaphysical role Balthasar accords to the spatial and temporal in his system. In the first

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935 *GL* 1, 328. Here Balthasar seems to develop Aquinas’ idea for the medium that makes the *lumen gloriae* possible when he writes that: “this light is to be described not as a medium in which God is seen; and such a medium does not take away the immediate vision of God,” *S. Th.* I, q. 12, aa. 2-5.


937 *A Theology of History*, 15.

instance a being is known by its exterior appearance or surface.\textsuperscript{939} A being always remains partially unknown for the subject. This “vacuity” coincides with the subject’s limited cognitive and perceptive abilities. While beings are concrete and part of the spatiotemporal continuum, for Balthasar they also exist in a transcendent relationship to the Transcendent.

A perfect temporal concomitance never exists between any two beings. The denial of perfect spatial or temporal harmonization between two beings does not deny the possibility of a shared and proportionate experience of an event. Individuals are finitely related by cause and effect, potential associations with other objects and beings as well as the larger spatiotemporal fabric in which they find themselves.\textsuperscript{940} Jonathan Bennett summarizes why many thinkers forego advocating that these relations can include some reference to an abstract proposition and by extension, an existing Transcendent Being, writing: “[s]ome people have objected that facts are not the sort of item that can cause anything. A fact is a true proposition (they say); it is not something in the world but is rather something about the world, which makes it categorically wrong for the role of a puller and shover and twister and bender.”\textsuperscript{941} The spatiotemporal continuum mathematically proxies as a weak analogy for Transcendent Being for: “[w]e must derive

\textsuperscript{939} See: GL 1, 30.


\textsuperscript{941} Jonathan Bennett, Events and Names (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishers, 1988), 22. See also: See: TL 1, 96 and TD 5, 386-87.
time—and time only in the continuum idealization—out of it. Likewise, with space.”⁹⁴²

The subject discerns the meaning of an object by contrasting its arrival in the spatiotemporal event and the being’s universal meaning. The intercalations of time and space underline a subject’s experience of the future (2 Cor. 3:18).⁹⁴³ A subject’s idiosyncratic spatiotemporal framing gives her a way to see the irreplaceable value of each being’s experiences of change.⁹⁴⁴ Thus Balthasar sees a purely neutral sense of history as impossible, as beings invest meaning to their every experience; he writes: “[a] purely secular view of history is quite impossible. Historical science may attempt to be neutral as regard the philosophy of history but it cannot convert the fact that its subject—man and his acts—conducts himself, in small things and great, according to his basic idea of ultimate naming, that is to say, as a philosopher.”⁹⁴⁵

The subject acknowledges truth in the infinite modifications of internal and external landscapes, Balthasar reasons, because the Transcendent adjudicates all spatiotemporal evolution by eternal gauge. This evolutionary thrust is not meant to suggest that the truth’s revelation in reality is reductive or partial to the subject’s ability to receive it, but rather, that any perceived good implies the infinite potential of further disclosures of truth, unity, beauty and the good.⁹⁴⁶ This ongoing revelation of being presupposes for Balthasar that there exists one Transcendent Being whose supra-position “opens” up space or “absence”, allowing immanent reality to both disclose and guarantee

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⁹⁴³ See: TL 1, 96 and TD 5, 386-87.  
⁹⁴⁴ TL 1, 198-99.  
⁹⁴⁵ ExT, 1, 27.  
⁹⁴⁶ See: TD 2, 227-42.
relationships.\textsuperscript{947}

Truth resounds conditionally for Balthasar in one of four areas: nature, participation, freedom and mystery. In these four events finite truth reveals and actualizes ever-greater amplifications of the Divine Truth.\textsuperscript{948} Consequently, Balthasar insists that: “[w]hat man is in his totality cannot be ‘explained’ in terms of the process by which he has become what he is.”\textsuperscript{949} Space and time predicate for the subject the means to explore her intuitive sense of eternity.\textsuperscript{950} Balthasar agrees with Badiou that beings exist in relationship to a quantifiable infinity. However, unlike Badiou’s mathematical and actual infinity that formally organizes a being’s relationship to the void, Balthasar views the infinite as an eternal value of Jesus Christ’s inner essential state.\textsuperscript{951} As Balthasar interprets the concept of \textit{opera trinitatis ad extra communicata}, the internal infinite essential movements of Jesus Christ’s finite being are absolutely equal to the eternal Trinitarian life and its expression in history. God’s love becomes a fully coherent lived experience, Balthasar implies, when eternity incarnates temporally in the person of Jesus Christ. Faithfully participating in Christ’s finite nature avails one a relative share in

\textsuperscript{947} As Edward N. Zalta’s work on Göttlob Frege has shown, the concept of Transcendent Truth serves to ground a profound theory of mathematics. In Frege’s theory, immanent beings are seen to participate in a “transcendental” relationship with the True. Zalta writes: “[e]ven the sentences of Frege's mature logical system are (complex) denoting terms; they are terms that denote truth-values. Frege distinguished two truth-values, The True and The False, which he took to be objects. The basic sentences of Frege's system are constructed using the expression ‘( ) = ( )’, which signifies a binary function that maps a pair of objects \( x \) and \( y \) to The True if \( x \) is identical to \( y \) and maps \( x \) and \( y \) to The False otherwise. A sentence such as ‘\( 2 + 2 = 4 \)’ therefore denotes the truth-value The True, while the sentence ‘\( 2 + 2 = 6 \)’ denotes The False,” see: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/frege/.

\textsuperscript{948} See: \textit{TL} 1, 47.

\textsuperscript{949} \textit{GL} 1, 26. Although time is not finally explained in its spatial manifestation for Balthasar, local and relative temporal changes are possible.

\textsuperscript{950} See: \textit{TL} 1, 196-97 and \textit{S. Th.} 1, q. 84, a. 3.

\textsuperscript{951} See: \textit{TL} 1, 252-53.
Christ’s supra-temporal existence as the Son as Athanasius epigrammatically testifies:
“God was made man so that man might be made God.”\(^\text{952}\) The spatiotemporal scale encompasses a being’s essential expansion of her exterior and interior borders by accepting that one’s self definition includes Jesus Christ’s embodiment of the Transcendent and finite.\(^\text{953}\) Consequently, surface topology does not bear its ultimate meaning in its mathematical quantification, as Badiou claims, but rather, for Balthasar, spatiotemporal boundaries are congruent both to a being’s ocular-erotic grasp (\textit{concupiscencia oculorum} or the “perceptually based lust” of the eyes) and her conscious “internal” \textit{transcendental} measure of the eternal.\(^\text{954}\)

In \textit{Ratio, Subject and Image} we turn to Balthasar’s clarification of how he sees an object conveying meaning through its appearance in the world. The subject’s first notion or mental form of an object mentally binds her to another being’s sensual properties. A subject consciously develops when she instigates a rapport with objects or other beings in the world. The subject’s conscious ratio of an object is reducible neither to the object’s appearance nor the subject’s intention. Consequently, the subject’s response to an object never becomes a single affective state or mood (\textit{Stimmung}) nor does an object completely condense into mathematical calculation. Postmoderns such as Meillassoux believe that what is perceived, as an existing object is in truth only a representation of facticity and objectivity:

What I experience with facticity is not an objective reality, but rather the unsurpassable limits of objectivity confronted with the fact that there is a word, a word that is describable and perceptible, and structured by determinate invariants. It is the sheer fact of the world’s logicality, of its givens in a representation, which

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\(^{953}\) See: \textit{GL} 7, 188-201

\(^{954}\) See: \textit{TL} 1, 48 and Schindler, \textit{Dramatic Structure}, 198.
evades the structures of logical and representational reason. The in-itself becomes opaque to the point where it is no longer possible to maintain that it exists, so that the term tends to disappear to the benefit of facticity.\footnote{After Finitude, 40. See also: “[f]acticity is the ‘un-reason’ (the absence of reason) of the given as well as its invariants,” After Finitude, 41.}

Initially the subject reproves all deductive formalizations of an object preferring to behold (Sehen) the beauty of its appearance (Aussehen).\footnote{Balthasar’s hope that the subject does not bring a priori conceptions to her meeting of the other does not mean that she not have preexisting expectations of every encounter. Balthasar differentiates between a subject’s immanent expectations (Naherwartung), which gives the encounter between a subject and object an underlining structure, and constant or one might say vocational expectations (Stetserwartung). Like truth, human desire decrees universally but not totally in an historical occurrence. The distinction of immanent and vocational desires holds, in Balthasar’s opinion, as a result of their common ordering by and toward a Transcendent Divine Will.} Balthasar takes the image and not the concept as the fundamental element of cognition.\footnote{Balthasar laments that concepts have taken the place of images that can be contemplated, see: GL 1, 390.} The properties of light and measure are inseparable from Truth’s disclosure: “[b]ehind its spiritual light as intelligence there dwells within it the abiding will to self-opening and to openness.”\footnote{TL 1, 117. See also: TL 1, 43-44.}

The “rapprochement” of being and consciousness is possible because within a being there is a light.\footnote{See: GL 1, 241-57.} The subject’s reception of an object’s surface contours calls her to explore the object’s own hidden essential designs. Regarding the object’s essential quotient in appearance Balthasar suggests that:

From beginning to end, everything is tied to the starting point of all cognition: the senses. No knower can behold the truth except in the mirror image of the outward expression. As a result, every existent object that is known is not only marked by contingency but also explicitly receives the truth that expresses it and that is its measure. Contingency is an intrinsic quality of worldly truth, and it is in virtue of this inherent and indelible mark that worldly truth is differentiated, already in the most original act of self-consciousness, from the divine truth.\footnote{TL 1, 229.}
The subject shapes a mental image of an object to deliver a more in-depth understanding of the convertible relationship existing between the object’s phenomenal appearance and its essential core.\(^{961}\) The subject’s pondering of other being’s existential and essential characteristics gives her a sense of reality’s organization as a whole.\(^{962}\)

In the section *Truth and Essence* we investigate how Balthasar describes a subject’s response to an object’s changing appearances. By consciously holding her original sensory intuitions of an object in the imagination, the subject is able to intuit something of an object’s uninterrupted essential truth even when it seems imperceptible in the material.\(^{963}\) The distinction between a being’s meaning and its imaginary configuring by the subject is constantly at work when they exist in a relationship. Balthasar likens this conscious holding of a unified ideal of the object’s image to the subject’s love of the object.

Once the object is held as an image in the subject’s imagination she is able to place its essential truth in relationship with other essential truths. In *Abstraction, Synthesis and Truth* we expound on how the subject’s abstractive and synthetic operations refer in finite measure to the Ur-kentotic motions of selfless giving and unifying love between the Divine Persons.\(^{964}\)

\(^{961}\) See: *GL* 1, 152 and *TL* 1, 159. On understanding as an immaterial operation, see: *S. Th.* Ia, q.50, a.1ff.

\(^{962}\) Knowing another is fundamentally an act of receptive play and not a violent wrestling on the historical stage, because the totality of reality is isomorphic to each particular being, see: *TL* 1, 82, 197, *TD* 2, 227-42 and Schindler, *Dramatic Truth*, 82.

\(^{963}\) On an early explanation of the imagination’s role in synthesizing composite images see: *S. Th.* I, q. 81, a. 2.

\(^{964}\) Balthasar’s theo-logical interpretation of human consciousness’s relationship to contingent and infinite ideas develops but is consistent with Aquinas’ work, see: *S. Th.* I, q. 79, a.3, q. 85, a.2 and a.3.
The subject’s discovery of an object’s essential truth is only possible, Balthasar insists, because this truth is neither predetermined by the subject nor divorced downright from the perceived object. Even though every image is derivative and relative it is able to participate in the universal truth: “[f]or in every man there is a certain principle of knowledge, namely, the light of the agent intellect, through which certain universal principles of all sciences are naturally understood as soon as proposed to the intellect.”

The particular and universal are the nexus where conscious intent, perception and appearance meet as an evolutionary principle of knowledge that remains subjectively reflexive for: “[t]he light of the intellectus agens is the light of esse as reality: with this orientation to the intellect it attains essences [i.e. logical structures], and in this meta-logical light they become comprehensible. But this means that the essential categories…thrive in ‘spherically curved space.’” Through independent subjective perceptions an aggregate picture of the world develops and promises infinitely more.

In *Consciousness and Groundlessness* we explain how the subject-object bond develops, for Balthasar, with a view to an object’s changing appearance in the world. The subject bridges the transition between each new disclosure of the perceived object’s essential truth. The subject is able to hold an image of an object in consciousness even when it no longer subsists, Balthasar contends, because both beings participate in eternal truth.

In the section *Knowing as an Act of Love* we explore how the ideas of sacrifice and love inform Balthasar’s theory of subjective consciousness and an object’s essential

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965 *S. Th.* I, q. 79, a.5. On Balthasar’s agreement that “omnis scientia” is part of the human being’s metaphysical structure, see: *GL* 4, 155-56.

966 *GL* 4, 407-08.
disclosure. A qualitative interpretation of being informs Balthasar’s epistemology. In favoring the object’s essential truth over its physical manifestation in the world, the subject can paradoxically “quantify” an object’s material features as a formal idea or an associated symbolic value. While this translation of the object never captures its full truth, it does provide one with a statistical valuation of a being. This diminution of the existential object, Balthasar emphasizes, is necessary to share information about beings to those not privileged to experience directly their ongoing disclosure of meaning.

The subject’s self-knowledge matures in the act of discovering the essential truths of other beings. Because, Balthasar believes, concord pre-exists between being and truth, the inner significance of essential being appears in conscious and non-conscious beings alike. Truth can only be acquired when a being “makes room” for another being in her consciousness. An aperture exists in being, allowing for the metaphysical layering of its ontological, cognitive and moral dimensions. While a being is naturally open to other beings, it is only when the subject loves the “other”, Balthasar maintains, that the truth of finite being properly partakes in eternal truth.

(1) Methodological Approaches

Balthasar argues that formalistic systems such as Badiou’s mathematical ontology disappoint in their explanations of a being’s essential “genetic” makeup and hence a being’s interaction with the truth. No less is it the case that Balthasar sees most rationalist and idealistic systems as wanting in light of their failure to take seriously the formal properties of non-conscious beings. Here the philosophers could learn from the common sense of the non-professionals, as Balthasar comments:

Why should people not be convinced idealists also in their daily lives? In fact,
they are not. Rather, they adjudge external existence and value to the things they know inside of themselves, and no argument in the world can convince them that this affirmation is merely a practical one that could be superseded from a higher speculative standpoint. In a word, they affirm the intentionality of intellectual cognition, whose primary direction is out of the subject, and they do so ultimately because, in the primordial act in which they laid hold of themselves as subjects, they know that another, holding them in his grasp, places them in existence, over against, and at a distance from, himself.\(^\text{967}\)

According to Balthasar, naïve realism and most postmodern schemas are lacking as they underestimate the significance of a being’s essential properties, just as Critical and Idealistic philosophies risk overlooking the significance of a being’s appearance, for: “[i]f our ruling idea is limited to what the cognitive subject is able to construe, then we wholly lose the phenomenon of objective self-manifestation, the self-revelation of the object from the heart of its own depths, and everything runs aground in shallow functionalism.”\(^\text{968}\) Balthasar summarizes his criticism against the thrust of these various philosophical schools as they are:

\[\ldots\text{bound to fail, for both ultimately misunderstand the essence of truth: truth is, in fact, the revelation in the appearance of the very being that does not itself appear. Both systems are incapable of establishing the relation between the appearance and what appears; both are varieties of the same fundamental deficiency. Both are aware that they are dealing with a mystery, but because the one seeks the truth in the conceptless image, whereas the other seeks it in the imageless concept, both arrive only at an empty mystery. The pure concept of rationalism and the cosmic ground of idealist mysticism, on the one hand, the unknowable thing-in-itself of empiricism and the pure movement and transitoriness of the mysticism of experience, on the other, are all empty. In the end, this void thrusts the subject back into itself.}\(^\text{969}\)

Balthasar’s moderate realistic approach sees being’s quantifiable augmentations with a view to their prior essential and Transcendent amplifications. The subject’s self-definition through free action only extends to other beings by means of non-inhering

\(^{967}\) TL 1, 54.  
\(^{968}\) GL 1, 447.  
\(^{969}\) TL 1, 137.
relationships. This relational difference between a subject and other beings is ultimately grounded in Ur-kenosis. The Transcendent orders all finite differences for the Divine: “affirm[s] the intentionality of intellectual cognition, whose primary direction is out of the subject, and they do so ultimately because, in the primordial act in which they lay hold of themselves as subjects, they know that another, holding them in his grasp, places them in existence, over against, and at a distance from, himself. Precisely in the reverent distance that thus opens up between God and the creature, one’s fellow creatures have room to appear in their own self–standing being. Because it must decide to confess its finitude before the infinite God, the finite subject must also decide to acknowledge that its fellow creatures, too, are self-standing existents.”

Failing to presuppose an actual Transcendent inevitably leads to a paradox that becomes determinative in Balthasar’s methodology, namely that: “the ‘motus’ of freedom is inseparable from the disclosure of all being’s independent truth and ‘intentions’ ‘causa sui’, because there is thus in the will a natural longing (naturale desiderium) for complete, exhaustive self-possession, which would have to coincide with the ‘possession’ of being as such, we arrive at the Thomist paradox (which Henri de Lubac has again brought to light): man strives to fulfill himself in an Absolute and yet, although ‘causa sui’, he is unable to achieve this by his own power or by attaining any finite thing or finite good.” In other words, Balthasar is aware that his “Theol-logical” epistemology grounded on Transcendent revelation argues that the subject’s ability to love and exist in transcendental relationship to the Transcendent is tied to and congruent with her finite

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970 *TL* 1, 54.
nature—one that is fundamentally creative and spontaneous. The presence of the eternal in Jesus Christ’s incarnation does not eliminate his or our freedom, but rather, allows for finite self-determination in the face of the chance and indeterminacy of this world, that is, with view to the freedom of other beings.

Subjective perception oscillates in non-inhering relationships, grounded in differences that stress a being’s accidental properties and the subject’s recognition of its essential nature. Together the subject sees these various experiences as a path to correspond with universal truth and the Transcendent (Matt. 5:8). Balthasar reasons that: “[a] being appears, it has an epiphany: in that it is beautiful and makes us marvel. In appearing it gives itself, it delivers itself to us: it is good. And in giving itself up, it speaks itself, it unveils itself: it is true (in itself, but in the other to which it reveals itself).” The mathematical and axiomatic attempts an elucidation of being, but, Balthasar judges, such a formal reckoning is never comprehensive enough. While, there is no favored discipline for Balthasar that fully satisfies a being’s relationship to truth, his theo-logic narrates how a subject’s urge to know (appetitus naturalis) and an object’s desire to be known are inseparable from the Transcendent.

Assuming that all beings exist in relationship Badiou correctly believes that Set Theory shows how two beings can be identified as distinct and this reveals how the principle of non-contradiction is logically derived. A contradictory or non-self-
identical being cannot be fully ascertained. Badiou states that: “[a] Topos, even if it is absolutely non-classical (for example if it contains an infinity of distinct evaluative nuances and differences between the true and the false), determines the principal of non-contradiction as true.” Balthasar seems to agree with Badiou on this particular point as he sees in a being’s topological and essential characteristics a way to identify the differences existing among beings. However, Balthasar does not think, like Badiou, that the principle of non-contradiction a priori discounts being’s relationship to the Transcendent. Balthasar’s theology of Ur-kenosis stretches the logical restrictions imposed on the principle of non-contradiction by classical logic. The kenotic acts of Jesus Christ’s Incarnation and Passion re-define the principle of non-contradiction in terms of the paradoxical. It may be the case that Balthasar’s metaphysical system will find its best explanation by employing “paraconsistent logic” that holds two contradictory propositions as truthful and meaningful. The question of paraconsistent logic exceeds the limits of our pursuit here. However, a preliminary outline of how paraconsistent logic

the relationship (X, Y). In this simple set a distinction is made between the two terms such that neither term is ever an element of the same thing [e.g.: ¬(X, X)]. See: TL 2, 320-22.

975 Thinkers such as Meillassoux see polar systems such as Balthasar’s as methodologically open to contradiction: “[t]hus the strong model of correlationism can be summed up in the following thesis; it is unthinkable that the unthinkable be impossible. I cannot provide a rational ground for the absolute impossibility of a contradictory reality, or of the nothingness of all things, even if the meaning of these terms remain indeterminate,” After Finitude, 39 and 41.


977 Taking beings as self-organizing and evolving answers, in part, those of Balthasar’s critics who claim that anyone who holds to transcendental thinking is mistaken for even non-conscious beings are in a non-rational transcendent relationship with the Divine. It is the whole of Creation that is in relationship to the Transcendent and, thus, it is not clear that Balthasar’s view of transcendence is not a solipsistic gesture. For a critique of this approach see: Philosophy of Difference, 172-73.
may be applied will be provided in the next chapter when we look at the manner in which Jesus Christ consciously and physically appropriates death and Hell without supplanting his eternal identity.

Balthasar’s belief that objects have a natural tendency, indeed, even an inherent “love” and “hope” for other beings will most likely be seen as philosophically suspect and theologically unmerited. Certainly, such an opinion counters some of the issues initiated by the conceptual and reductionist tendencies of idealistic and empirical approaches. However, Balthasar defends his anthropomorphic reading of objects by holding that truth is co-produced when the subject receives the “loving self-gift” of another being’s existence. The subject’s encounter with an object is more than can be captured in a mathematical description:

Truth as we know it in the world always consists of individual disclosures, propositions, judgments, which unveil a determinative perspective. Each of these perspectives has its finitude, and has to be completed by others. No worldly truth is absolute—not even if it is genuine, real truth. It is only truth if it is in continuity with the whole truth, if it is really an expression (even if only a limited and measured one) of an unconditioned and unmeasured revelation and gift of self. So in the human use of truth every truth, every finite communication of truth must express an unmeasured will to self-donation (Hingabe).⁹７⁸

Balthasar attempts to mediate the extremes of a positivistic phenomenal approach and an Idealistic conceptual assessment of being. Unlike other philosophical systems, that of Balthasar’s, balances subjective conceptualization with the object’s disclosure of its phenomenal and essential attributes; the synthesis of both are involved in one’s relationship to the whole and by extension the Transcendent. The subject has a primal intuition of the “whole”. He observes that: “while I can distinguish between my ‘mode of being’ (modus subsistentiae, tropos tēs hyparxeōs) and my grasp of the (universal) being,

⁹７８ TL I, 137. See also, Ibid., 143.
I cannot separate them." The subject grasps a being by oscillating between universal and particular conceptualizations of a being: “from the universal which is empty, to the particular and again from the particular, with its plenitude, to the universal and vice versa: from the particular which is limited, to the universal and again from the universal, with its vastness, to the particular.” Because of the fluidity existing between the subject, reality and the Transcendent, truth has a necessary apohatic, subtractive or delineative character. These negative movements look to develop the concept of remotion and hence clarify the difference between the Transcendent and immanent. The relationship between Transcendent and immanent being serves to negate the non-identity also existing between them. Balthasar proposes that:

The principal expression of the finitude of earthly truth is that the form of human knowing is delimitation and definition. Knowledge comes about in the following way: one delimits the domain of what is to be known vis-à-vis other truth, which is thereby excluded, and, by setting boundaries and by delineating their contour, determines the content of this domain. Every new determination that leads to deeper knowledge, that concretizes what has hitherto been uncertain, is, on the one hand, a narrowing of the universal through increasingly more particular definition and, on the other hand, a progressive exclusion of possible truths by means of ever more extensive differentiation.

The formal categorization of a being’s specific resources is only possible if reality never

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979 TD 2, 209.
980 TL 1, 174.
981 On the method of kenotic subtraction see: S. Th. I, q. 33, a. 4.
983 TL 1, 245. See also: “[t]he legitimacy of discursive knowledge nonetheless begins here. The human spirit’s activity of sifting, dividing, and uniting (intellectus dividens et componens), in which it spends most of its time in which is its principal mode of elaborating truth, depends ultimately on a first meditation, that is, distinction and reunification, within its immediacy. But this first mediation is also the origin of all communication. Knowing and saying form an inseparable unity,” TL 1, 165.
ceases to reveal the truth of each individual being. Consequently, Balthasar assures us, every being forebodes infinitely more than what formal and solipsistic epistemologies admit. Likewise, one’s epistemology must be clear about the subject’s cognitive limitations. Pure neutrality is a mythic structure for Balthasar, as well as truth’s conditioning along the lines of domain specific endeavors, for: “[c]ontrary to common opinion, method shares with logic its inability to separate itself from its context. There is no method valid for every domain, just as there is no logic that can set aside its objects.” Unlike Badiou who seems to elevate mathematics to something closely akin to a purely neutral system, Balthasar cautions against underestimating the influence of the subject’s interpretative framing in every instance. The methodological apparatus the subject adapts to better know the world is determined by one’s first impressions of an object’s simple presence (Gegenwart), for in this meeting something of the object’s

984 Balthasar concisely states of this complex relationship: “After all, the judgment ‘the tree is green’ (S = P), which is, of course, an instance of synthesis nonetheless is no simple subsumption of a particular under a universal. Green is not a superordinate category under which tree falls, even though in the actual judgment of the predicate green represents something already familiar to knowledge, which by reason of its universality serves to introduce the particular subject, which as such is what is to be known, into this sphere of this already familiar context. The success of this introduction—and the fact that it actually does not succeed is the mystery of human knowledge—depends upon more happening that a mere comparison between two already known items. Something creative has to happen. After all, the subject of judgment, which is the thing to be known here, is in itself unknown, and what appears to be a subsumption of it under the predicate, which is known, is in fact an elevation of it into the light of knowledge. Being, in this case the tree, is represented within knowledge, not in itself, but sensible appearance, which as such, as we have already had occasion to observe, is not yet known. Furthermore, insofar as this sensible appearance enters into the intellectual light of knowledge, it is synthesized in the predicate, in the concept.” TL 1, 247.

infinite profundity manifests in its surface appearance.\textsuperscript{986} Balthasar avows that: “[t]he concept thereby distances itself from the vitality of truth in a way that the essence cannot—except insofar as it knowingly holds back a revelation of itself at the level of intellect that was asked of it at the level of the senses. In this instance, the essence would likewise take on an objective abstractness comparable to the empty concept.”\textsuperscript{987}

(2) Essential Nature and Ontological Difference

Balthasar ascertains being to be in a state of repetitive “in-differing” given the dramatic interfacing of its essential and existential factors.\textsuperscript{988} Of this imperative structure Balthasar says that: “[i]f the identification of essence and existence is impossible in creatures, then the coincidence of existential and essential truth must be equally impossible.”\textsuperscript{989} This primitive internal animation within being appears variously in metaphor and image for Balthasar, who describes it in his writings as: “the opening of the door”, “the entrance of a person”, “an event”, “the arrival of some news”, “the beginning of a history”, “the welling up of a spring” or “the shining of the light.”\textsuperscript{990} This so-called “real distinction” systematically forms being as internally free and externally open to relations with others and the Transcendent.\textsuperscript{991} The essential testifies to a being’s persistent declaration of its radical and near incommunicable nature in existence: “[t]he sphere of essence extends without discernible rupture from reality to ideality, from the

\textsuperscript{986} TL 1, 196. See also: “The revelatory movement of the images is not their autonomous act. Rather, it is a movement that proceeds ultimately from the essence, whose self-being it reveals. Truth consists in the unveiling of being, in its self-surrender for the benefit of the knowing subject...,” TL 1, 149-50.

\textsuperscript{987} TL 1, 151.

\textsuperscript{988} See: TL 1, 84 and GL 4, 400-07.

\textsuperscript{989} TL 1, 249-50.

\textsuperscript{990} See: TL 1, 221 GL 5, 649-50.

\textsuperscript{991} TL 1, 250-253.
figure (Gestalt) formed in concrete existence (Dasein) changing as this does through space and time, right through to the stable, normative idea which persists through all fluctuations in the real.” 992 Indeed, the essential can only be partially known in its revelation in an existing being. The existential intensifies the essential insofar as it “transcends” the essential in a two-fold manner: “[e]xistence thus transcends essence in two senses: in the adamantine factuality, which thought can never bend to its own purposes, that sets it apart from nothing and gives it the look of an indissoluble unity and uniqueness; and in the plenitude, which equally eludes exhaustive possession, that mocks the intellect’s every attempt to master it through order and control.” 993

The sum of a being’s essential properties is never fully decreed at any one time in a being’s existence, nor is existence taken by Balthasar to be an epiphenomenon. 994 Rather, because time never leads to entropy in being the: “…phenomenon of time belongs to the core of the creatures’ ontological make-up and that the philosophical analysis of time is the most adequate entryway to a living, concrete understanding of the real distinction.” 995 The essential remains inexhaustible to any analytic dissection or subjective formalization because it initiates an existing being whose transcendental leanings elude final definition. 996 And still it is taken as fact that a being’s ontological

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993 TL 1, 188. Aquinas concurs that the isolated or particular being is metaphysically tied to the universal as being is universal in reality. He writes: “The reason is that the principle of individuation in material things is individual matter, and our intellect, as said before, operates by abstracting intelligible species from that kind of matter. But what is abstracted from individual matter is universal. Therefore our intellect has direct knowledge only of universal,” S. Th. I, q. 86, a. 1.
994 TL 1, 193.
995 TL 1, 195.
996 See: TL 1, 136-37 and TL 2, 81-85. For Balthasar the infinite properties of
difference implies for Balthasar that her essential augment of her own being (quidditas) and reality as a whole are self-defining acts. Of the essential’s broadcasting of a being’s identity, Balthasar states that:

The essence unfolds between the two poles. As it expands, it understands that it is posited [gesetz] and, at the same time, participates in its positing [mitvollziehend sich setzen]. Both sides of the act of being are always simultaneous: being posited (as nature) and self-positing within this fundamental relation. Insofar as it is posited and, as such, always already existent, it is able to lay hold of what it itself is: its self-positing is not the sovereign act of the sheer origin but the recapitulation of an already given measure: it is nature.\footnote{997}{TL 1, 218-19.}

The distinction between a being (esse) and the manner of its underwriting of its own truth of being (actus essendi) sets out the parameters of freedom’s most indigenous delineations or revelations.\footnote{998}{See: TL 1, 43-44, 93, and 164-70.} Self-reflective differing allows one to posit a “unicum” making possible one’s external engagement of beings in the world.\footnote{999}{See: GL 5, 625.} Subjective freedom first equates with receptivity for being exists with a new task, namely: “that of being the space in which the truth of things comes to itself...[as] the object can unfold only in the subject, and the subject is structured in such a way that it has to serve as the locus of this unfolding. Its role, then, is not limited to possessing the object in itself, but consists most properly in making itself available, in an attitude of service, for the completion of the object.”\footnote{1000}{TL 1, 67. See also: TL 1, 48 and 65.} Human subjectivity, for Balthasar, is fundamentally a capacity to welcome the other. Postmoderns such as Badiou and Laruelle do not accord a
significant role to subjective receptivity in their philosophies, but rather, speak of
difference grounding, limiting or even annulling subjective decision in a fundamentally
diverse world. Where for Balthasar finite being’s receptivity to the world is ultimately
made possible by the room created by the existence of the Divine, for these two thinkers
subjective action follows from the subject’s conscious aligning or “auto-knitting” of
difference and diversity in Reality: “[t]hese are the transcendental and ‘individual’ lived
experiences that hold a priori not only for beings but for ‘Being Itself’ and for
Difference.”\textsuperscript{1001} The essential-existential polarity forestalls a being’s limitless truth in
the world. Reality as a whole guarantees that a being’s endless essential differing never
dissipates into a chaotic formlessness unavailable for subjective assignation. In other
words, the spatiotemporal fabric bridges the gap between the essential and existential
properties of being, insuring there is no “sheer negative”.\textsuperscript{1002} The sub-spiritual properties
are important to a subject’s conscious aptitude because this secreted realm mirrors the
subject’s commitment in the spatiotemporal ambit.\textsuperscript{1003} The distance separating a subject
and object echoes in their internal spaces and reality as a whole: “along with the ontic
that orients man and the form of revelation to one another, the grade of the Holy Spirit
creates the faculty that can apprehend this form, the faculty that can relish its and find its
joy in it, that can understand it and sense its interior truth and rightness.”\textsuperscript{1004} This act of
conscious and intuitive interiorization of external beings and forces in constant flux, as
advocated by Balthasar, is rejected outright by postmoderns such as Laruelle: “…the law
of the identification of the diverse and the non-positional diversity itself or its

\textsuperscript{1001} Philosophy of Difference, 206.
\textsuperscript{1002} TL 1, 195.
\textsuperscript{1003} TL 1, 229-30.
\textsuperscript{1004} GL 1, 247.
transcendental root fall this time ir-reversibly outside one another, or at least the non-positional diversity outside its identification, henceforth affecting its identification instead of allowing itself to be interiorized by it.”¹⁰⁰⁵ For Balthasar, space and time allow for the inverse predication of a being’s essence and its actualization in a unified existing being. From Balthasar’s point of view, a being’s freedom and self-possession and identity are dialectically present in the world, for: “[t]he more perfectly a being possesses itself, the more free it is the more receptive to everything that surrounds it.”¹⁰⁰⁶

Existence is more than a counterpole to the essential. It is, Balthasar assures us, a way to experience the totality of reality, for it is: “not simply the naked presentiality [Da] of existence, but equally the whole fullness, the indescribable density, vitality, and weight of being, which, for Thomas, is compressed in the word esse.”¹⁰⁰⁷ The change in subjective perceptions and cognitive acts are based on the opposition between an object and the extra-mental, donative, spatiotemporal reality in which it is located: “[f]or vision is made actual when the thing seen is in a certain way in the [perceiver].”¹⁰⁰⁸ The object’s condensation in the subject’s mind as an effigy is only possible given the subjective mind’s semi-permeable opening and liaison with the spatiotemporal range. An object is mentally stabilized in the subject’s mind given the parallax evolution of her reflective and perceptive acts.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Philosophy of Difference, 200.
¹⁰⁰⁶ See also: TL 1, 37 and TL 1, 41 where we read: “[t]he disclosure of being is meaningful only if it is directed to a knowing subject. We must therefore say that the object’s meaning is first fulfilled in the subject, which therefore contains the measure of the object. The subject’s freedom and spontaneity include the ability, not only to apprehend truth, but also positively to bring it into being [setzen].”
¹⁰⁰⁷ TL 1, 188.
¹⁰⁰⁸ S. Th. 1, q.12, a. 2.
(3) Spatiotemporal Continuum and Being

Distinctions between the object and subject are possible given the discrepancy existing between space and time. Balthasar claims that relationships are likely among beings given the external quantitative and intimate qualitative dissimilarities demonstrated in every being. A being’s materiality sets out her physical boundaries, whereas her qualitative dimensions reveal the vast pools of her essential nature. Time is in an orthogonal relationship to space, which stages a being’s movement in the world.\textsuperscript{1009}

The spatiotemporal continuum only gives a comparative sense of a being’s spatial and temporal position in relationship to the whole of reality given a being’s own essential prioritization. A notion of Absolute time and space outside of the Incarnation is impossible for finite beings. Badiou recognizes the key role this relationship between the finite and Absolute plays in Christianity:

[w]hat gives it meaning is its historicization in scission, which makes the infinite ex-sist in the finite. Therein lies the necessary stroke of genius of Christianity. For this to happen, God (A) is indexed (\(A_p\)) as specific outplace of the splace of the finite: this is the principle of the Incarnation. God becomes man. God divides himself (the Father) and himself-placed-in-the-finite (the Son). A is the Father, and \(A_p\), the Son, that historic son by whom God ex-sists. God thus occurs as scission of the outplace, \(A = AA_p\), God = Father/ Son, a scission that the Council of Nicea, the first of the great modern politico-ideological conferences in history, will designate as sole existence–as unity of opposites–in the well known dialectical axiom: ‘The Son is consubstantial with the Father.’\textsuperscript{1010}

The difference or scission between the Transcendent and finite being is historically realized in the person of Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{1011}

\textsuperscript{1009} See: *Theology of History*, 40-50.
\textsuperscript{1010} A Theory of the Subject*, 15. The term “splace” refers to a being’s own “reflexive” or “indexed” identity. See: Hollis Phelps, *Alain Badiou: Between Theology and Anti-Theology* (Durham: Acumen Press, 2013), 144. The “infinite” and the “One” are dynamic properties of being (e.g. “ex-sist”).
\textsuperscript{1011} See: *TL* 1, 260.
Balthasar sees an analogous scission existing between a finite being and material reality. A being’s genealogy (emergence in the world) is possible given space’s elasticity. Reality watches over a being’s personal transformations, and given that, the spatiotemporal medium gathers beings together (Versammelt), allowing for the communication of their asymmetrical relations. The expanse existing within and between beings heralds for Balthasar a being’s integration into reality. The predication of a being’s unitive and partitive determinations results in a unity that is grounded equally in a being’s internal ontological differences and the subject’s experiences of independent external associations in the world. As Christopher Langan reasons about being’s differential or “syndiffeonic” relationships: “any assertion to the effect that the difference between the relands is “absolute” or “irreducible”; the mere fact that the difference can be linguistically or geometrically expressed implies that it is only partial and that both relands are manifestations of one and the same ontological medium.”

While distinct, the essential and existential interpenetrate in time and space, as: “[t]he sphere of essence extends without any noticeable break from reality to ideality; from the interior form of

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1012 See: “The sensorium (when considered in its totality and not in an abstract separation from the subject) is a sheer mediator that cannot impair the truth. Accordingly, the knowing subject’s fundamental attitude must be the posture that is required by the phenomenology itself: total, indifferent readiness to receive, which presupposes the exclusive desire to receive and reproduce the phenomenon as purely as possible. This attitude merits the name of justice, inasmuch as with incorruptible honesty it acknowledges, and metes out to the object, what is in fact is its due. Any knowledge that lacked this attitude would no longer be true knowledge,” TL 1, 76.

1013 The temporal is not seen to be a negative phenomenon as some readings of Plato’s theory of temporality hold, see: GL 4, 32-34 and 197-201. For example, the subject’s conceptual diremption of a being from its spatiotemporal existence shows the positive properties of time and space.

1014 CTMU, 17. See ibid: “…a syndiffeonic relation consists of a difference relation embedded in a relational medium whose distributed rules of structure and evolution support its existence.”
existence that changes in space and time to the idea that is above [über] all real change and functions as its norm. Every attempt at tidily dividing these two spheres is doomed to failure by their indivisible interrelation.”

Qualitative dimensions extend into reality, characterizing created being’s relationship to truth. The full cogency of a being’s initiation into our consciousness strikes us simultaneously in two temporal moments. We grasp another being in terms of its future arrival or “coming toward” (Zukunft) us and its passing away (zukommt) into memory. As time and being are in a state of constant flux every moment is marked by inferred negation, finality and absence—what one misses in time will be lost forever.

The spatiotemporal provides a place for the infinite interplay between beings that remain essentially free in relationship to their own becoming. Immanent futurity awaits further realization in a being’s esse by an as yet “unspoken” essential disclosure. When the synchronous exchange of the essential between the subject and object falls out of harmony, the subject’s traction on the object falters for: “[i]n the situation, the truth comes to a head in an emphatic presence: you have to grasp it here—or nowhere. This presence is not necessarily meant in a chronological sense. It is an inherent property of truth…” When we are deprived of a cognitive hold on the

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1015 TL 1, 105. Deleuze seems to agree with Balthasar on this point concerning being’s extensional properties when he states that the “given-ness” of a being: “is not in space, the space is in the given…extension, therefore is not only the quality of certain perceptions,” Giles Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume’s Theory of Nature* (trans.) V. Boundas (New York, NY: Columbia Press, 1991), 91. See also: TL 1, 1, 62-64.

1016 TL 1, 245.

1017 See: TL 1, 196-98.

1018 See: GL 4, 635-37.

1019 TL 1, 104-05.

1020 TL 1, 199.
essential presence in an object’s appearance, the spatiotemporal background overshadows our perceptions until a new appearance of the object is effortlessly tendered to the subject. The subjective image or mental picture (Bild) of an object is “detached” from the externality of space and time and universalized as a mental idea. The temporal binds beings together, Balthasar reasons, because being is naturally directed towards the future. The dipole of finite and infinite correspondences set a being in relationship to the future. Time acts as a dipole-anisotropy for being. All beings are sequentially revealed in a present moment that announces that the future will inevitably constitute being ad infinitum: “forgetting what is behind, I strain forward to what is before” (Phil. 3:13). The plenitude of every moment would be incomprehensible without time’s infinite differentiation as past, present and future.

The past and future meet in the present, giving it a “surpassing richness”. Temporal sequencing works to set free the truth of a being in the world. The difference between time and space certifies that the gaps between past, present and future are conceivable. Therefore, Balthasar points out: “[i]f we could thoroughly grasp and fathom the whole of this gift, there would be no more future, better, we would have made

\[\text{\textsuperscript{1021} See: TL 1, 127 and TD 2, 208-09.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{1022} See: GL 7, 526-529.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{1023} Hilbert prohibits the possibility of actual infinities within finite aggregate structures. The dipole of finite and infinite also exists for being as temporized as a dipole-anisotropy. The mathematical relationship between being and time proves that moving into the infinite past is impossible.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{1024} Here anisotropy refers to a being’s natural temporal tendency towards the future. Being’s characteristic “future leaning” is made possible given a pre-existing temporal relationship to the past. Created being can be further situated within a dialectical schema where created and finite is placed on one end and on the other, eternal and uncreated.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{1025} TL 1, 198.}\]
the whole future present in the present. But this is intrinsically impossible.”

Consequently, a being takes part in time’s futurity (Zukünftigkeit) because it is a prototypical possibility of the present that the subject arrives at by subtracting the past from the present given time’s infinity. This temporal subtraction is possible for the subject because knowledge of being is spatially infinitely divisible. Therefore, Balthasar states of knowledge of being that:

For each new distinction that is required to advance knowledge is like the division of a spatial continuum, which can be prolonged ad infinitum. This infinity has an immanent finitude; in fact, its whole essence is an expression of finitude. For it presupposes an initial delimitation, and its progress, while in one sense limitless, in another sense entails a never-ending series of further delimitations."

Because the past is understood by means of its theoretical distancing and differing from the present, it has no final claim on the subject’s free relationship to the present and the future: “[t]he past remains in this present only as a constant warning to devote ourselves more earnestly to what is coming [dem kommenden] than we have so far, not to evade decision, not to think that any possession is definitive. It no longer has an independent power to counteract the futurity in being.” The subject is able to make a conceptual partition between past, present and future in the world because the pre-existing relationship between essential and existential anticipates how movement and material

1026 TL 1, 197.
1027 See: TL 1, 196. This process follows from Balthasar’s qualitative definition of time, see: “[t]he chief characteristic of created being and created truth is its intrinsic finitude. Needless to say, by finitude we do not mean a quantitative limit one might run up against, but rather a quality that actively pervades the world’s whole being and truth. Moreover, this quality immediately expresses creatureliness and, therefore, immediately expresses the Creator’s infinite being and infinite truth,” TL 1, 245.
1028 TL 1, 246.
1029 TL 1, 199.
interact within the subject’s own being. The essential stages the temporal for the subject which suggests a moral qualification for Balthasar, who affirms that: “[f]rom this side of potency, the cognitive capacity gets its perfect readiness for, and indifference toward, every occasion for knowledge, whose specification is reserved exclusively to the object.”

The subject’s pursuit of another being takes place in an inestimable horizon of future meaning. The accidental is temporally married to a being’s infinite essential potential that always recruits future meaning. Actual infinity displays in finite being, Balthasar hypothesizes, because:

The finite appearance as such is the coming to light of a certain infinity. This is not because its finitude is not perfect or because its form shades off into the twilight of the unknown. No, the perfection of its finitude is precisely as such the revelation of its intrinsic infinity. This infinity truly becomes visible in its appearance as the excess that does not become visible; it is unveiled as what remains veiled; it is made known as the ineliminable mystery of being.

Time’s qualitative relationship to space makes possible the infinite abundance of beings in the world. The Transcendent’s relationship to finite beings gives an infinite “density” to beings. Being is finite and determinable but inextricably bound to the future and this is the case, Balthasar muses, only because the eternal and Transcendent have traces in finitude. Balthasar stresses that the future intuits for finite being its Divine contrary:

The characteristic of futurity, of always just beginning, of springing up from the source, of heading toward more, is thus one of the most positive, most unsurpassable aspects of being as such. If being, especially eternal being, and abidance within it, is full and vital, it is because of this futurity.

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1030 For Balthasar time exists in relationship to being see: GL 4, 394-95.
1031 TL 1, 48.
1032 TL 1, 88.
The gift is always greater than the capacity to receive it. By the same token, the fulfillment will always partly consist in acknowledging this excess of presence [Gegenwart] over and above present [Gegenwart], this future-laden, future-generating richness of eternal being.\(^{1033}\)

Being actualizes as part of the mystery of Divine providence, or, grace’s presence in history. By subjective “bracketing” the subject separates her sensual perceptions of an object from its place in the world. In this way, the subject begins to explore how all being’s intensive properties relate to the Transcendent. Where a being’s temporal ordering promotes its external topology, eternity affords a being a greater qualitative “intensity”.\(^{1034}\) In this way, the value of eternity can be seen to be present in time itself. Balthasar conceives of time and being as holistic for they are taken to be greater than the sum of their discrete temporal measures.\(^{1035}\)

It is here that Balthasar dramatically parts company with Badiou, given their fundamentally different uses of infinity (άπειρο). As noted in the previous chapter, Badiou sees infinity as an actual “being” or as the definable limit of a numeric series. Certainly, an infinite convergent mathematical series allows for the averaging of its partial sums and hence produces a quantifiable limit. Badiou thus sets a being in relationship to an “actual” convergent infinity.\(^{1036}\) Given Balthasar’s definition of being...

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\(^{1033}\) TL 1, 197.


\(^{1035}\) See: “This relation of the present to the past, indeed, this intrinsic precariousness of the present, which itself contains the seeds of its own passing away, is precisely what gives every moment of existence in this world its infinite, eternal weight,” TL 1, 198. See also, ibid, 199: Truth’s situational character does not impair its “universal validity” or “supra-temporal value”. However, it is also the case that eternity is not measurable by temporal categories as the perfection of God is not a matter of potential expression of existence. God is the ever greater (immer-Größe), see: TD 4, 21-22.

\(^{1036}\) It must be noted that Badiou and Balthasar both agree that being can be conceived as a “pure multiple”, or in Balthasar’s terminology, have an “infinite depth”. Further, both agree that being infinitely appears as the “effect of a transcendental
as open-ended, its relationship to the infinite is better seen as an exemplar of a divergent infinite series. In divergent infinite series no mathematical limit can be attained, even though a value can be proven.

As reality is self-enclosed one must justify why there are infinite relational caesuras within totality. The qualification of being’s presence in terms of temporality infers that extra-mental movement or physical change is constitutive of reality. Time simultaneously singularizes or isolates (vereinzelt) the truth of the identity of a particular being. However, this relationship is open-ended given its relationship to other infinite beings and reality as a whole. Thus, infinity has an immanent finitude that diffuses throughout a being’s essential nature. The temporal demarcates the subject and familiarizes her with the greater mystery of infinity, eternity and the Transcendent.

(4) Ratio, Subject and Object

Any notion of another being, Aquinas forwards, is formed in an initial perception (simplex apprehensio) prior to any cognitive manipulation or registration (intelligentia legislation” for Badiou, or in Balthasar’s system through the infinite grounding in esse of the “groundless” essence or gestalt. The two diverge on the weight given to the Transcendent. For Badiou the finite being exists in an immanent and subtractive relationship with the void and non-existing Transcendent and this directly informs a being’s representation and topology. Central for Badiou, then, is the being’s ability to inscribe some limit to infinity as his conception of a being’s understanding of infinity is congruent with her more fundamental relationship to the logic of set theory; he writes: “the categorical formulation of mathematics does not reveal the underlying ontology, but rather the space of possible logics. That is to say, in set theory, logic is prescribed by an ontological decision, while in category theory, ontology is ‘possibly’ determined by logical choice,” Alain Badiou, Mathematics of the Transcendental (trans.) A. J. Bartlett and Alex Ling (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 57. In Balthasar, the fact that a being’s real distinction is open ontologically premises her choice to exist in relationship to an existing Transcendent Being. Our purpose here is not to prove the existence of an actual Transcendent Being, but, rather, to show that Balthasar’s belief in the Transcendent is logically consistent.

See: TL 1, 211.
Aquinas’ theory of relations influences Balthasar’s own approach. Balthasar’s metaphysics does not have the subject-object split that has become a datum of our post-Kantian world. Balthasar follows Aquinas’ interpretation that an object is connatural to the subject. A particular being announces its presence (Gegenwart) to the subject, as if, Balthasar speculates, it were cooperating in something of the paramount meaning of being—mit einer scharfen Betonung des Da im Sein. Balthasar’s view on the identitarian combinations of the subject-object relationship seems to develop Aquinas’ earlier position when he says that: “…every kind of knowledge comes about by the knower by being assimilated to the object known.” As all being is essentially and

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1038 On the receptive nature of material being and immaterial sight see Aristotle’s De Anima, 427-8: “[n]ow that only can receive color which has none, as only that which is soundless, can receive sound, What is without color is transparent and the invisible, or what is barely seen, being dark,” in Aristotle’s De Anima: with the Commentary of St. Thomas Aquinas, (trans.) Father Kenelm Foster M.A., PH.D., and Father Sylvester Humphries, O.P. (Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1951), 271. See also: 589-91, ibid., 362.

1039 Aquinas claims that if some a inheres in some b by means of a real relationship, some change results in both. In a’s positing in b, two new beings: b’ and a’ occurs. The determination of a’ and b’ assumes a real relationship with a, a correspondence which is only possible with objective and subjective movement and change. Further, as Aquinas writes: “regarding those relations which posit something in only extreme, it does not seem difficult to understand how, when that extreme in which the relation really exists is changed, something new is said relative to the other without that other changing. For nothing really happened to it. But in those cases in which a real relation is found in both extremes, it seems difficult to understand how something is relatively of one, which does not change, because of a change of the other. For nothing new comes to something without a change of that to which it comes,” St. Thomas Aquinas: Commentary on Aristotle’s Physics, (trans.) Richard J. Blackwell, Richard J. Spath, and W. Edmund Thirlekel, (intro.) Vernon J. Bourke, (forward) Ralph McInerny (Notre Dame, IN.: Dumb Ox Books, 199), 326. See also: S. Th. I., q. 8, a. 2 where the presence of the Transcendent in created matter lends to its mystery.

1040 See: S. Th. I, q. 7, a. 3.

1041 See: TL 1, 196.

1042 Such cognition is premised in the way in which one knows the Divine, see: S. Th., 1, q. 12, a.1 and a. 2. The asymmetrical reciprocity between subject and object evident in a person’s charitable act to the “Other” is, according to Aquinas, an attunement
existentially grounded, the subject ‘organically’ corresponds to every other being;
however, this conscious allowance never suffices to explain totally away a being given its
own essential truth. The subject must keep both aspects of knowledge in simultaneous
play. Balthasar observes that:

There is, then, a kind of identity between the subject and object in
knowledge: object’s essential word becomes audible and understandable
through the sensible word by mediation of the subject’s own word
(verbum mentis). The two words coincide, and in this coincidence the
subject is able to take the measure of the object’s essence and existence.
In this respect, the subject encloses the truth of the object within the unity
of its own measure, which is to say, of its self-consciousness. But this
identity gives way immediately, indeed, at the very moment it arises, to a
definitive relative opposition [Gegenübersein] between knower and
known, since the very meaning of self-consciousness is that the known be
present in it as known, not as knower. Only when the subject understands
that the object stands over against it as something having being-for-itself
does it, the subject, inwardly possess the full measure of the object. The
object’s immanence in the subject’s consciousness is the prior condition
for understanding its transcendence.1043

Objects are not simply inert empiric entities as their non-subsistent essential relations
actualize the object’s identity and set it in relationship to all reality.1044

Self-identity (being-for-oneself) also always provides a free self-communication
and a willingness to enter into relationship with other beings.1045 This ratio existing in
the subject-object relationship creates an epistemic environment that conjointly
communicates the significance of both beings. The subject intentionally “stretches out”
(esse intentionale) to better direct herself to the object under investigation. This
movement takes place by her increasing the intensity of her conceptualization of the
object. The subject increases the range of the object’s reach by intellectualizing its truth.

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1043 TL 1, 74-75.
1044 GL 1, 588.
1045 TL 1, 111.
In being receptive to the subject’s gaze the object gives her a way to experience love and hence set herself in relationship to the Transcendent:

This special gaze, from which the object expects so much, leads into the inner sanctum of knowledge. In order to describe it correctly, we have to affirm two things at once, neither of which must give up its place to the other: This special gaze, which is possible only in the loving attention of the subject, is equally objective and idealizing. That these two qualities can be compatible is the grand hope of the object. It hopes to attain in the space of another the ideality that it can never realize in itself. It knows or guesses what it could be, what splendid possibilities are present in it.\(^{1046}\)

The subject’s opening up to another being in the first instance is pre-volitional.

For Balthasar human consciousness begins with the child’s wonder. In these first stirrings the child has an instinctive relationship to herself and the world. Human consciousness awakens when the child first experiences her mother’s smile.\(^{1047}\) This gesture embodies the totality of reality for the child as in this act of the mother’s love the interior dimensions of the truth of being appears.\(^{1048}\) The encounter with her mother involves the child’s whole person.\(^{1049}\)

Love affords the child with a “home” upon which her conscious sense of self and the other can safely grow. The human person, Balthasar alleges, is an authentically spiritual being given that her finite nature exists in a transcedent relationship to Absolute Truth. Phenomenal objects further guide the child’s conscious relationship to other beings by setting out freedom’s relationship to the truth and love’s relationship to

\(^{1046}\) TL 1, 114.

\(^{1047}\) See: GL 5, 616-17.

\(^{1048}\) The recognition of the giftedness of all beings is supremely evident in beings’ participation in loving relationship. See: “At the most fundamental level, the dawn of self-awareness in freedom is not the realization that we are simply ‘there,’ even ‘there with others’ [:] it is rooted in the fact that we are ‘gift’ and ‘gifted’ which presupposes a ‘giving’ reality,” see: TL 1, 94.

\(^{1049}\) See: Dramatic Truth, 111-12.
action for: “insofar as love is the truth engendering movement itself, it alone holds the key to the use of truth (Wahrheitsanwendung), it is the measure of all communication and all reception.” Thus, to be made in the image of God means for Balthasar to be fundamentally receptive:

The image of God means, first of all, that the human being cannot be closed in on himself. If he attempts this he betrays himself. To be the image of God implies relationality. It is the dynamic that sets the human being in motion toward the totally Other. Hence it means the capacity for relationship; it is the human capacity for God. The human being is, as a consequence, most profoundly human when he steps out of himself and becomes capable of addressing God on familiar terms—He is most profoundly himself when he discovers his relation to his Creator.

For Balthasar, human consciousness points to the fact that faith is always a gift that appeals to the totality of one’s freedom and reason. The revelation that love is eternal and existence a gift is key to the child’s conscious development and first experience of desire. The difference between beings parallels the subject’s relationship to the Transcendent and thus the subject must take: “cognizance of its likeness to God in the exact measure that it has to recognize its essential ordering to another—to recognize, that is to say, its creaturely condition.” The goodness of Creation is rooted in the ontology of being and is secondarily reflected in the subject’s cognitive functions. The subject’s intuition of the whole, the essence’s relationship to its appearance and reality’s correspondence to the Transcendent is not simply an intellectual proposition for Balthasar, but the call to adapt one’s consciousness to love.

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1050 TL 1, 132.
1052 TL 3, 236-40.
1053 TL 1, 52-53. See also: TL 1, 54-55.
1054 See: TL 2, 162-63.
Human receptivity is rooted in a non-conscious sensory medium.\footnote{1055} Consequently, Balthasar seems to have the human subconscious in mind when he writes of the subject’s first sensory contact (\textit{species sensibilis}) with an object that: “the senses, which are conventionally supposed to be receptive in knowledge, are…active and spontaneous, just as, conversely, the intellect, which is supposed to play the active role, is, in its own way, receptive, namely, as a perceptive capacity (\textit{intellectus passibilis}).”\footnote{1056} In the subject’s immediate encounter with an object, the object exhibits greater freedom than the subject.\footnote{1057} Regarding this counter-intuitive insight Balthasar explains that: “[i]t goes without saying that this openness cannot yet be regarded as an act of free personal choice; it is rather nature’s first sketch in the will (\textit{voluntas ut natura}) of what personal freedom (\textit{voluntas elicita}) will be.”\footnote{1058} Being’s assembling of the essential-existential dichotomy opens a subject to truth’s general expression prior to any particular manifestation. Balthasar describes this early stage such that:

\footnote{1055}{On the non-conscious aspects of a subject’s nature, Balthasar writes that: “[t]he subject’s passivity accounts in Balthasar’s mind, for the material aspects of a being: The imperfection of specifically human receptivity consists mainly in the fact that it remains bound to the subhuman, unspiritual forms of cognition that we see, for example, in the vegetative, sensitive, physical life of the human soul. It is in this respect, in this respect alone, that the one opening of the subject to the other’s truth is no longer a spontaneous act but the unchosen necessity of being broken open to receive, through the sub-spiritual gateway of the senses, the life and truth of the other that comes, uninvited, pouring into the domain of its intellect,” \textit{TL} 1, 63-64.}

\footnote{1056}{\textit{TL} 1, 47. See also: \textit{GL} 1, 247-48.}

\footnote{1057}{See also \textit{TL} 1, 53 where this cognitive act sets the stage for the subject’s more expansive conscious appropriations.}

\footnote{1058}{See: \textit{TL} 1, 110. See also: \textit{TL} 1, 209. Central to Balthasar’s cognitive theory is his interpretation of Aquinas’ concept of \textit{potentia oboedientia}. Balthasar emphasizes the “active and potential” characteristics of cognitive receptivity and investigation. Aquinas writes: “[a]nd since the good disposition of the power which moves through being moved, depends on its conformity with the power that moves it: therefore the virtue which is in the irascible and concupiscible powers, is nothing else but a certain habitual conformity of these powers to reason,” \textit{S. Th.} I-II, q.56, a.4.}
From the side of potency, the cognitive capacity gets its perfect readiness for, and indifference toward, every occasion for knowledge, whose specification is reserved exclusively to the object. Every anticipation of truth’s self-visititation in the form of innate ideas, schematics, or categories would hinder this pure readiness.\(^{1059}\)

Where Badiou sees subjective forcing as central to a subject’s decisive read of an object, Balthasar takes as a primary the role of humility and receptivity on the subject’s part. One’s first knowledge of another being is passive, and for Balthasar, this passivity reflects a certain sense of “self-abandonment” (Hingabe) to one’s desires.\(^{1060}\) As previously illustrated, for Balthasar, one can only know another by first creating a “houseroom” for the “world of objects” that the subject is invited to “populate” in her mind.\(^{1061}\) To Badiou’s way of thinking, knowing is fundamentally about actively imposing your decisions and interpretations on others who are also competing to force their wills in a given event, whereas, for Balthasar’s understanding is a likened to a sacrificial *aphaeresis* (αφαίρεσις)—a “letting go” of the self in order to better love the other. According to Balthasar, the subject’s “radical renunciation” makes the object’s free manifestation possible, as well as giving her the first inkling of the subject’s analytic and synthetic capacities.\(^{1062}\) A being’s passive openness or receptivity censures for

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\(^{1059}\) *TL* 1, 48. The subject is thrown into being insofar as objects are presented to one’s senses regardless of one’s intentions, see: “Without having been notified or asked, it was thrown into the enterprise of knowledge. It has always already commandeered for the formation of the world, and its apparatus is already at work before it becomes aware of its operation,” *TL* 1, 68.

\(^{1060}\) *TL* 1, 71. See also: *GL* 1, 244.

\(^{1061}\) See: *TL* 1, 65.

\(^{1062}\) *TL* 1, 151-52. The sympathetic openness to reality of all beings provides the means for the subject to actively determine one’s perceptive field. Although a subject shares in the same phenomenal matrix that envelops all other beings she can conceptually [\emph{subtract}] beings from this reality. As Balthasar states: “It is not until we see this negative capacity to overlook and to withhold attention to things that the corresponding positive capacity to welcome freely becomes visible.” In this sense the subject’s active and
Balthasar the need for any *a priori* deductive categorization of another being. In this way, the subject remains internally compliant to an object’s infinite presence in the world: “[t]he locus of this first analysis and synthesis is prior to all discursive knowledge; it lies in the still unrestricted openness of the horizons of being. It is thus the abiding foundation of every particular, limited intellectual activity that, reflecting the structure of man’s cognitional powers, moves between the senses and the concepts.” Balthasar makes a sideways gesture to Aquinas when accounting for the logos between the subject and object because the mental concept is not taken as a final term or definition of an object but rather as a medium and open relationship.

Both passive and active approaches to the object, Balthasar points out, are necessary if the subject is to discover truth in the world. Freedom is actualized—in part, by a being submitting to the sphere of influence of other beings. A being’s worth is prior to its conscious quantitative assessment or affective feelings of value (*Wertfüllen*) on the subject’s part. Balthasar contends that if the subject lacks the fundamental receptivity that esteems to unify particular beings and Being in totality, subjective cognition reduces

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potential aspects of the intellect creatively work with her sensory evaluations of beings. In this chapter we explore how the subject’s analytic capacities are key to her conscious understanding of herself, other beings and the Transcendent. In the following chapter we will see how human consciousness ultimately derives from one’s relationship to the Urkenotic incarnation in Christ’s person and mission.

*TL* 1, 166.

Balthasar is here developing Aquinas’ theory of double existence (*duplex esse*) that we interpret to state that a finite being’s limited *esse* does not limit its worth given its pre-existing relationship to the Divine. This ontological truth has a parallel conceptual confirmation, for while the mind is part of reality, its conceptualizations about singular beings infers the universal, for: “[m]an has prior knowledge of singualrs through imagination and sense. Consequently, he can apply his universal intellectual knowledge to a particular; for properly speaking, it is neither the intellect nor the sense that knows, but man…,” *De ver.* q. 2, a. 7, resp. 3 in Thomas Aquinas, *Truth. vol. 1: Questions I-IX*, (trans.) Robert W. Mulligan, S.J. (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), 94.
to affective and aesthetic measures:

The truth of another has to be received in the readiness of total indifference, which as such is pure potency. On the other hand, because this potency entails a capacity for every cognition, it is a thoroughly active potency. It has nothing to do with the slack malleability of matter, which, having no will of its own, is open to taking on whatever form another’s will may choose to impose upon it. No, the indifference of this active potency is a readiness to spring into action wherever the object’s self-display might send or employ it… It is like a lighted room that, being completely empty, hides the presence of a light. It is not until an object emerges into the light that the presence of an active energy becomes evident in it. And yet the active potency of the subject is not the expression and emanation of a pure actuality without potentiality (actus purus), because active readiness for everything (quodammodo omnia) implies, with equal immediacy, a real capacity to be determined by everything, so that the subject can’t be described as a kind of spiritual matter…

The perceived object cannot be explained solely in terms of the object’s material presence or the subject’s scrutiny. Balthasar charges that modern critical epistemologies that disconnect the object’s role in the subject’s constructive seizing of the object’s verity are wanting. The indeterminate nature of an object’s essence can be stabilized in the sensorium because the object’s form (gestalthafi) manifests an organizing principle through its outward appearance. To Balthasar’s way of thinking, the object is given its proper due when it exists in relationship to the subject in a ratio of reciprocal signification:

In so far as the disclosure of being is a property objectively inherent in being

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1065 TL 1, 49. See also: Healey, 31 and S. Th. I, q. 45, a.4.

1066 Cognitive science verifies the mind’s role in creating reality from its perceptions in such experiments as the Shepherd’s Table Illusion and the Necker Cube.

1067 There is a significant likeness between a being and its nature (species intelligibilis). Essence makes this change possible by introducing duration into esse. See: “Becoming here does not mean that the object’s existence has a temporal form, while its essence, unperturbed by coming to be and passing away in time, supposedly represents its supratemporal truth. For its essence is precisely what exists, but what exists cannot be unaffected by alteration.” TL 1, 59. Time’s transparency, its coming and passing away at every moment, is, as a whole, a medium for the intensity of God’s form of existence to become transparent. See also: TL 1, 243.
itself, the knowing subject is obliged to conform itself to this disclosedness. That is, knowing the truth happens when knowledge, by virtue of an ‘adequation’ to the thing as it really is (adaequatio intellectus et rei), lets itself be determined and measured by the thing. The proportion has to be achieved between subject and object, and the decisive measure of the proportion lies with the object.\textsuperscript{1068} 

The counterpart between subject and object has a communal role because truth is universal to all reality.\textsuperscript{1069} Regarding this reciprocal relationship, Balthasar writes that:

\begin{quote}
...knowledge always both gives and receives the measure, and truth arises [entsteht] and consists [besteht] in this duality of measuring and being measured. The knowing intellect both produces truth (as intellectus agens) and registers it (as intellectus possibilis). It is in this shifting middle, in a kind of balancing act between reason’s two functions—receptive, consenting self-abandonment [Hingabe], on the one hand, and judgment, on the other—that truth itself moves.\textsuperscript{1070}
\end{quote}

Being never fails to offer its unique meaning and it is a subject’s task to recognize this ongoing disclosure for: “existence would have lost every meaning, for being would have been deprived of that property which alone makes its possession desirable: namely its constantly received uniqueness, and therewith, its character as something


\textsuperscript{1069} Aquinas offers the philosophical grounding that makes the move of a proportioned measure between an object and subject. The relation between two beings can be established if they share the same extra-mental order (eadem ratio ordinis). The order in which a being belongs determines the nature of proportion applicable. As Aquinas explains: “The proportion of the creative intellect to the knowing of God is not a commensurate proportion, the proportion in the sense in which the proportion means any sort of relationship of one thing to another (such as the relationship between matter and the form cause-and-effect). In this sense nothing prevents a proportion from holding between the creature in God, according to the relationship of one who is understood, just as it also obtains according to the relationship of effect to cause,” \textit{S.C.G.} I, 15. 20. See also: “There are no phantasms of incorporeal things, because the imagination does not go outside the world of time and the continuum. So if our intellect could not operate upon anything without turning to phantasms, it would follow that it could not operate upon anything incorporeal,” \textit{S. Th.} I, q. 84, a. 3 and a. 7.

\textsuperscript{1070} \textit{TL} 1, 42.
The object is first understood non-essentially through its appearance or common generic meaning (conceptus obscurus), as Balthasar evinces: “[t]he universal is realized in the individual alone, in such a way, moreover, that the individual always represents an inexplicable excess over and above the universal…[for the] unique singularity of the person cannot be expressed by the number ‘one’. The individuals of a species can be counted, but persons, insofar as they really have a uniqueness, cannot be numbered. Each of them is a world unto himself.”

The subject’s pre-conscious sentience of the object’s essential truth arises when the subject begins to grapple with what an object means. The subject does more than read the external sign or appearance of the object. The correlation of subjective conception and an object’s phantasm prompts knowledge about the object’s content:

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1071 TL 1, 82.
1072 TL 1, 56.
1073 Subjective knowledge must make a priori claims about what it investigates. See: In II Phys., lectio 1, n. 148. However it is also the case that knowing something demands one differentiating from the very presuppositions taken for granted as we continue to read: “[f]or when [one] wishes to know demonstrate that which is known in itself, [one] uses that which is known in itself as if it were not known in itself,” in St. Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on Aristotle’s Physics, (trans.) Richard J. Blackwell, Richard J. Spath and W. Edmund Thirlkel, (intro.) Vernon J. Bourke, (forward) Ralph McInerny (Notre Dame, IN.: Dumb Ox Books, 1999), 78. Receptivity resonates the material level’s openness to immaterial and spiritual derivation for: “There is no alien matter upon which God impresses his ideas; the only preexistent “matter” out of which God creates the world is his free will and his eternal idea. For this reason, nothing hinders God’s essence from becoming transparent in creation, so much so that one beholding worldly things can look to the archetype through the image and, in so doing, forget that he is not seeing the archetype immediately but only in the mirror of the creature,” TL 1, 234. Aquinas’ discovery of Aristotle’s argument for the close relationship between a particular being and its participation in universal meaning presents the nascent logic of being’s relationship to the Transcendent. Aquinas’ comment on Aristotle’s In Metaph. Lecture 3, 1308 runs: “[h]e says,…it is necessary to speak of sensible substances and to show what their essence is. Therefore, let us first make some dialectical comments about the essence of a thing…because both are universal,” in St. Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle: vol. 2, (trans.) John P. Rowan (Henry Regnery Company, 1961), 505.
The image is therefore an original expression. It is a creation, not an imitation. And yet it is not the being as such that lies before us in the image. Insofar as the image is a surface, it can, of course, reveal the depth and can convey some notion of it. But it cannot itself be the depth. It can, like a painting, employ perspective to represent the third dimension that it itself lacks. In other words, it expresses something that it is not, because it itself is only the expression of something else. Though it is not that something, the image does contain it in the form of expression.\textsuperscript{1074}

The subject abstractly orders the infinite horizon of an object’s immanent appearance by grasping its deeper essential truth. The object demonstrates the nucleus of its meaning and this requests the subject’s attention, for: “[w]hoever cannot see and read the form also misses the content. Whoever does not see the form will not be enlightened by the content.”\textsuperscript{1075} Given the object’s relationship to the Transcendent, Balthasar makes the case that every being has an indwelling essential entelechy whose importance is nominated by the subject.\textsuperscript{1076} The image’s plasticity in subjective consciousness enables the subject to signify the object’s content in a manner particular to her. Balthasar says that:

The interpretation of the object by the subject presupposes the significance [\textit{Bedeutung}] of the object for the subject. The object acquires such significance as soon as it begins to give an interpretation of itself through its appearances. The agent of this interpretation is the object’s non-appearing essence; the means of its interpretation is its appearance, which is to say, the world of the images. But it is the whole that is significant [\textit{das Bedeutende}], and the whole is self-expositing

\textsuperscript{1074} \textit{TL} 1, 140. The medium between subject and object avoids infinite regress because of the division between the created reality and Uncreated Divine. In this way, Balthasar expands upon the role ontological difference plays in stemming the role the sensorium plays in subjective relationship. In the cosmological difference between finite and Transcendent a nomination of difference presents that can be put into conversation with Badiou’s own concept of the void.

\textsuperscript{1075} \textit{GL} 1, 151.

\textsuperscript{1076} The grasping of an object as a whole, that is, with a view to its composite nature as essence and esse obliges one to distinguish between the difference between fundamental substance and accidental parts. This move requires that one consciously distinguishes between sensual perceptions and intellectual activities. See: \textit{TL} 1, 57.
being. \textsuperscript{1077}

The subject can now notionally verify her understanding of an object’s essential and existential resources with allusion to her original sensory intuition. \textsuperscript{1078}

\textbf{(5) Truth and Essence}

An object’s external, quantifiable crust betrays an inexhaustible interiority that bids the subject’s contemplation. \textsuperscript{1079} Reality is a comprehensive system of coordinated beings whose consistently plural and open-ended emergence argues against nihilistic materialism by proposing that reality is exposed as an infinite hierarchy determined by the relative “height” or “exactness” (\textit{die Höhe}) of each being’s essence. The untold value of being and truth are never fully divulged to the subject at any one point in time. \textsuperscript{1080}

Consequently, subjective intention and the objective’s ‘confession’ of its nature are dialogical. \textsuperscript{1081} The subject’s immediate sensory intuition (\textit{Anschauung}) of an object’s essential nature allows her to generate an image of the object in her own mind. \textsuperscript{1082}

Balthasar claims that: “[i]n the act of thinking, a consciousness [\textit{Bewußtsein}] is unveiled, 

\textsuperscript{1077} \textit{TL} 1, 139.

\textsuperscript{1078} It must be noted that Balthasar’s predilection for distinguishing the various ontological and cognitive structures does not deny he believes these to be experienced by the subject. See: \textit{TL} 1, 57.

\textsuperscript{1079} See: \textit{TL} 1, 88-90.

\textsuperscript{1080} Time can be a medium for both the negative and the positive. Badiou seems to speak to this characteristic of time when he writes of history’s relationship to chance. For Balthasar, ultimately time is directed to the positive given Jesus Christ’s ordering of it, see: \textit{TD}, 4, 126-28.

\textsuperscript{1081} \textit{TL} 1, 175.

\textsuperscript{1082} The object’s presence in the subject’s perceptual field is not taken as determinative as: “[a]lthough many things force their way uninvited into the field of sense awareness, the subject still has the capacity to screen and to sift this multiplicity, to leave the greatest part of it in a sort of forecourt and to attend inwardly only to what corresponds precisely to its interest,” \textit{TL} 1, 109. See also: \textit{TL} 1, 192.
hence, present to itself with such immediacy that the two components of the [German] word [Bewußt and Sein] admit of no separation whatsoever. Consciousness implies not only of the abstract property being conscious but also, with equal immediacy, the reality of being conscious, being consciousness. It is this being, then, that is immediately unveiled and present to consciousness.”

The inmost essence of an object is exhibited in its appearance and in veiling, and this makes the erasure of an object’s content significant to the knower:

The knowledge is genuine because the thing itself is genuine…When he knows being, the knower knows that he has made a complete circuit of the knowable, that, in principle, nothing eludes his knowledge—at least insofar as it is being. The knower has the certitude that he has reached the very frontier of nothingness, and so he need not fear that there is some yet unknown background behind being from which the knowledge he has gained could be called into question or abrogated.

The subject “contributes a dimension of depth” that was lacking in an object’s image by giving it a “wholeness of form (ein Ganzheit der Gestalt)” not found in its empirical appearance. This “wholeness of form” is analogous to the intellect’s form of love—a love that wonders. The fact that a residue of the object’s essence is partially “unseen” further bids from the subject a spontaneous and loving response: “[j]ust as in mutual human love, where the other as other is encountered in a freedom that will never be brought under my control, so too in aesthetic perception it is impossible to reduce the appearing form [Gestalt] to my own power of imagination.”

In the dynamic between the object and image an ongoing appraisal of the truth continues to take place for the subject, making truth neither a being nor a becoming. Balthasar argues that truth’s

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1083 TL 1, 37.
1084 TL 1, 38.
1085 TL 1, 72-73.
1086 LA, 53.
relationship to being has a *transcendental* bearing for: “[i]f it were merely being, it would be one with the eternal truth and would no longer need to regain the truth from moment to moment. If it were a mere becoming, a constant flux, it would no longer be true but would be one and the same as the inessential transitory of the images. But in this way it is simultaneously becoming and being….”

The imagination’s capacity for receptive and spontaneous action on the subject’s part maintains a perfect balance between her original sensory intuition and its ongoing development as an image. The imagination is “malleable” enough to contain an ongoing cataloging of new images:

The midpoint, that is, the power of imagination, already contains the seed of a whole differentiation. This differentiation lies in the mysterious dual unity that characterizes the relation of expression. It is situated in the never-ceasing separation and reunification of the signifier and signified. At the heart of the image world, the relation of expression awakens like a restless pulsation. Its movement widens out in ever-broader swings the pendulum to the full span of the subject–object polarity. Source of this movement, that is, the power of imagination, plays an equally productive and receptive role.

Mental phantasms function to sort the subject’s perceptions of an object in the imagination. Therefore, the image’s transitory nature of unveiling and returning back to its essential ground (*das Wesen*) is a continuous and seamless process, but one that drives

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1087 *TL* 1, 174-75. See also: *TL* 1, 158.

1088 This immediate extraction from sensual appearances proves to Balthasar that “[t]he presence of imagination is the chief expression of the fact that the creative spirit is thrown into knowledge long before it can decide whether it wants to know or not, that the material of knowledge is provided from the outside, and that even if spontaneous self-expression has to adhere to the expressive language of a nature that does not depend upon its activity,” *TL* 1, 238-39. See also: *TL* 1, 72.

1089 *TL* 1, 163.
truth for the subject. The subjective vision harbors the potential birth of new images from its interior core as an: “active-passive radiance of the divine glory from the form of revelation.” The subject is able to keep at abeyance an object’s steady becoming and relapse by taking its image into her memory and collating it through abstract and synthetic operations.

Abstraction concentrates and divides the subject’s spontaneous intellectual grasp (intellectus agens) of the sensual contours of an object into its underlining elements or univocal forms. Abstraction puts a theoretical edge on a being. Intuition begins with a sense of the whole whereas logic begins when the subject starts to form units in the world. To the degree one can universalize one’s concepts, the closer one discovers the infinite essential truth of a particular object. The multitarian or equivocal expressions of an object’s entelechy thus finds some resolution in the subject’s application of univocal terms. Balthasar summarizes this complex orchestration:

By drawing essential points into the foreground while pushing inessential aspects into the background, the subject can see vivid contours in the disjointed multiplicity presented to immediate perception, understand the figure it apprehends as the active expression of a power necessarily underlying the activity, but not appearing as such, and bring out the meaning of what it has beheld by arranging it within already familiar contexts and categories. This manifold activity is characterized by a simultaneous elevation of sensory

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1090 The polar relationship existing between concrete object and immaterial form points to the deeper interior truth of ontological difference upon which identity of being is staged.

1091 GL 2, 28. See also: Presence and Thought, 99.

1092 Balthasar infers in this process what Aquinas makes explicit, that is, memory is defined by its ability to operate in an extra-temporal fashion, see: S. Th. I, 79, 6, 2.

1093 The univocal forms do not appear as intermediate to the subject although they are invariable in themselves. However, univocal notions offer a “fixity” of meaning that allow for their interpretative use by the subject.

1094 TL 1, 152-55.

1095 On the mean (modus medius) between the univocal and equivocal conceptions to the Transcendent see: S. Th. I, q. 13, a. 2, a. 4 and a. 5.
perception into the concept (*abstractio speciei a phantasmate*), on the one hand, and immersion of the intellectual meaning into sensory perception (*conversio intellectus ad phantasma*), on the other.\(^{1096}\)

Conjectural classification of a particular object’s essential being by the subject gives her greater liberty.\(^{1097}\) Indeed, it is this very dynamic that allows the subject to freely choose how she sees the situation she finds herself in: “[b]oth dimensions—the offer that comes our way [*zukommend*] and the warning threat of its withdrawal—are intrinsic to the situation. In each situation, it is left to us which of the two aspects we prefer to choose.”\(^{1098}\) Without recommendation to the essential and *transcendental* aspects of a being any subjective evaluation is only qualified as a local discontinuity within the whole. However, by taking into consideration a being’s essential nature, a being can be seen to exist apophatically to the Transcendent and this difference plays a part both in the subject’s configuring of an object and how she understands the spatiotemporal matrix. The essential truth of an image must be contextualized to momentarily stay their existence, given their transitory status. The subject’s conceptual ordering of an image attempts to account for the totality of the original object’s “density”.\(^{1099}\) Without this subjective act the extra-mental world exists but fails to communicate any meaning in its appearance. Because being is an irreducible phenomenon, it requires an “appearing surface” to express its non-appearing depths:

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\(^{1096}\) *TL* 1, 73-74.

\(^{1097}\) Such a move also gives further credence to the subject’s reasonable and yet paradoxical relation to temporality as both an internal constitutive element of being and its relative expression in objects. Aquinas unfolds this mysterious dynamic in his outlining of the different ways human subjects and animals are able to act by controlling the time of their engagement. See: *S. Th.*, I, q. 81, a.1 and a. 3.

\(^{1098}\) *TL* 1, 199.

\(^{1099}\) For both Balthasar and Aquinas the imagination produces phantasms from the objects placed before it by the senses. A phantasm is closely associated with our idea of a sensual image, sense-impression or mental image.
Because the images have no depth and no essence, they also have no law. If the images alone existed, the world would be completely random. True, they recur in certain series and sequential patterns, but nothing guarantees in advance that they will continue to do so consistently. Therefore, as long as they are considered in themselves, apart from relation to any point of reference outside them, they are absolutely senseless. Though this medley of green, white, and blue may produce a certain harmony and evoke a certain feeling of well-being, it would start making sense only when it is looked at, no longer as an image, but as a landscape, as a significant whole, whose center of gravity lies entirely elsewhere than the pure image in which it appears.\textsuperscript{1100}

(6) Abstraction, Synthesis and Truth

By means of abstraction the subject institutes noetic boundaries that parcel and manumit being’s essential and material properties.\textsuperscript{1101} Inversely, synthetic judgments on the subject’s part allow her to entrust an image when part of a larger symbolic world and explanatory paradigm.\textsuperscript{1102} The symbol and word collect into a complex and expansive language.\textsuperscript{1103} As Balthasar remarks, the subject cognitively grasps an object’s gestalt through its analytic and synthetic functions. There is no algorithm that explains completely how one moves to general inductive truths from deductive appraisals of a particular being:

At first, a thing announces itself to the knowing subject in sensory intuition, while remaining totally unknown insofar as it is a subject in itself, hence, in its particular existence. Synthesis then converts this thing into something known or, at least, no longer wholly indeterminate. It follows that the synthesis performed in the judgment is also an inchoative analysis, an initial differentiation of the totally empty “this” that is the subject of the judgment. Accordingly, human knowledge is always a unity

\textsuperscript{1100}TL 1, 133. See also: TL 1, 139.
\textsuperscript{1101}See: TL 1, 151-53.
\textsuperscript{1102}The infinity of the created order defies complete elucidation. As every being participates in the whole of being, one’s own being remains partially mysterious and reality escapes final conceptualization: “The whole world of images that surrounds us is a single field of significations. Every flower we see is an expression, every landscape has its significance, every human or animal face speaks its wordless language. It would be futile to attempt a transposition of this language into concepts,” TL 1, 140-41.
\textsuperscript{1103}See: TL 1, 160.
of analysis and synthesis; it concretizes the intelligible universal predicate in the subject, the sensible universal subject in the predicate and, in doing so, moves at one and the same time in the two opposite directions that were just now exhibited separately—thus avoiding the risk of getting lost in either one of the two empty infinities.1104

The subject’s conceptualization of an image’s essential truth briefly captures its possible infinite regression. Thus relegated to the imagination the subject is able to intuitively and conceptually set the image’s context into ever expanding patterns and networks with the derived content of other images. The subject’s own conscious boundaries expand by differentiating and freeing the truth of objects beyond its accidental indicators:

The images differentiate into expressions originating from the inside and expressions originating from the outside. As the development of subjectivity intensifies, the awakening consciousness assimilates external, already existing expressive forms and, in equal measure, invents new, spontaneous ones from within. The growth of its self-consciousness and the growth of its consciousness of the world are thus totally simultaneous. Spreading out from the midpoint represented by the images, consciousness increasingly detaches itself from them in freedom.1105

An object transforms the intellect, calibrating a subject’s mind with other beings, ideas or concepts.1106 Balthasar argues that:

Concepts without intuitions are empty; the content of cognition always begins with the senses, even when it transcends them. In the end, the subject is not free

1105 TL 1, 163.
1106 An idea is taken as a sign and means to know another being. Because the introduction of an idea to the mind does not alter the substance of the individual we do not speak of a change in the proper sense but a movement or becoming in intellectual activity. For Aquinas becoming results when a subject is placed in a new relation (terminus ad quem) that does not necessarily lead to substantial change. See: De ver. 9, 4, resp. 4 which reads: “A thing cannot be called a sign in the proper sense unless one can come to know something else as if by reasoning from it,” Thomas Aquinas, Truth. vol. I: Questions I-IX, (trans.) Robert W. Mulligan, S.J. (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), 426.
to think as it pleases. It does not have the freedom of the object, which can reveal itself or veil itself in silence. In apprehending a thing, the subject has to conform to the law of what has been revealed. The fundamental gift bestowed upon the subject in knowledge is the privilege of apprehending things as they are.”

The image and concept are part of individual meaning’s marriage to Absolute Truth.

Similarly, one can say a being’s nature is like a number insofar as both are in the first instance about differences of “kind” and not “degree”. However, as Balthasar comments, a being’s image reveals itself to be fundamentally about the qualitative:

The image simulates something that they themselves are not: a world. They suggest the idea of essence and existence, but they are neither. They have no essence, because they are nothing but surface without depth. They are mere appearance [Erscheinung] and are thus incapable of displaying any interiority at all. In themselves, they have neither distance nor proximity.

One’s intuition and conceptualization of a being’s truth never fully synthesize, as this work is never complete. The subject’s desire to know must persist for as Balthasar writes, “[t]he sensible sign contained a fullness of sense. However, this sense did not present itself as belonging to the signs as such but rather as the emergence of an intimate and hidden reality.” An image only provides an analogy of a being’s full meaning, but this truth is distributive or applicable to other images. However, comprehensive the subject’s conceptualization of a being is, it can never import the sum of its total worldly meaning as it remains analogical. According to Balthasar, the premonition that mystery

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1107 TL 1, 108.

1108 Balthasar seems to reformulates Aquinas’ reading of Aristotle on this point: “since one kind of composite is constituted of something in this way ‘as a whole’—i.e., the whole is one—and not in the way in which a heap of stones is one but as a syllable is one (without qualification), in all such cases the composite must not be identical with its components, as a syllable is not its letters…” Metaph. Lesson 7, 1674 in St. Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle: vol. 2, (trans.) John P. Rowan (Henry Regnery Company, 1961), 616

1109 TL 1, 133.

1110 TL 1, 159.
is a durable property of every being is verified given the infinite landscape of Creation and Transcendent that all being is situated in. Indeed, even a single image can never be contained as its: “…inexplicable active irradiation forms the mid point of being to the expressive surface of the image, irradiation reflected in the image itself and granting it a unity, depth and richness far beyond its own power to contain.” Intellectual ideas direct the subject’s apprehension of an essence’s relationship to universal truth’s ratio of being. The fact that knowledge about an object is shared further argues against its final reduction by any one person. Fortunately, this apparent failure is actually a means towards the building up of community:

There can be no community without a certain balanced tempered and average truth. This averageness is not only a natural datum based on the participation and communication of all subjects in a common human nature. Rather, it is always the product of a common renunciation in which all persons forgo the exclusivity of their personal truth for the sake of the average truth that community demands.

The subject-object ratio brings into conversation the gestalt of two beings that exist as finite and infinite.

An object’s “auto-signification” in appearance and infinite ontological indiffering sets all beings in a meaningful relationship to the subject. The object presents itself to the subject in terms of its interior differing for Balthasar, and his interpretation of this relationship relies, in part, on the linguistic modeling of the Trinitarian life elucidated by Aquinas. This approach distances Balthasar from Badiou’s

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1111 TL 1, 142. See also: TL 1, 118.
1112 TL 1, 192.
1113 See: TD 4, 82 where Balthasar notes of meaning’s disclosure in being that the subject possesses a kind of “eternity” but: “we are not thinking of the timelessness of abstract propositions, as in mathematical axioms, that possess an, as it were, secondary ‘eternity’, dependent on the primary; what we have in mind is the presence of Being in the concrete existent.”
particular rejection of philosophy’s ‘linguistic turn’. While Badiou does not directly engage Balthasar on this point, we argue that one can take his critique of Derrida as instructive. A being presents itself by \textit{subtractive} measure or \textit{différance} for Derrida and Balthasar, but for Badiou this move can only be made at the cost of immediate relationships and results from an inappropriate reading of Plato:

Where Derrida spent his life showing that ‘presentations’ never achieve the goal of reaching ‘the real thing,’ presence or truth, Badiou takes ‘presentations,’ at least those of set theory, to be the embodiment of presence and truth. Derrida deconstructed Plato, Badiou hyperstructures him. For Derrida all is deferment, \textit{différance}, and for Badiou all is immediate (at least when it comes to the signs of math and set theory). In a sense, Badiou returns us to a pre-post-structuralist stance: to a French structuralism…\textsuperscript{1114}

However, the presence of \textit{différance} conveys meaning for Derrida given language’s immediate and \textit{subtractive} relationship to being. In this way, Derrida seems to speak of this mystery when he pens: “[t]herefore the sign of this excess must be absolutely excessive as concerns all possible presence-absence…and yet, in some manner it must still signify…The trace is produced as its own erasure.”\textsuperscript{1115} Similarly, for Balthasar, the groundless void at the heart of being re-asserts itself in being:

In the end, this void thrusts the subject back into itself. Since the world provides only formless material, consciousness seeks salvation in itself and looks to itself to give form. It now recognizes that it is the power that establishes sense and posits existence in cognition; it understands its own subjectivity as the primordial source of all objectivity, at least to the extent that it transcends the world of images. Because these images themselves remain inessential, there is no need to waste time over where they come from and what they belong to. The only important point is that all powers by which the subject brings order—the \textit{a priori} forms of perception and the categorical forms of judging reason—come from its own inner store.\textsuperscript{1116}

\textsuperscript{1114} Ricardo L. Nirenberg and David Nirenberg, “Badiou’s Number: A Critique of Mathematics as Ontology” \textit{Critical Inquiry} 37 (Summer 2011): 611.
\textsuperscript{1116} TL 1, 137-38. Both Balthasar and Aquinas maintain that in this relationship
If interior in-differing is taken to be an intrinsic principle of being as Balthasar’s theory of Ur-kenosis suggests, then relationships between beings are immediate and \textit{subtractive}.

The subject’s conceptualization of the object moves her away from intimate sensory encounter, allowing her to focus on the interior ratio of the object.\textsuperscript{1117} The ratio between the object and subject establishes the substantial characteristics of being whereas the conceptual ratio actualizes the essential relationship of beings, as: “[t]he concept has the capacity to distance itself from the perceptual image and to assume a stance of self-sufficiency in abstract isolation.”\textsuperscript{1118}

Subjective consciousness and the object’s immaterial meaning have the same grounding in reality. Because the spatiotemporal continuum and subjective sensorium are isomorphic, Balthasar forwards, the ratio that exists between the subject and object is

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the identity of the subject and object remains unchanged insofar as their substantial foundations are not altered in relationship to the Divine. Likewise, the act of knowing safeguards the particular identity of a being subjectively known: “what is visible or what is knowable is not acted upon by being known or seen,” In V Metaph., lesson 17, 1027 in St. Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle: vol. 1, (trans.) John P. Rowan (Henry Regnery Company, 1961), 388. See also: “The presupposition is that there exists simultaneously the One (which by definition has nothing of the object in it) and yet (however secondarily and provisionally) the Other over against the One, of which I, too, am one part. This fact seems contradictory and is certainly, in its facticity, impossible to explain. For if the One is objectless [gegensatzlos], how can something be set over against it [entgegengesetzt]? There are three ways to solve this riddle, ways that occasionally complement one another. The first explains the relationship of the One to the not-One (which are the beings of the world) through the relationship of Being and Appearance. In that case, the religious way consists of seeing through theAppearances and coming to realize that ‘I’ am not an ‘Other’ at all in the deepest sense but rather the One itself,” \textit{ExT.4}, 27.

\textsuperscript{1117} See also: TL 1, 41, 102-03 and: “Although many things force their way uninvited into the field of sense awareness, the subject still has the capacity to screen and to sift this multiplicity, to leave the greatest part of it in a sort of forecourt and to attend inwardly only to what corresponds precisely to its interest,” \textit{TL} 1, 109. This capacity confirms the existence of a harmonious underlining relation between a subject and object. Balthasar’s position is congruent with Aquinas’ in this matter. See: \textit{S. Th.} I q. 84, a. 1.

\textsuperscript{1118} \textit{TL} 1, 150-51.
\end{quote}
reflexive. Balthasar states that:

Although the sensorium, in the guise of imagination, appeared as the source of the spirit, which it thus seemed to encompass and to release itself, this relationship is clearly reversed when the spirit attains self-consciousness. The temporal priority of the senses and of the images gives way to the real priority of the spirit, which includes in its larger space the smaller space of sense perception.

The object’s perpetual, essential disclosure in appearance finds a corresponding parallel in the interior differences between the subject’s consciousness (bewußt) and the understanding she is “being-conscious” (Bewußtsein): “[w]e are concentrating on the fundamental paradox that both things are unveiled in my own presence-to-myself: namely, the absolute incommunicability of my own being (as ‘I’) and the unlimited communicability of being as such (which is not ‘used up’ by the fullness of all the worldly existence in which it subsists).”

The transition between these two internal motions is crucial, for here we see how truth intimately calls on consciousness and, analogously, “intends” in non-conscious beings. The move from subjective intuition and perception (Einheit der Anschauung) to essential or spiritual reflection draws content from an object and this means, in turn, that all beings have a relative trajectory towards consciousness. Balthasar writes:

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1119 TL 1, 72.
1120 TL 1, 167. The imagination also serves to bring collected memories to each experience, as Balthasar states concisely: “If being moves from inside out, by expressing or ‘dispersing’ itself (äußert), understanding moves from outside in, by ‘recollection’ (sich erinnert),” TL 1, 145.
1121 TD 2, 208.
1122 See: TL 1, 43-44 and: “Augustine says: ‘Faith is not seen by its possessor in the heart of which it is,’ as the soul of another man is seen from movements of the body; ‘rather, certain knowledge clings to it, and consciousness proclaims it’...Therefore, according to this, knowledge of the mind clings to faith in so far as consciousness proclaims it. But consciousness proclaims faith in so far as it is present in it. Therefore, faith is known by the mind in so far as it is present in the mind through its essence,” De
The transcendence of knowledge, which is given \textit{a priori} universality of the horizon of being, implies a real immanence of the other subjects but by nature participates in the equal, identical universality. The transcendence of the individual knowing subject is transcendence only because this subject expresses something of the ontological unity of human nature in which it is immanent.\textsuperscript{1123}

The correspondence of essences, of subject and object, centers their collective perfecting. Intuiting the whole in every passing moment, the subject is now able to introduce into her particular perceptions of the object something of the object’s own metaphoric “perception” of all reality through the subject’s eyes: “[t]hese two aspects together complete being’s personal character; being as a whole now appears as the bearer of the personal uniqueness that, from the point of view of essence, appeared as perspectivity.”\textsuperscript{1124} The subject’s experience of the universal is always born in an existential context.\textsuperscript{1125} The subject’s experience of the whole is reciprocal to a truth that is universal by definition and is paradoxically realized in a strict context.\textsuperscript{1126} Once the image’s concept is determined to be truthful, the subject can freely explore its latent relationship to pre-existing rational faculties: “[t]he intellectual laws of finite thought are from beginning to end dictated by formal logic, which with its sub- and supra-ordinations of concepts, its never-ceasing delimitations, unmistakably expresses the inner limitation

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[\textsuperscript{1123}] TL 1, 169. The image or representation of the Transcendent remains only a “remote similitude” (\textit{similitudinem quondam remotam}).
\item[\textsuperscript{1124}] TL 1, 189.
\item[\textsuperscript{1125}] TL 1, 155.
\item[\textsuperscript{1126}] TL 1, 234. See also: “Intellectual awareness is concerned with universals, and this is what distinguishes it from sensory awareness, which is of individuals. But this distinction cannot apply in the appetitive part of the soul. For any wanting is a tendency, which moves from the soul towards things and since things are all individual, every want seems to be a want for an individual thing. So there should be no distinction made between the intellectual appetite and the sensory appetite…” \textit{S. Th.} I, q. 80, a. 2.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
of this thought and of the truth that lies within its grasp.” Balthasar and Badiou agree that beings never physically trespass their topological boundaries, however, Balthasar retains that reason is *transcendently* unlimited in its reach:

Evidence is being that lays hold of itself and measures itself in self-consciousness, to which being as a whole is disclosed in this act. But the inner form of this act of measuring is itself a being measured by the absolute identity of being and consciousness, hence, by a free Divine Person. This in no way disables active self-possession or transforms it into a merely passive subjection to another’s measure: the identity of the infinite subject equips the finite subject’s form of self-consciousness with a kind of infinite authority.

Judgments are neither static nor, finally, formal abstractions for Balthasar—neither in the manner of their arrival nor in their existential determinations. The theoretical extension of a particular object’s essence outside of its existential source draws the subject’s effort away from the object’s internal radiance. Indeed, the more universal one’s concept becomes, the closer it moves to becoming indistinguishable from the spatiotemporal continuum in which it resides. Balthasar argues that:

The more universal something is, the more empty it is, hence, the less it is known in its concrete applications. The wider the boundaries are, the less determinate becomes the knowledge of the content captured within them. In this respect, synthesis is indeed a march into infinity—because one can go on enlarging the framework ever more universally—but into an empty and bad infinity, which, once again, is akin to the infinity of the spatial continuum.

The abstractive nature of scientific and mathematical laws reduces being to a statistically predictable result not, to Balthasar’s mind, to apodictic certainty. Given that an object’s meaning is constantly being updated, any categorical pronouncement on a

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1127 *TL* 1, 248.
1128 *TL* 1, 259. The knowledge of something intelligible precedes the knowledge by which someone knows that he is understanding and, therefore, by which someone knows that he has intellect. See: *TL* 1, 258.
1129 *TL* 1, 246.
1130 On why science cannot treat singular beings see: *S. Th.* I, q. 86, a. 1.
particular being never accounts for the overflowing of its meaning. Balthasar takes no issue with these laws when unambiguously used within their explicit disciplines. He does have problems with a cross-disciplinary application of axiomatic logic to explain the spiritual or essential nature of a being:

In the end, the subject is not free to think as it pleases. It does not have the freedom of the object, which can reveal itself or veil itself in silence. In apprehending a thing, the subject has to conform to the law of what has been revealed. The fundamental gift bestowed upon the subject in knowledge is the privilege of apprehending things as they are.\(^{1131}\)

A being is not understood, Balthasar avers, solely through formal itemizing, as all such predications are blind to the mystery of being and truth. The subject has an integrated experience of the object’s existence in the world (\textit{Einheit des Da-Seins}) when one accounts for the essential truth of its images.\(^{1132}\) The formal law never becomes the dictate of subjective desire. Balthasar draws attention to this, stating that:

The subject experiences within its interiority the necessary unity of sense and being; wherever it reads sense in the images, it must also immediately posit being. In conferring essence and existence upon the images, the subject solves the mysterious enigma of their manifestness. The subject finds their unmysteriousness as sheer images so senseless, and thus soanguishing, that it has no choice but immediately to bestow upon them a sense, and, therefore a depth and a mystery. Only if the naked manifestness of the images conceals in itself the unmanifest depth of an existing essence is knowledge able to grasp it.\(^{1133}\)

Subjective choice and relationships always involve some unknown and thus both involve some criterion of incommensurability.

\textbf{(7) \ Consciousness and Groundlessness}

Time and space are subjectively experienced, which disavows that any two

\[^{1131}\text{TL 1, 108.}\]
\[^{1132}\text{TL 1, 72-73.}\]
\[^{1133}\text{TL 1, 135. On the relationship of seeking and finding, veiling and unveiling see also: TL 1, 146, 200-02 and 262-64.}\]
subjects will have the same experience of a given event. Further, since particular beings are tied to the universal, their full truth is subtle, as Balthasar propounds: “[w]e do not know what unity is in truth; we are acquainted with unity only in the irreducible duality of universal unity and particular unity, and we can never make the two aspects coincide. We can never lay hold of what unity is beyond this duality.”\textsuperscript{1134} Ironically, individual modifications in our perception of objects in the spatiotemporal fabric sanction some determination of truth. The variances within and between beings allows for spontaneous, repetitive discourses of an object’s essential nature and the subject’s reception of this truth.

The essential grounding of the object, that is, its cyclic, phenomenal appearance and the dissipation of this appearance, continue as long as the object exists. The object’s essential core momentarily notifies the subject by unveiling itself in its appearance and then hides itself as veiled (als verhüllte enthüllt) from the subject. In this labyrinth of secreting and disclosing, truth actualizes for the subject. Internalization of the object by the intellect never nullifies the need for continual subjective re-appropriation of an object:

In the object, there is no appearance that is not immediately an appearance of the essence. There is no appearance, therefore, that does not just as immediately step back before the essence, inasmuch as its very substance is to be inessential [das Wesenslose] and, as such, to manifest the substance of the essence.\textsuperscript{1135}

The image’s repeated “renunciation” of its existing appearances renders something of its

\textsuperscript{1134} TL 1, 157. See also: TL 1, 174-75. 
\textsuperscript{1135} TL 1, 151-52. As will be shown, this relationship of measure cannot be finally established if one being is of a different order and evinces non-mutuality, as is the case between God and the human person. However, imperfect knowledge allows for some predication: “[i]t should be said that that from which something is named need not always be the form according to the nature of the thing. It suffices that it be signified in the manner of form, grammatically speaking. For a man is named from his action and his clothes and other such things are not really forms,” De pot., q.7, a. 10, ad 8.
essential truth, if the subject is willing to “sacrifice” something of its own ego to accept this meaning. Because the object’s semblance constantly changes, there is an urgent call for subjective thoughtfulness at every temporal juncture. Recounting this bilateral unfolding, Balthasar writes that: “[t]he stream of images, in which nothing can be repeated and everything comes only once, the subject now takes to be the truth of being: pure changefulness is being’s enduring essence, pure unreality is the form of its existence….The subject remains in the truth as long as it persists in receiving images and gives itself over completely to this reception.”\textsuperscript{1136} The object never attains consciousness but it has the relative “freedom” to submit its intrinsic meaning to subjective and Transcendent survey.\textsuperscript{1137} Non-conscious beings endlessly presage meaning. As Balthasar notes, “[t]he essence, then, far from being realized at any given moment, is something like a supra-temporal idea…that maintains itself as a uniform plan during the whole course of an existence, but also something like a plastic potency…that progressively unfolds and displays itself in this existence.”\textsuperscript{1138} The subject’s notion concerning a particular or “unattached” being (\textit{individum vagum}) is limited but intuits universal truth.\textsuperscript{1139}

The grounding of the image in the groundlessness of its non-appearing source is a disposing act for the object and subject, but it is an advantageous “sacrifice” for both beings. The subject’s move from unmediated sensory experience of an object to making a reflexive concession for its essence (\textit{reflektierender Geist}) parallels the object’s own

\textsuperscript{1136} \textit{TL} 1, 137.
\textsuperscript{1137} \textit{TL} 1, 80.
\textsuperscript{1138} \textit{TL} 1, 194. The subject’s knowledge of an object is genuine because she takes the object as an authoritative existing being—including the object’s relationship to Nothingness. We will turn to this question in the following chapter.
\textsuperscript{1139} See: \textit{S. Th.} I, q. 86, a. 2.
incessant unveiling and the hiddenness of its essence in being-in-itself
(Eigenständigkeit). Consequently, Balthasar concludes that: “[t]he unveiling of the
essence in the appearance thereby begins to move, so to say, in reverse. It is no longer the
essence that actively reveals itself in the appearance; it is now the appearance that, by
going to ground, passively allows the essence to become visible as the ground.”

The object’s retrogressive phase of going-to-ground or perishing (Zu-Grunde-Ge hen) proves
to Balthasar that the object’s accession never presents the pure essence in any given
image. Subjective interpretation does not preclude the continual manifestation of truth:

It belongs to the truth of the living that a part of itself must remain hidden. And it
belongs to the truth of the free and spiritual being that a part of itself must be
consigned to forgetfulness, not every truth…has claim in eternalization. An
ordered cosmos of truth comes to birth only through a selection and preference:
much that is hidden must be brought forth, and much that is disclosed be returned
again to hiddenness.

Similarly, a subject’s perceptions and conceptions of an object’s image do not replace the
existing being.

The object’s shift from appearance as image and return to its internal point of
origin validates the thought that a being’s essence is always greater than its emergence
suggests to a viewer. Consequently, the image’s resipiscence highlights for Balthasar one
of the truth’s most paradoxical characteristics, that is, its impermanence relative to its
ongoing identity:

1140 TL 1, 147. Aquinas speaks of the same event in much the same manner:
“…because the intellect reflects on itself, by the same act of reflection it thinks of its own
thinking and the idea by which it thinks. And thus the idea is a secondary object of
thought; but the primary object of thought is the thing of which the idea is a likeness,” S.
Th. I, q. 85, a. 2. See also: TL 1, 59 and 67.

1141 TL 1, 146.

1142 TL 1, 26. On the Hegelian influence on this concept, see: TL 1, 146.
We can lay hold of nonsubsistent being [Sein] only in what factually exists (even if we were to imagine a purely possible essence, in the same act we would have to conceive the possibility of existence as well); a finite creature is such in virtue of the fact that it subsists. Strictly speaking, being cannot be said to be. Only something that is in virtue of being can be said to be.\[^{1143}\]

The word, image or number standing in for being is significant precisely because they are non-identical to the being they specify.\[^{1144}\] Images exist under the constant threat of eradication and regarding this potential move into nothingness and non-identity Balthasar claims that: “…the images float without fixity between being and nothingness, just as they float with no fixed residence in a no-man’s land between subject and object.”\[^{1145}\] Balthasar rejects any claim that the proper reply to an image’s impermanence on the part of the subject concludes in the application of some preconceived concepts or ideas. For Balthasar, such preparations deny that an object’s entelechy has general implications requiring the subject’s creative and evolving response.\[^{1146}\] The ephemeral and the universal, Balthasar ventures, are allied: “[i]t is only with this transitoriness that the moment becomes fully, irreplaceably precious: its value is so great that literally nothing can make up for it. The moment is not just a singular event, but the singularity of all events, the qualitative specification of every last fragment of being.”\[^{1147}\]

The difference between the conceptual and phenomenal narration of a being and the further truth of reality as a whole are paradoxically only possible, Balthasar counsels,

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\[^{1144}\] See: TL 1, 139 and in S. Th. I, q. 34, a. 1 the difference between a word and the existing being it represents is supremely evident in Jesus Christ’s name for the Eternal Word.

\[^{1145}\] TL 1, 133. See also: TL 1, 148 and 151.

\[^{1146}\] See: TL 1, 181.

\[^{1147}\] TL 1, 198. In the next chapter we will show how this relationship epitomizes Hell’s inversion of Creation that finds its final answer in the Cross.
by premising their pre-existing unity in the subjective consciousness. Of this Daedalean web of relationships, David Schindler states that: “[t]he joint movement between being and consciousness is thus not symmetrical but asymmetrical, not a self-moving of consciousness ‘connected’ to a self-moving of Being but a single movement, which is movement of Being carrying the self-moving consciousness.” The subject’s grasp of truth and the object’s meting out of its own essential truth are distinct but integrated in the subject’s experience of individual beings in reality. The subject’s intentional delimiting and synthesis of the essential truth of being is subtractive, vicarious, liminal and unending. In this process the subject’s own intangible rational perimeters inflate in the intellectual purchase of new, essential magnifications of beings:

These measures are always already impressed upon its inward space (species impressa) by means of its receptivity, and they are transformed by means of its spontaneity (intellectus agens) into conscious measures that it can measure by the measure of its own self-consciousness (species expressa). The process by which the subject first stands under the measure of things and subsequently measures both its own measure and the measure of things is the context in which the world and the self are formed simultaneously.

The subject’s account of the essential characteristics of images empowers her to formulate symbolic representations. Balthasar makes a distinction between an object’s image in the imagination and its further abstraction in symbol. The symbol makes a being’s relationship to the infinite one of its most prevalent characteristics, hence Balthasar alleges that: “[i]t is as if, at the moment when the two finite magnitudes of sense [Sinn] and image [Bild] coincided the work became infinite—as a symbol

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1148 See: TL 1, 24-26.
1149 Dramatic Truth, 129.
1150 TL 1, 149.
1151 TL 1, 69. See also: TL 1, 41.
[Sinnbild] that from now on transcends the sum of its parts.”\textsuperscript{1152} The subject can now place her concept of the image into a larger symbolic and conceptual universe that advances the truth of the subject’s interpretation of their transcendent reach and “perennially self-replenishing depths”.\textsuperscript{1153} Because her concepts are determined, or, in Balthasar’s words, have a “single field of significance,” symbolic modifications can be placed in relationship to other emblematic systems.\textsuperscript{1154} In this corroboration of symbols the subject includes the object’s own proportionate reflexive identity in reality. In Balthasar’s terminology the latter is termed a “floating middle”, that is, the relationship between an object’s essence and its denotative value. It is in the meeting of the conscious and essential solidarity that the subject-object relationship is given its “perennially self-replenishing” depth.

\begin{center}
\textbf{(8) Knowing as an Act of Love}
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The ratio between subject and object must be indefatigably initiated because the profusion, or, manifoldness (Vielfalt) of a being’s essence is only briefly exposed yet always speaks to the subject’s relationship to the whole truth.\textsuperscript{1155} In Balthasar’s idiom this association is a “spiritual knowing”, that is, an act motivated by the \textit{transcendental}  

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1152} \textit{TL} 1, 141.
\item \textsuperscript{1153} See: \textit{TL} 1, 138-42 and 264. Analogical notions and relationships can be enlarged as they reflect interior essential contrasts, see: \textit{S. Th.} 1, q. 88, a. 1 and a. 2.
\item \textsuperscript{1154} See: \textit{TL} 1, 180-84. See also: “The first mode of individualization is the easier to grasp. It is based on a progressive determination of a subject by means of its distinctive essential features. Looked at abstractly and in themselves, these characteristics belong, at least could belong, to other subjects as well. When, however, they are mixed in precisely this manner, they constitute the uniqueness of an entity and of its situation. Their particular composition produces what we could call a “constellation” in the strong sense of something that presides over one’s destiny,” \textit{TL} 1, 185.
\item \textsuperscript{1155} In the next chapter we will argue this correspondence of in-differing is metaphysically possible for Balthasar given the Divine’s Ur-kenotic existence (e.g. 1/God).
\end{itemize}
nature of love:

Love is by no means on the far side of truth. It is that which within truth ensures an ever new mystery over and above all unveiling; it is the eternal more-than-what-we-already-know without which there would be neither knowing nor knowable; it is that which, within the real, never permits a being to become a mere fact and that which never permits knowledge to rest on its laurels but makes it serve something higher. [1156]

Love’s transcendental character makes it a priori to its conceptualization—love cannot be anticipated (Die unvorhergesehenen der Liebe). [1157]

The subject tirelessly repeats its plumbing of the object’s essential depths and a superior understanding of the object follows. The subject does not coerce the truth as it is not revealed in a closed hermeneutic circle, but rather, in the free exchange between two immaterial enumerations. [1158] Balthasar, thus responds:

All truth goes back to this groundless ground: all truth is grounded in the correspondence between image and ground in the self-apprehension of being (in light of its interiority identity and luminosity) that occurs in this correspondence. But this fact also closes the circle of truth in itself, and it is not possible to go on asking why there should be a correspondence and luminosity, measure and light in the first place; why anything should have the goodness to give itself and to disclose itself to us in its being; why there should be truth in the first place. [1159]

Ideally, the subject does not mechanically reproduce an object in a mental image (Bild).

The subject’s conceptual grasp of an image must take into consideration that the image is

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[1156] TL 1, 118.
[1158] The images must be contextualized to be meaningful given their transitory status: “Because the images have no depth and no essence, they also have no law. If the images alone existed, the world would be completely random. True, they recur in certain series and sequential patterns, but nothing guarantees in advance that they will continue to do so consistently. Therefore, as long as they are considered in themselves, apart from relation to any point of reference outside them, they are absolutely senseless. Though this medley of green, white, and blue may produce a certain harmony and evoke a certain feeling of well-being, it would start making sense only when it is looked at, no longer as an image, but as a landscape, as a significant whole, whose center or gravity lies entirely elsewhere than the pure image in which it appears,” TL 1, 133.
[1159] TL 1, 223.
an exemplar (Urbild) of a Divine idea. The discrepancy between the object’s full truth and its representation in a symbol coax a creative response by the subject.\textsuperscript{1160} Subjective knowledge is a partially unfinished project, but this deficiency is a positive factor for the subject’s self-determination.\textsuperscript{1161} The subject must take care that the object’s essence is included as part of her creative repartee with the object, however; she is also producing something new in the world as: “[t]he sensible sign is now in truth absolved from the essence, inasmuch as the connection established by the immediate relation of expression is replaced by a new, arbitrary connection: linguistic creation.”\textsuperscript{1162}

The subject gains access to the inner significance (Bedeutung) of an object’s essence in the dual differentiation of an object’s gestalt and the subject’s conceptualization of it. It is from this “essentially and permanently mediate appearing” that the truth is uncovered.\textsuperscript{1163} Balthasar thus claims:

Because human thought oscillates in its very structure between the unity of the subject and of the predicate, the content of cognition also remains suspended

\textsuperscript{1160} TL 1, 69. See also: “Although knowledge strives by its very essence to attain unity, it can seek unity only in two contrary directions. On the one hand, it seeks unity in the direction of the subject of the judgment. Proceeding analytically, knowledge breaks down and shifts in the attempt to fathom the original, indivisible unity of the existent subject, the individuum ineffabile. On the other hand, knowledge seeks this same unity, with equal immediacy, in the direction of the predicate of judgment. Operating synthetically, it attempts to categorize the atomic individuals under more and more encompassing unities and thereby achieve a unity of being and meaning for the whole in its universality,” TL 1, 248.

\textsuperscript{1161} See: TL 1, 41 and 68.

\textsuperscript{1162} TL 1, 159.

\textsuperscript{1163} TL 1, 44. The meaning that is generated from the ‘floating middle’ is complex. A distinction, for example, can be made between a singleton and the membership it has in a set and its further openness to other relationships. For example, 0 and \{0\} are not equal. The former deals with 0 in terms of its self-identity, whereas the latter expresses its identity in terms of classification. Likewise, the equation \{0 + 0\} = 0, defines 0 in terms of identity, membership and formula (relation). I believe it is on this level of precision that both Balthasar and Aquinas weave their explanations of the object’s relationship to a subject.
halfway between the object and the subject of knowledge. The analysis of the object of knowledge can reach only so far as the object itself appears in sensory intuition, but this intuition announces and promises an eternal surplus of intelligibility in the ontological depths lying behind it. Even when we have apprehended a thing’s species and its individual property, we can never fully bring to light the ground of its ontological mystery. But this is equally true that even in the act of knowing, the subject never becomes as fully present to itself as it is in itself.¹¹⁶⁴

There is a rhythm of nearness and distance in any relationship of love that the subject-object ratio conceptually mimics. To know is intrinsically tied to the act of self-giving and, thus, laudably, also represents an act of faithful loving:

   Trusting self-gift (vertrauende Hingabe) remains the a priori of all true knowledge between free spirits and in this attitude there is fulfilled the objectification of the subject in the object as well as, the objectivity of the object being received vis-a-vis the subject. Thus faith is so little in opposition to knowing (Wissen), or even in tension with it, that unity of faith and knowing signifies perfect knowledge (Erkenntnis) and perfect openness for the truth.¹¹⁶⁵

The subject’s confirmation and interpretation of an object, like love, is a consolidated act. In knowing another being, new possibilities of unity are present for the subject. At times this pooling can only exist when the subject overlooks all obstacles to this engagement.

In this act of phrenic “forgetfulness” Balthasar sees something comparable to love:

   Where the good of love and its integral wholeness requires it, love will reproduce the truth in a fragmentary and veiled fashion. For truth can bear a division, whereas love cannot. Truth as we know it in the world, always consists of single revelations, propositions, and judgments that unveil a definite perspective. But each one of these perspectives remains finite and must be completed by others. No worldly truth is absolute, even when it is genuine, actual truth. But it is truth, if it is really an expression (albeit a limited, measured one) of an unconditioned, unmeasured revelation and total self-giving.¹¹⁶⁶

¹¹⁶⁴ TL 1, 248–49.
¹¹⁶⁵ TL 1, 189–99. See also: GL 1, 227 and TL 1, 42.
¹¹⁶⁶ TL 1, 127. Balthasar’s schema here follows from the distinction that can be made given being’s participation in both the transcendental essential characteristics of being and the quantifiable characteristics of a being as understood by the Tri-Personal Transcendent nature of the Divine see: S Th. 1, q. 30, a. 3.
At the essential level all human beings are equal insofar as they all present a *sui generis* testimony to universal truth. Because the essential’s reach continues to extend throughout reality, the subject is responsible for the meaning she makes in the world. The solitary person can never truly know being or have a meaningful destiny. Rejecting love, Balthasar believes, imposes a self-exile on the subject from other beings and the Transcendent. The sinner acts as if her whole future is static and reduces her affiliations to covert, unilateral decisions about self, others and reality. Isolation and anonymity hallmark inauthentic being (*Uneigentlichkeit*), and perhaps even lead to a falsehood that stymies one’s natural desire (*appetitus naturalis*) with the fabricated satisfaction that the universe is peripheral to one’s desires. Balthasar sees a being’s spiritual existence as open and forward looking whereas the heretic is blind, heteronomous and complacent to all but her own desires. Individual experiences of truth must be related to the whole for every misuse of truth consists in the granting of independence to the fragmentary to the disfavor of the whole. According to Balthasar, this intuition of the whole is a “welcoming belief” (*einladende Glaube*) and highlights the role trust plays in all realization of truth, given its dialogical nature:

An attitude of faith is immanent in the attitude of knowledge. This immanence provides the ultimate justification of what we said concerning the double criterion of truth, which is at once subjective and objective, personal and social. This inner-worldly polarity and analogy affecting the criterion of truth is rooted ultimately in a transcendent analogy between the divine and the worldly subject within the act of knowing itself. In intra-worldly knowledge, the subject relinquishes the autonomy of its criterion of truth and shares this criterion with the object. But this relinquishment would be absurd if, from the very beginning, such an autonomy were withdrawn, or better never given. Because, however, the first encounter with truth already has the form of a communication, this form logically

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1167 See: *MP*, 101 and *TL* 1, 121.
1168 See: *TL* 1, 98, and 110-11.
1169 See: *TL* 1, 128.
abides throughout inner-worldly knowledge.\textsuperscript{1170}

The sinner’s displacement of self in constricting relations leads to an inescapable godless solitude.\textsuperscript{1171} Consequently, Balthasar argues that: “[t]ruth is not just a property of knowledge; it is above all a transcendental determination of being as such.”\textsuperscript{1172} The solution (\textit{Lösung}) of the enigma of intimacy and relationship is the redemption (\textit{Erlösung}) of the full extent of human alienation by Jesus Christ. The Son unconditionally centers the infinite relations between the Trinitarian Persons and as Jesus Christ, delineates the differing relations of the finite creature, even her loveless actions: “God as the gulf of absolute love contains in advance, eternally, all the modalities of love, of compassion, and even of a ‘separation’ motivated by love and founded on the infinite destruction between the hypostases—modalities which manifest themselves in the course of a history of salvation involving sinful humankind.”\textsuperscript{1173} The primordial fact (\textit{Urtatsache}) of being is plenary because being is essentially inseparable from truth and truth serves the “unity-of-difference”, or, “love” of the whole of reality.\textsuperscript{1174} The essentiality of being gives the subject infinite ‘sight lines’ into the truth of being and Transcendent love.

\textsuperscript{1170} TL 1, 260-61. Faith is an element of all knowledge and is one of the defining marks separating it from opinion and conjecture: “Opinion and conjecture (δόξα) are at home in the image world, in which there is no objectively communicable knowledge. Faith, by contrast, is an essential component of intellectual knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), insofar as such knowledge is always also a matter of one person’s testimony before another that moves dialogically between them,” TL 1, 176.

\textsuperscript{1171} See: TD 4, 137.

\textsuperscript{1172} See: TL 1, 10.

\textsuperscript{1173} MP, viii-ix.

\textsuperscript{1174} TL 1, 245.
Chapter Six: Absolute Difference and Consciousness

Introduction

In the section, *Polarity and Spiritual Destiny*, we explore how Balthasar sees dialectical relationships as fundamental to a being’s identity and correspondence to the Transcendent. Critiques of correlational systems such as that which Balthasar advocates are varied, but most forward the thesis such systems lack an erudite understanding of the rapport between reality and the nature of the human subject. John Mullarkey, for example, warns that the systematic unity of oppositions points to a procedural dogmatism that confuses onto-theological representation with subjective *transcendence*.\(^{1175}\)

For Balthasar the Transcendent Other ironically calls the subject into a relationship of contingency. Polarity brings to the fore for Balthasar the idea that every cognitive act involves some employment of relational difference. This understanding of difference allows one to explain being and change without undermining the principle of non-contradiction. Balthasar’s understanding of antinomy suggests a communal sense of identity, for: “[e]very real ‘contra’ presupposes a constantly to be understood relationship and thus at least a minimal community in order to be really a ‘contra’ and not totally unrelated ‘other’.”\(^{1176}\) Being and truth are thrown into reality as a co-giving founded on

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\(^{1175}\) For Balthasar and such postmoderns as Laurelle, associations of the simultaneity of univocity and equivocity in asymmetrical conceptual pairings implies further such relationships. Laruelle states that: “[t]he transcendental is indeed an in-division through and beyond empirical distinctions, but it continues to attribute itself to something other than itself, to the empirical and to beings or even being,” Laruelle, 174. See also: *Post-Continental Philosophy: An Outline*, 19.

differential relations.\textsuperscript{1177} The subject realizes that her mysterious encounter with the material and essential aspects of her own consciousness can be extended to all other beings.\textsuperscript{1178} This cooperative economy between subject and object commutes reality as a whole.\textsuperscript{1179} The dialectical works in Balthasar’s system to stop the conflating of a being with its relational opposite and simultaneously making their union possible. The distance between finite beings and the Transcendent, for example, points both to the unique nature of each, as well as a possible unity between them.

Human consciousness’s infinite reach finds its definite expression in Jesus Christ, whose finitude is perfectly versant with his eternal and Transcendent nature. In the section \textit{Infinity and Consciousness} an interpretation of Balthasar’s Christology is proffered that gives prominence to Jesus’ effectuating of consciousness’s infinite scope. We further suggest that a faithful response to Christ permits one to participate analogously in Christ’s infinite consciousness and that this relationship changes how we think.

The finite person Jesus Christ is unique as he engages in his Passion, that is, analogously, Absolute Difference as fully Divine. In the section \textit{Cross and Consciousness} we show how Balthasar’s understanding of the analogy existing between Jesus Christ’s being and the human person avouches a way for the faithful person to positively approach all negative differences. Indeed, in Christ’s death and resurrection

\textsuperscript{1177} See: \textit{TL} 1, 189-90.

\textsuperscript{1178} \textit{TL} 1, 166. Badiou correctly surmises: “Let it be said then that the God of metaphysics makes sense of existing according to a proof, while the God of religion makes sense of living according to an encounter,” \textit{Briefings on Existence}, 26. However, Balthasar is right in affirming that through the life, person and consciousness of Jesus Christ an analogous encounter to our own metaphysical structuring is realized.

\textsuperscript{1179} See: \textit{TL} 1, 61-62.
Divine love is the motivation for the institution of the Church and the nucleus of evangelization (Acts 2:24).

(1) Polarity and Spiritual Destiny

The subject’s reason and will orient beings in relationship to an illimitable horizon. The subject’s move towards the object’s essence is seen by Balthasar to be an efficacious or spiritual measuring, that is to say, an intuitive and transcendent understanding of the whole: “[t]he being receives an inner space that as such has infinite value; its principal property is incomparability, incommutability, resistance to any classification under a generality or any subordination under a category. As individuals, beings appear to be ‘specimens’ of a species or genus; as persons, as intellects existing for themselves, they have the unity of being in themselves and can no longer be subsumed as a multiplicity under any unity.”

The revelation of truth and its subjective apprehension are vibrant events just as they are a looking glass into being’s intrinsic autonomy and a participation in the Transcendent. Subjective truth represents the individual’s cognitive approach to her transcendent relationship to the Transcendent.

For Balthasar a spiritual person is one who is fundamentally united to the truth and open to communicating this truth. Sharing her experience of truth, the subject emulates Jesus’ own relationship to the truth as found in this world. The Divine hypostases set out for Balthasar a particular “theo-logic” by which finite beings are called

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1180 TL 1, 189. Aquinas holds a similar position, see: De Pot., q.7, a. 10, corp.

1181 For Balthasar and Aquinas being signifies the highest perfection and marks the move from potential awareness of one’s world to conscious grasp. Aquinas claims that it: “is that act that is always more perfect than potentiality. Now no signate form is understood to be in act unless it be supposed to have esse...Wherefore it is clear that esse as we understand it here is the actuality of all acts, and therefore the perfection of all perfection,” see: De pot., q.7, a.2 and a. 9, in On the Power of God: vol. 3, (trans.) L. Shapcote (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1934), 12.
to participate in existence, for: “worldly being will necessarily contain within itself traces and images of the intra-divine difference, which means it can then appropriately enter upon a union with the divine unity”.\textsuperscript{1182} Any one Divine Person infers the equal and simultaneous existence of the other two Divine Persons. Likewise for Balthasar, any finite relationship existing between two beings infers \textit{a priori} an asymmetric relationship to the Transcendent. Jesus Christ’s sending of the Spirit is intrinsic to the Son’s external relationship to the world. Christ’s loving apprehension of the world becomes a possibility for all beings through the advancing work of the Spirit. With Jesus Christ’s gifting of the Spirit the believer’s grasp of another being’s essence now takes place as part of her \textit{transcendent} participation in the Transcendent. Between the historical event of the Incarnation and the Parousia the Transcendent sets into play the redemption of all differences. It is most important to note that the subject’s \textit{transcendental} appropriations, or, one might say \textit{epektasis}, is only possible because of the person and mission of Jesus Christ:

The exteriorisation of God (in the incarnation) has its ontic condition of possibility in the eternal exteriorisation of God—that is, in his tri-personal self-gift. With that departure point, the created person, too, should no longer be described chiefly as subsisting in itself but more profoundly (supposing that person to be actually created in God’s image and likeness) as a ‘returning (\textit{reflexio completa}) from exteriority to oneself’ and an ‘emergence from oneself as an interiority that gives itself in self-expression’.\textsuperscript{1183}

A finite being’s conscious self-identity and vocational striving exist in synclastic relationship to the Transcendent.\textsuperscript{1184} In summary, the human person’s \textit{transcendental} relationship

\textsuperscript{1182} E, 86.
\textsuperscript{1183} MP, 28.
\textsuperscript{1184} It is only when the subject’s nature actualizes as a divinely orientated mission that she becomes, for Balthasar, a complete person. The person is thus called into full existence given underlining differences that exist within a person and in her relationship
striving can be described as follows: “[b]y the light the blessed are made deiform.”

Since human knowing is paradigmatic to Christ’s own manner of knowing and willing as the eternal mystery of the Son’s generation (per modum intellectus) and the Spirit’s procession (per modum voluntatis), it seems plausible that Balthasar would have no difficulty with Badiou’s pointing out that in the mental retention of an image the subject has conceptually re-represented the original being. As we read Badiou, the subject’s grasp of an image is a re-representation. His re-representation by the subject is not determined by the perceived object’s essential correspondence to an existing Transcendent, however, but rather, by the void and the non-existing One. By contrast, Balthasar’s conviction that an actual Transcendent exists dramatically changes how he develops the subject’s conception of images. Balthasar deems that the Transcendent is Ur-kenotic, that is, a Being who is Three Divine Persons in eternal relationship (ONE∠(3) even in the face of non-subsistence and death. Balthasar states that: “the Spirit takes up his endless interpretation of the Word—which has gone ‘to the end’ (Jn. 13:1)—at the very point where it falls silent in death.” In this way, a subject’s conception of an object’s image is not simply a re-representation, but a tri-logical re-re-representation that is an analogue to the eternal consciousness of the Divine Persons. For Balthasar, the

to the Transcendent, for: “only through the ‘name’ that God uses to address the individual human being; only thus is he no longer an individual of a species but a unique person,” TD 1, 628. Balthasar does not ideally see beings in mathematical terms, as the interaction of topological points or linear projections. For him, a more fitting image, perhaps, would be three-dimensional spheres in self-reflective and external relationships, that is, in terms of a synclastic geometric analogy.

1185 S. Th. I, q.12, a. 5.

1186 See: S. Th. I, q. 88, a. 2. For Balthasar the distinction that holds between Father and Son in light of the Spirit-given supra-transcendence of God allows for all transcendent estimations of the mystery of Divine generation and procession.

1187 TL 3, 228.
sensory and conceptual orchestrations by the subject are a spiritual, or, *transcendent* measure of knowing. Balthasar differs from Badiou in the relative weight he assigns to a mental representation (*Vorstellung*) and the manner by which he mentally derives an image in relationship with the Transcendent.

Truth and being converge in the subject’s analogical exercise of knowing and desiring as a way to proportionately relate Divine and finite freedom. The nature of a being’s *transcendent* relationships is definitely elusive; however, by subjectively collating personal experiences of truth around these mysteries, the subject begins to take possession of the mystery of her own being as given and uniquely communicated, for: “in this act of taking possession, man is not a merely passive vessel; he is what God has willed him to be: one who responds to the Word, one who corresponds to God’s speech. By being dynamically inhabited by God, man is brought to attunement (*Stimmen*) by God: he possesses a voice (*Stimme*), and the right voice at that.” Balthasar advocates the claim that subjective truth is irreplaceable given that all worldly truth confirms the authority of Jesus Christ’s mission. By providing in Jesus Christ’s person and mission a fundamental hermeneutic for the life of subjects, the Transcendent is revealed in these subjects and their innovations. The subject is a joint administrator [*Mitverwalter*] of the truth with other beings and the Transcendent: “[t]he creative side of human knowledge is therefore the creature’s analogical participation in the act by which God’s archetypal,

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1188 Finite generation implies change and, hence, contraries, and this difference implies, in turn, an existing subject, see: De pot., q.3, a.9 and Michelle Schumacher, A Trinitarian Anthropology: Adrienne Von Speyr and Hans Urs von Balthasar in Dialogue with Thomas Aquinas, (Washington, D.C. : The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 49. The fundamental goodness of created being and its conceptual image are for Balthasar finally adjudicated by their reference to the Transcendent.

1189 *GL* 1, 475. See also: *TL* 1, 219-24.
productive knowledge creatively metes out truth. By a kind of grace, knowledge draws
the other into the properly spiritual sphere, thus giving it the opportunity to unfold therein
by the power, and in the light, of the subject—before it has to become, in its objectivity,
the object of knowledge.” 1190 Freedom naturally orientates toward the absolute interiority
of Divine Truth:

No thing is ever a mere fact. By its very existence, it participates in an essence
whose individual unity transcends the fleeting moment and which, in itself as in
others, transcends this very individuality because it embodies a common species.
But at what point does the immanence of this essence (as morphe) in existence
give way to a growing transcendence (as eidos) that, rising to the divine idea,
finally coincides with it? Who can say? Things are always more than themselves,
and their constantly self-surpassing transcendence opens ultimately onto an idea
that is, not the things themselves, but God and their measure in God. Things are
turned to this idea, from which they receive, every moment anew, their ultimate
truth. The unveiledness of being, truth, thus takes on a new aspect. It becomes a
participation in the sphere of divine truth itself through God’s ever-new meting
out of truth. Things are expectantly open to this act, and this openness to God’s
all-fulfilling truth is itself the form in which they participate in divine truth. 1191

Jesus Christ provides a way to view all that is negatory and immanent as a portal into the
Transcendent, for: “truth remains, in its essence, the free condescension of an infinite
spiritual realm that is hidden in itself; this applies first to the divine realm and,
analogously to every other interior space belonging to created beings. That this freely
uttered truth can be known in principal does not yet justify any claim to know it in
fact…[but] only a theocentric epistemology can make sense of the truth of worldly
knowledge.” 1192 The subject’s desire for the Transcendent and the Transcendent’s love
for Creation are congruent with the human person’s highest aims, for, as Saint Paul
testifies: “[b]ut we all, with faces unveiled, reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord,

1190 TL 1, 78.
1191 TL 1, 59.
1192 TL 1, 262.
are being transformed into His very image from glory to glory, as through the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

The scholastic adage “*totus sed non totaliter*” is instructive for Balthasar’s view of finite and *transcendental* knowledge. Balthasar holds that subjective consciousness intuits the whole of God without wholly seeing God.\(^{1193}\) The eradicable distance that manifests itself among independent beings and Reality’s remoteness from the Divine is not taken by Balthasar as a sign of infinite dissembling but, rather, proof that an association exists between the Transcendent and being’s exorbitance in the world.\(^{1194}\) Difference perpetually entices the subject with new perspectives whose essential orientation puts one in relationship to universal truth and its Transcendent source. He remarks that: “precisely because mystery and overflowing plenitude, eternal futurity and ever-intensifying promise, are immanent properties of truth, a being that is able to display these dimensions is more fully known than one whose value we suppose we have exhausted.”\(^{1195}\) The object’s sensible appearance corroborates with the subject’s belief that being exists in a reciprocal relation with the Transcendent:

\[\text{[T]hese forms are not only immanent in individual things but, being the laws governing what is and should be, also transcend them. Of course, we need to understand this transcendence properly. The forms embodied in things pass over, without any discernible boundary, into forms lying above things. These latter, in turn, are the eternal norms established by God himself that, as exemplars of things, contain truth and recapitulate it in him.}^{1196}\]

Beings are multiple because being’s autotelic purposes are in metaphysical

\(^{1193}\) See: *S. Th.* I, q.12, a. 8.

\(^{1194}\) For Balthasar’s view on the Church’s mission in this regard see: *TD* 4, 466-69.

\(^{1195}\) *TL* 1, 202.

\(^{1196}\) *TL* 1, 239.
harmony with the Ur-kenotic revelation of Transcendence. With Transcendent love
the abyss between the Divine Persons and finite beings is the raison d'être for their deeper
union, for: “[i]n a being that loves, there can be much mystery, but in this mystery is
light. In love there is endless depth, but no darkness.” A tragically bifurcated
worldview results for the subject when she separates loving from knowing. As Balthasar
warns: “[a]lthough there can be tensions and polarities within truth, these never justify
dividing the truth of this world into two heterogeneous dimensions: a theoretical, rational
truth of thought and a practical, vital, and irrational truth of life. The appearance of these
tendencies in the history of thought is an infallible symptom of an atrophied philosophy
that has lost confidence in its ability to perform its proper work of knowing the truth.”
Transcendent love bridges all finite differences, opening a way for a new theo-logical
epistemology.

Balthasar does not, like Badiou, define being in terms of revolutionary encounter,
provisionally unfastening one from the void at the heart of being, nor a momentary, albeit
violent, overthrowing of being’s historical playing out of one’s relationship to some
necessary non-existing One. Rather, for Balthasar, material being preambles being’s
freedom in that every being, by virtue of its non-conscious, inseparable relationship to the
essential: “[i]t is forced to its own freedom, in the sense that it is always already set in
motion toward this freedom by nature. The demand placed upon it, the exigency
inscribed in its inmost essence, is that it shape the movement in which it is already rolling
into a voluntary self-movement. It is always already on its way toward transcendence,

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1197 See: TL 1, 30.
1198 TL 1, 211. See also: TL 1, 195.
1199 TL 1, 254.
which simply means that by nature it must be spirit.”

Being exists in a relationship to the Transcendent that allots its potential to achieve a conscious “unity of apperception”, or, worldly truth.

The subject places the perceived content of an object’s essence into relationships with the essence of other objects, that is, with interior signs that beings “exist in themselves”. This measure and coordination of essentiality intuits the whole in the particular for the ‘ground’ pronounces itself in the act of a being’s illumination [Lichtung]. As a metaphor for the internal principle of human intelligence, light points to a human being’s fundamental openness to the interior and material instantiations of being.

Jesus Christ’s conscious representation of the Transcendent provides a way for Balthasar to understand how a subject can improve on her own cognitive limitations. Jesus Christ consciously takes hold of a being’s essential interior measure as a principle of the Transcendent’s own generation of the Son as verbum mentis.

The essence of worldly things consists so truly in their imaging God, and this image itself is so transparent, that God seems to shine forth immediately (immediate) from it. There is, then, a form of “intuition” specific to symbolic cognition, which consists in a psychologically immediate transcendence of the ontological sign (medium quo), though without removing it at any time. For the same reason, it is equally correct to speak either of a sort of vision of God in the medium of the creature

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1200 TL 1, 80. Balthasar’s thought on the spiritual or free nature of all beings develops from his reading of Aquinas, who writes: “The fact that the mover is moved is not the cause of its relation of mover being a real relation, but a sign thereof. For the fact that it moves through being moved shows that from one point of view it belongs to the same genus as the thing moved; and again from the fact that by its movement it is moved to a certain end it follows that this end is its good,” De pot., q. 7, a. 10.

1201 See: TL 1, 44-47.

1202 TL 1, 149.

1203 TL 1, 218.

1204 See: TL 1, 51.
(Rom. 1:20) or of a mediate inference. The “vision” meant here has nothing to do with some irrational form of cognition, for a passage from the sign to its expressed content, such vision implies a logical inference and can be translated into one at any given moment of the process. For the most part, this kind of transposition is unnecessary once the knowing intellect has become as adept at reading the world’s sign language as it has at reading letters in a book or at gathering a work of art from its colors or sounds.\footnote{1205}

Indeed, the subject’s remote appropriation of the Transcendent analogously replicates Christ’s own human grasp of the Father:

Being is disclosed within self-consciousness but not without qualification. We have spoken of the opening and illumination [\textit{Lichtung}] wherein the subject lays hold of itself and, in so doing, learns from the inside what being is. If this illumination showed just enough light on being for the subject to realize that, while it does not grasp being in its totality, all being must nonetheless be lit up in itself in the point–like identity of being and consciousness–where consciousness means the light in which the subject is able to measure itself and the object–it becomes clear that absolute being is necessarily self–measuring, self–present, and, therefore, self–conscious…implying its own measure to the knowledge of the object, it is not using a subjective measure but is privileged to participate in an objective, ultimately infinite and absolute, measure.\footnote{1206}

\section*{(2) Infinity and Consciousness}

Finite being never fully reconciles the dramatic tension between finitude and the Transcendent, as: “we never outgrow something which we acknowledge to stand above us by its very nature.”\footnote{1207} However, Jesus is not simply “one stage in the process of transcendence” but “belongs to a wholly different order” that the Spirit makes available to all beings.\footnote{1208} Subjective becoming recalls reality proportionally in the syntax of finite, observable frames and cognitive demarcations. This whole is re-defined in turn, for Balthasar, by Jesus Christ’s Incarnation. The Incarnation allows us to read the whole

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\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{1205}{\textit{TL} 1, 235.}
\item \footnote{1206}{\textit{TL} 1, 51.}
\item \footnote{1207}{\textit{GL} 1, 186.}
\item \footnote{1208}{See: \textit{TL} 3, 406-11.}
\end{itemize}
of Creation as historical moments of the Son’s eternal kenosis.

The radical other of the Transcendent incarnational marries into immanent finitude, forging a new way for being to ‘be’ in the world. One receives Christ in one’s own being through a reasonable, graced-filled faith in the Transcendent, for: “without reason, faith would not be truly human; without faith, reason has neither a path nor a guiding light.” Faith in Christ transforms one’s transcendental rational capacities, because, Balthasar argues, one’s reach for the Transcendent in Jesus Christ expands the confines of one’s being and ceases its unraveling by the differential forces within reality. Denying the Incarnation’s relationship to finite being risks being incarcerated cognitively in a world devoid of life-giving relationships. As a Divine and human person, Jesus Christ perfectly actualizes the unity of infinite and finite consciousness. Revealing the state of his mind, Jesus Christ offers insights into infinite consciousness and, more remarkably, appeals to others to be liberated by participating in his infinite consciousness:

Our analysis of finite self-consciousness yielded, then, not just an empty, unlimited horizon of being as such, which would function as a supra-categorical, a priori condition of the possibility of every finite cognition of objects, but also the explicit and necessary inference to an infinite consciousness, which functions as the condition of the possibility even of finite subjects. In this way, there opens up an analogy of self-consciousness, whose inmost, irrefragable certainty is the nonidentity of finite and infinite consciousness. At the very moment when finite consciousness touches on the sphere of the divine (and, because it is self-consciousness, it must touch on it), it is immediately thrown back into an ever-greater distance from it.

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1210 *TL* 1, 228. See also: *TL* 1, 252.
Christ’s infinite consciousness stands against all that forces the subject to collapse in upon herself. Finite beings are often afraid of the potential infinite reach of consciousness, as this appears to distance them from the security of the material. This fear trades on a false categorization of finitude and its conscious relationship to the infinite, however; as Balthasar states:

It is only because we experience consciousness in the world as finite that we are repelled by the idea of an infinite consciousness; our experience is that finite consciousness, however objectively open it is, remains imprisoned within its own subjectivity, and this leads us to suppose that the Infinite must be free from this self-involvement and the restrictions it implies. If consciousness takes this fear seriously, it cannot really hold that it is indebted to no one but itself. Here, the fact that consciousness is embroiled in the finitude of self-consciousness becomes a tragic destiny that calls for release; the transcendent striving for the absolute turns into the conscious attempt to put an end to consciousness by plunging into an absolute that is not regarded as conscious of itself.\(^\text{1211}\)

While the structuring polarities of being show that a finite being is not capable of entering fully into the Transcendent’s consciousness, an analogous participation is made possible through Jesus Christ. Christ illuminates a being’s image (abstractio imaginem) and its spiritual meaning (conversio intellectus ad phantasma) by impeccably and eternally affiliating with them. Only Jesus Christ can perfectly grasp an object as an image:

In one respect, ground and appearance are one; the appearance is actually the ground as appearing. From this point of view, the good, in the sense of perfection (perfectum), is always already actual. In another respect, however, there remains a gap between ground and appearance—each communication, being always new, keeps alive the act of striving to lay hold of oneself. From this point of view, the good is always in the process of being realized (by good we here mean the bonum honestum).\(^\text{1212}\)

To think with and like Jesus Christ means precisely to take one’s sensory and

\(^{1211}\) *TD* 4, 140.

\(^{1212}\) *TL* 1, 221.
conceptual renderings of a being not simply as a limited cognitive event but as a ‘process of divination’, that is, as a further consummation of our relationship with the Transcendent. This relationship pioneers a way to interpret being’s propensity towards non-being from the vantage point of its opposite. Balthasar writes that:

This becoming does not tend unilaterally away from nothing toward being, but remains constantly turned toward nothing and inwardly unassured; it is saved from falling into nothing at each instant precisely by the creative hand of God. The potentiality of this being does not univocally progress toward ever-greater actuality. Rather, the direction of becoming contains in itself a countervailing un-becoming.

The Son’s infinite and eternal reign over Creation funds Jesus Christ’s pure kenotic readiness for the Transcendent as a finite being. Christ’s consciousness is normative for finite beings even if we only have an apophatic and subtractive experience of this mystery.

In Jesus Christ’s eternal understanding of Creation a personal and absolute calculation of finite being is found. By making this enigma part of one’s conscious apprehension of reality the human person becomes a “new” person (Rom. 5:14ff) whose finitude makes known the invisible Transcendent (Jn. 1:18). The equiponderate relationship between subject and object defined in relation to Jesus Christ’s experience of the Transcendent sets out for Balthasar the true scope of worldly truth:

The person who had this experience would, of course, be seeing one side of earthly truth correctly. But he would be forgetting that the relativity of these individual, partial truths that the mind “divides” and “composes” also really contains the truth of the world and, just so far, is like a

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1213 GL 4, 446-47. The *modus significandi* is a way to talk about perfection based on its “refraction” through created participation in the Transcendent, see: Healey, 33.

1214 TL 1, 251. As Aristotle notes, matter as matter is an in-extensible void. Between Pure Spirit and Pure Matter (*material prima*) difference must be posited for identity to actualize. Difference, as noted, is ultimately revealed in Jesus Christ’s relationship to Absolute Difference (1/GOD).
fragment of reflecting glass in which the divine truth expresses something of itself in signs and enigmas. He would be forgetting that he could not even suspect the existence of worldly truth without simultaneous disclosure of the existence and essence of the supra-worldly, supra-finite truth.\textsuperscript{1215}

Taking on Christ’s infinite consciousness, the finite being comes to a greater sense of truth’s measure of being and love’s compass of truth.\textsuperscript{1216} For this being, ultimately outside of truth and being’s relationship to the love of the Transcendent, Balthasar assets, “[e]very distinction between subjective and objective becomes meaningless.”\textsuperscript{1217}

\textbf{(3) Cross and Consciousness}

Unlike Badiou, whose philosophical view sees violence in the world as inevitable given the One-(non-)One relationship, Balthasar sees in Jesus Christ’s person and mission the means for love to defeat all that is antithetical to God. The Cross is a permanent elision in Creation where eternal love emerges. Further, with the Transcendent’s Incarnation this conversion becomes a way for the believers to set their own lives against all that is opposed to God. Jesus Christ presents to the faithful a way to understand how the differences one experiences can become the means to overcome Absolute Difference. Consequently, Balthasar argues that Jesus’ separation (\textit{Trennung}) from the Father in the event of the Cross: “includes and grounds every other separation—be it never so dark and bitter.”\textsuperscript{1218} There is no negativity in God’s inner life and, thus, Christ subsumes in his sacrifice all vitiating differences within an ever-greater

\textsuperscript{1215} \textit{TL} 1, 252.
\textsuperscript{1216} \textit{TL} 1, 264.
\textsuperscript{1217} \textit{TL} 1, 115. See also: “The image that love saw and held up is doubtless an image of the object. Not, however, of the object as it is, but of the object as it could be. It is the ideal, not the real, reality of the object. This ideal reality exists nowhere else than in the love of a subject,” \textit{TL} 1, 115-116.
\textsuperscript{1218} \textit{TD} 4, 324-25.
Transcendent love:

Life is only genuinely alive insofar as it…grows beyond itself, lets go of itself. It is rich only insofar as it can be poor, insofar as it loves…Death will not allow itself to be pushed to the end of life; it belongs right at the center, not in mere knowledge, but in action. Death characterizes our breakthrough into a life that is ever greater. It is through this positive death that we amass life.1219

Although human thought and action is “broken, realized and reset (ab-ans-, und eingerichtet)”, it is also a simulacrum of the Passion’s perfect unity with Eternal love.

It is an irrefragable truth for Balthasar that being finds its most primitive expression in the groundless ground of Transcendent Love consummated in Christ’s formlessness, for: “[h]e had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him,” (Isaiah. 53:2). For Badiou, by contrast, as noted in Chapter Four, the One’s relationship to its contradictory representation as (non-)One sets being in relationship to an upheaval of violence in an event. For Balthasar, however, Absolute Difference is destroyed in the Passion, an event that provides, in turn, a prompt for finite beings. The human person is given the opportunity to witness to her approval of Christ’s mission. Balthasar claims that: “[t]he non-fixability of this primal experience is but the noetic reflection of the ontic indeterminateness of Being in totality over against God.”1220 This relationship is only made possible by the Son’s kenotic act, regarding which Balthasar states that:

Only if God freely decides in the Son to bring forth a fullness of nondivine beings can the Son’s essentially ‘relative’ and thus ‘kenotic’ act in God be seen as a personal act (esse completum subsistens) within the act of creation that gives to everything its real identity (esse completum sed non subsistens). But the Son’s kenotic life is not just relatively kenotic but is also in its own way fully kenotic. Only in this way can he assume the image of human likeness (the homoioïma

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1220 GL 1, 245.
anthrōpōn of Philippians 2:7), personifying man in his reality, but not, as it were, to replace the esse non subsistens, since otherwise he would have personified the whole of humanity.”\(^{1221}\)

Jesus Christ mediates the two termini of Nothingness and Divine Spirit and, thereby, metaphysically brackets reality within them as an eternal choice. Christ’s mediation is continued by the Spirit for: “even if he ‘blows where he will’, since he is the Spirit of the truth of the Father in the Son, his freedom can only blow in the saving work of the Father and the Son. This work is directed to ‘all flesh’ with the aim of imparting of ‘eternal life’ to it (Jn. 17:2).”\(^{1222}\) Christ encompasses this externalization in history. Badiou is correct in stating that the Passion of Jesus Christ continues to partially determine finitude: “[a]s long as finitude remains the ultimate determination of existence, God abides…in the form of abandonment, the dereliction, or leaving behind of being.”\(^{1223}\) The meeting point of finitude and eternity in Jesus Christ uses the spatiotemporal continuum as the means to admit the Transcendent, so Balthasar contends: “the Christ-event, which is always seen in its totality, is the vertical irruption that fulfills in horizontal time; such irruption does not leave this time—with its present, past and future—unchanged, but draws it into itself and thereby gives it a new character.”\(^{1224}\)

Jesus Christ’s person incarnates the simplicity of Trinitarian Being (das Selbe) in history, thereby changing the way finite being and relationship are present in the world. The act of being (essendi) is only truly free when the innate tensions of created being exist within Jesus Christ’s dramatic relationship to the Transcendent. Christ is the totality (das Ganze) in the concrete and this, as such, he defines his uniqueness (einmalig), not

\(^{1221}\) E, 90.
\(^{1222}\) TL 3, 247. See also: TD 4, 318-19 and TL 2, 293.
\(^{1223}\) Briefings on Existence, 25. See also: ibid., 29.
\(^{1224}\) TD 5, 25. See also: GL 7, 526-532.
his particularity in the world. This Trinitarian Ur-kenotic dynamic is proportionally offered to all beings in accord with their own irreplaceable place in the world: “[t]hus the raising of a man to the level of the unique, the only-begotten, calls for the yet deeper descent of God himself, his humbling, his kenosis or emptying, right down to the binding of himself by entering into one man, a man who, unique though he is, does not cease to be a man among men.”

Divine love alone explains Christ’s obedience unto death. This is not to imply that Balthasar rejects the idea that beings are historical, given their common material composition, but rather, that Christ retains all things in dialectical relationship. The Son is the “medium tenes in omnibus” who holds the entirety of eternity and Creation in “fruitful dialogue.” Jesus Christ’s eternal Trinitarian life allows the Son’s Transcendent fix on finite Creation and, thus, paradoxically sets all finite and partial knowledge in relationship with the whole. Balthasar writes:

The knowledge is genuine because the thing itself is genuine...When he knows being, the knower knows that he has made a complete circuit of the knowable, that, in principle, nothing eludes his knowledge—at least insofar as it is being. The knower has the certitude that he has reached the very frontier of nothingness, and so he need not fear that there is some yet unknown background behind being from which the knowledge he has gained could be called into question or abrogated.

Everything in reality “turns on” the inner-Trinitarian love and glory of Jesus

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1225 Theology of History, 15-16. See also: “The Trinitarian analogy enables the Son, without abolishing the analogia entis, simultaneously to do two things: he represents God to the world—but in the mode of the Son who regards the Father as ‘greater’ and to whom he eternally owes all that he is—and he represents the world to God....” TD 3, 230, n.68 starting on page 228. It is important to note that metaphors of distance do not imply that any ontological separation exists between Jesus Christ and the Father and Spirit, see: TD, 2, 236–38.
1226 See: TD 5, 250-56.
1227 See: TL 1, 234.
1228 TL 1, 38.
Christ.\(^{1229}\) The Transcendent’s marriage (connubium) with Creation takes hold because God is faithful to God’s self (2 Tim. 2:13). Jesus Christ perfectly integrates experiences of impermanence and finite “separation” from the Transcendent in his person, given the Son’s Ur-kenotic relationships (ONE\(\triangle\)3). Of Christ’s harmonization in love of all that is asymmetrical to the Divine, Balthasar writes that: “[t]he groundlessness of all worldly grounds is itself analogous to the groundlessness of the divine ground. Of course, the structure of this analogy entails the unequivocal creatureliness of reality’s groundlessness—the fact that the world does not stand in itself and the distance from God that this implies—is the locus where we glimpse the unequivocal godliness of God’s groundlessness—the fact that, unlike the world, he stands wholly in himself.”\(^{1230}\)

Exhaustion, dispersal, and any other “negative” difference in the world can only, finally, become positive given Christ’s Ur-kenotic identity, which brings simplicity to the multifariousness of being.\(^{1231}\) In Christ “all things hold together” (Col. 1:17).\(^{1232}\)

The Ur-kenotic drama volunteers a way to understand the subject’s negotiation of essential non-subsistent relationships in reality.\(^{1233}\) Jesus Christ’s mission converts all beings towards Transcendent love without discounting each being’s free choice to sin.

\(^{1229}\) See: GL 7, 391-99.

\(^{1230}\) TL 1, 231. See also: GL 5, 618.

\(^{1231}\) GL 7, 202. The operation of subjective consciousness is necessarily related to Ur-kenosis because it is this representation of Absolute Difference that makes possible some cognizance of finite differences. Balthasar’s theories of Ur-kenosis and subjective consciousness takes to heart Aquinas’ claim that: “we know each thing more perfectly the more fully we see its difference from other things,” SCG, 1, 14.


\(^{1233}\) See: TD 2, 391.
Difference would introduce an irreconcilable disjunction into finite being without Christ’s conciliation of the Divine and finite natures. The annulling force of difference finds answer in the supra-kenotic ratio between the eternal Son and Absolute Difference made actual in the person of Jesus Christ. The Son through Trinitarian free choice incarnates as the finite person Jesus Christ and thus engages the non-forms (Un-Gestalt) of pure difference, namely as sin, death and hell. Christ’s encounter with these anti-Transcendent forces never threatens his eternal essence and supra-form (über-Gestalt) in the Divine hypostases. As Balthasar writes: “…God can simultaneously remain in himself and step forth from himself. And, in thus stepping forth from himself, he descends into the abyss of all that is anti-divine…” The sub-sumption (Aufhebung), sublimation or formalization of Christ’s interior life is impossible.

Christ’s descent into Hell presents a way for the finite creature to understand the Transcendent’s confrontation with Absolute Difference. Christ’s supra-rational and finite engagement of Absolute Difference is a means for finite beings to surrogate in a “death-like way” their own experiences of finitude and immanent differences. The creature will never fully comprehend her conscious participation in this mystery for when a mind: “tries to bore into the abyss [Abgrund] of existence [it] will never get to the bottom [Grund] of it. Being is ever actual, and this actuality is so indivisible and unfathomably [unergründlich] full that it springs upon every attempt at intellectual mastery and knocks it to the ground before it even gets started.”

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1234 See: MP, 172 and TD 3, 525-26.
1235 See: MP, 14-23.
1236 TD 3, 530. See also: GL 1, 432.
1237 TL 1, 236-37.
1238 TL 1, 190-91. Translation altered.
Non-being, death and nothingness are instruments by which Christ authenticates truth and love (e.g. *Heb.* 2:14). Von Speyr therefore states that: “His fullness does not stand in contradiction to any void, because it is not the fulfillment of a determined quantity or a particular power of comprehension. It is fullness without antithesis.”

Thus, Balthasar says that: “the death, and the dying away into the silence, of the Logos so become the center of what he has to say of himself that we have to understand precisely his non-speaking as his final revelation, his utmost word.”

Christ’s death is infinitely fecund as he dies for all of us. The universal meaning of Christ’s death is born in Jesus’ singular Passion. Unlike Balthasar who sees Jesus Christ as the concrete universal, in his monumental work on Saint Paul, Badiou argues the opposite, stating:

> The formula according to which God sent us his Son signifies primarily an intervention within history, one through which it is, as Nietzsche will put it, “broken in two,” rather than governed by a transcendent reckoning in conformity with the laws of an epoch. The sending (birth) of the son names this rupture. That it is the son, not the father, who is exemplary, enjoins us not to put our trust any longer in any discourse laying claim to a form of mastery.

Sacramentally, Christ’s death merges the liturgical life of the Church’s members with Transcendent love. To this end, Balthasar states: “his earthly life was polarized by this general death, so also his eternal life remains eucharistically polarized.”

The Passion communicates the Son’s eternal desire, that is, that all differences end, not in antinomy for a believer but, rather, by virtue of Christ’s mission, in the resurrection. Christ’s

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1239 *Colossians*, 40.
1240 *MP*, 79. The silence of Jesus Christ on the Cross is never fully understood by the subject, however, as Balthasar says: “[i]n abstract contemplation of essence (essential energies, *visio essentiae*) this interplay of vision and non-vision does not emerge with due clarity; only when God’s Trinitarian reality is revealed as event do we see that the two aspects can be reconciled,” *TD* 5, 407.
1241 *Foundation of Universalism*, 43.
1242 *Life Out of Death*, 50.
defeat of all that is inimical to the Transcendent is liturgically remembered, thereby

anticipating our own resurrection:

The descent of One alone into the abyss become the ascent of all from the same
depths, and the condition of possibility for dialectical change…lies on the one
hand in the ‘for all’ of the descent (and so not just in the ‘dying’ but in becoming
a holocaust outside the camp of God (cf.: Heb. 13:11ff), and on the other in the
prototypical Resurrection with which this possibility deals. Without the
Resurrection, Christ would sink into the abyss, but ‘all’ would not be raised. He
must be, then, the ‘first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep’ (1 Cor., 15:20), the
‘first-born from the dead’ (Col. 1:18).

The Passion guarantees that the possibility exists for all beings to have a transcendental
relationship with the Transcendent. Balthasar’s daring to hope that “all be saved” must be
understood as an offer that is actualized with both the gift of the Transcendent’s grace and
the subject’s full conscious and free obligation. Badiou’s highlighting of Saint
Paul’s contention that an intimate relationship exists between hope, faith, love and labor
that strives beyond egotistical concerns is conversant with Balthasar’s project. Badiou
questions whether Saint Paul believed that a radical rupture exists between one’s efforts
and some future judgment or in fact if a continuum of sorts exists between the finite and
infinite. Of this “classical judicial eschatology” Badiou sets forth: “[d]oes Paul mean that
the hope in justice is the hope in a judgment, the Last Judgment? That would be hope in
an event to come, one that would separate the condemned from the saved. Justice would

\[1243\] MP, 53. The subject’s ability to participate in Christ’s own experience of
Absolute Difference or the metaphoric abyss remains a mystery. Healey explains that:
“[i]n the final analysis God’s mystery is not a positive aspect of his being but a
consequence of the human intellect’s limitations,” Healey, 186-87.

\[1244\] Balthasar agrees with Gabriel Marcel that subjective hope is by definition a
subject’s unique experience of the universal. Marcel writes: “[t]here can be no
particularism of hope; hope loses all sense and all force if it does not imply the statement
“all of us” or an “all together”, Gabriel Marcel, ‘Structure de l’Espérance’, cited in Hans
Urs von Balthasar, Dare We Hope “That All Men Be Saved”? With a Short Discourse on
Hell, (trans.) Dr. David Kipp and Rev. Lothar Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press,
1988), 81.
be done, and it is in this final tribunal that hope would put its trust.”
Hope for Saint Paul, Badiou continues, suggests something akin to his own concept of “fidelity” insofar as both suggest that commitment and labor bridge the distance between present and future, as well as serving to define the nature of human subjectivity. Badiou holds that Saint Paul characterizes hope: “as a simple imperative of continuation, a principle of tenacity, of obstinacy…[a] striving (ergon), and love to grueling work, to the laborious, the troublesome. Hope, for its part, pertains to endurance, to perseverance, to patience; it is the subjectivity proper to the continuation of the subjective process.”

It is not asked of the faithful person to focus her memory on a given event as nothing is to distract individuals from the logic of immanence that defines every moment of their existence: “[w]hat the doctrine of the event teaches us is rather that the entire effort lies in following the event’s consequences, not in glorifying its occurrence. There is no more an angelic herald of the event than there is a hero. Being does not commence.” Badiou’s formalized version of the Transcendent does not call for heroic allegiance—there is no Christian notion of sainthood being expressed here. In similar fashion, the logic of immediacy Badiou advocates only offers a shadow of the Christian concept of memory, which is seen by Balthasar as intrinsic to a sacramental theory of the Eucharist. The event is, for all that, still seen by Badiou to be an invitation to perseverance and conversion, that is, the courage to hold on to the unwarranted truth set before an individual: “[c]ourage, in the sense in which I understand it, has its origin in a heroic conversion, and is oriented towards a point that was not there, a Real woven out of the

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1245 *Foundations of Universalism*, 93.
1246 *Foundations of Universalism*, 93.
1247 *Being and Event*, 210-11.
impossible. Courage starts at a point, a heroic turn that cuts through established opinions and does not tolerate any nostalgia, even if, in its essence, courage is the disciplined holding on to the consequences of the encounter with this point.”¹²⁴⁸

Unlike Badiou’s fidelity to the event, for Balthasar, a person can only orientate and labor towards the future given one’s faith in an actual Transcendent being. Balthasar further warns of the need to avoid a starting point that weakens Divine and human freedom: “[w]e have to take care to avoid any ‘Christological restriction’ that would want to ground the reality of creation on some ‘prior’ reality of redemption or grace; there is no ‘before’ or ‘after’, and, even if the goal is first thing intended by the agent, in ordine executionis we must first posit a natural (nondivine) subject as the possible recipient of grace. Nor does this mean that God ‘owes’ it to himself to be faithful to the order and consistency of his unitary world plan.”¹²⁴⁹ Balthasar does not postulate the reality of universal salvation but, rather, argues that our individual decisions presuppose a pre-existing relationship to the possibility of personal salvation given the universality of Jesus’ redemptive event and the common humanity we share with Jesus. More specifically, given Jesus’ deeming to share our transcendental cognitive structures, a way is made available for us to consciously focus our lives around the truth of Christ’s redemptive event. Properly understood, the question of universal salvation should inspire believers to have a deeper sense of the Divine’s love through “evangelization”. Foremost in such work is a subject’s transcendental reach for the Transcendent and the intellect’s desire to know Creation through love. As Jürgen Verweyen succinctly states: “[w]hoever

¹²⁴⁹ TD 3, 257.
reckons with the possibility of even only one person’s being eternally lost beside himself is unable to love unreservedly.”1250 In the first instance, this stand makes no de facto claims about universal salvation, but, rather, points out how our hope in Christ transforms the finite, ontological and noetic lens through which we see Creation, focusing them on and in love.1251 The subject’s love of the Transcendent thereby influences how we think about other beings:

Our entire knowledge of God remains strictly bound to the interpretation of worldly signs, if for no other reason than that all of man’s knowledge of intelligible reality outside the I is restricted to the expressive field constituted by the senses. But this is also true, as we have already shown, of the knowledge of God that can be retrieved within the subject’s self-consciousness, since even in the interiority of the subject, God is not immediately disclosed in himself, but only indirectly, on the basis of the disclosedness of being as a whole. The finite intellect has no means, either inside or outside itself, to get an immediate glimpse of God; it remains dependent upon the sign language of the things through which God speaks to it.1252

Self-consciousness is grounded in the ratio existing between one’s ontological differing and the Absolute Difference between Creation and the Divine.1253 When the subject’s experiences of worldly differences and a being’s multiplicity are in an

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1250 Jürgen Verweyen, Christologische Brennpunkte, (Essen: Ludgerus 1977), cited by Han Urs von Balthasar in Dare We Hope “That All Men Be Saved”? With a Short Discourse on Hell, (trans). Dr. David Kipp and Rev. Lothar Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 211.
1251 See: GL 1, 656.
1252 TL 1, 233-34. Again the subject’s ability to discern the significance of images follows, Balthasar states, from Jesus Christ’s relation to reality, for: “[t]he mythical understanding of the world sees the whole world as a shared theophany. In an eschatological sense, this is also what the world is for Christian faith. If the cosmos as a whole has been created in the image of God that appears—in the First-Born of Creation, through him and for him—and if this First-Born indwells the world as its head through the Church then in the last analysis the world is a ‘body’ of God, who represents and expresses himself in this body, on the basis of the principle not of pantheistic but hypostatic union,” GL 1, 679.
1253 On Balthasar’s explication of the relation of Deus interior intimo meo..., see: TL 1, 268.
analogical relationship to the Transcendent: “[t]he sum of possible entities then, transcends the range of realized beings.”\textsuperscript{1254} Although a finite being is limited and exists in a created world, subjective reason is structured to be in relationship with the totality of Being.\textsuperscript{1255} Individual truth exists in relationship with Absolute Truth beyond the margins of any one being or determined fact.

\textsuperscript{1254} \textit{E}, 47. See also: \textit{TL} 1, 111. It is this ontological openness that sets the subject in relation with the transcendent prior to any conscious act. As Balthasar notes: “…the paradox of the creature has always included the openness of the totality of being, and hence it has also included truth and goodness as absolute categories,” \textit{TD} 4, 138.

\textsuperscript{1255} See: \textit{My Work} 112.
Conclusion

The question we have concerned ourselves with is this: can a speculative reading of Balthasar’s theory of Ur-kenosis be used to outline a metaphysic that can be put into conversation with the Christian tradition and some currents of postmodern thought? The opening chapter presented some necessary background. Viewing Balthasar’s work as a development of its theological antecedents it sets the stage for its application to current metaphysical questions and problems. Central to Balthasar’s “kenotic” metaphysics is the way it understands immanent, differing relations as a means to grasp subjective truth and love’s correspondence to the Transcendent. In Chapter One we saw that with Ur-kenosis a perfect unity exists in the Divine essence and hypostases of the Father, Son and Spirit. In order to open Balthasar’s metaphysical system up to contemporary debates we speculated on how Ur-kenosis offers a new way to interpret the concepts of Transcendence, immanence, relation and difference. We have chosen these central themes in Balthasar’s Ur-kenotic theory in light of their relation to postmodern thought. A key notion in this regard is that of what we term *ubtraction*, that is, a positive understanding of difference made possible by Ur-kenosis. Trinitarian kenosis reveals how the “difference” between the Divine Persons destroys neither their freedom nor eternal union and provides, further, a way to understand a created reality.

The Father creates “space” within the Trinity, giving the Son and Spirit the means to be free. This Divine “space”, or, one might say “Nothingness”, does not introduce any division within the Trinity as the Spirit’s Absolute groundlessness allows love to interpenetrate and unify each of the Divine Persons. While the Father is the
source of the Son and Spirit, Divine consciousness is unique to each Person and simultaneously shared among them. This Tri-noetic relationship between the Divine Persons illustrates how finite knowledge premises the existence of relative differences between beings. We picked this theme and that of a unifying ratio up again when we showed, in Chapter Six, how the essential core of a being allows for a ratio to be established between conscious and non-conscious beings.

Chapter Two discussed Balthasar’s understanding of the Ur-kenotic structures of the Transcendent. Here the kenotic, or, \textit{subtractive} act, sets the stage for the Divine Persons’ eternal choice to see the Son incarnate and, by so doing, personally bridge the Divine and created realms. While the Transcendent is beyond our understanding, Jesus Christ’s kenotic experience of the Father provides an example of the perfect \textit{transcendental} relation and allows us to formulate Balthasar’s theory of finite being’s conscious representation of objects in Chapter Six. Through analogy, apophasis and polarity, we are allowed a proportionate share of Jesus Christ’s relationship with the Father. The subject exists in a proportionate relationship with God in her continuing dialogue of truth and love. Thus, reality is dialectically structured in a manner that reflects the Ur-kenotic Trinity’s revelation in the fully Divine and human person of Jesus Christ. Reality is not a metaphorically broken mirror, but, more correctly, for Balthasar, an infinite, essential disclosure of the Transcendent in intra-relationships:

By the same token, the search for the unity of being itself is at bottom a search for God and, at the same time, the recognition that no creature is God. The bad infinity that knowledge encounters at every turn is like an inverse mirror image of the true, but never graspable, infinity of God. In itself, worldly truth is, in all its finitude, an index of this infinite identity that appears in worldly truth as its enabling ground.\textsuperscript{1256}

\textsuperscript{1256} \textit{TL} 1, 253.
Chapter Three presents Balthasar’s understanding of Jesus’ eternal knowledge of the Father, as the Second Person of the Trinity and as a limited finite being. Jesus Christ’s faultless obedience to the Father is taken to validate the receptivity needed for the birth and flourishing of human consciousness. The subject’s relationship to differences in the world and the ongoing changes in being’s appearances likewise finds remedy in Jesus Christ’s conscious relationship to sin, death and Hell, as elaborated in Chapter Six. Rightly understood, Christ’s journey into Hell allows us to see how the four, characteristically postmodern themes of difference, relation, transcendence and immanence can be positively appropriated and lived by finite beings.

Jesus’ experience of these rejections relative to the Divine does not extinguish his conscious sense of the Father. Since Jesus does not cease to exist in relationship to the pure Groundlessness of the Spirit, even Hell’s inversion of Creation cannot eradicate his beatific vision. Christ’s redeeming presence as Absolute Love defines and defies the “Pure Nothingness” of Hell. Similarly, the Spirit’s groundlessness allows us to see how a being’s non-subsistent and changing appearances are rendered meaningful in relation to Christ. Jesus Christ’s relation to Hell and the Divine “Nothingness”, or, groundlessness of the Spirit continues to arbitrate finite being’s experiences of the void and the Transcendent.

Like many postmoderns, Badiou denies the existence of the Transcendent. The One, he argues, is non-existent given its nullifying relationship to a (non-)One. Unlike Balthasar, Badiou claims that being is quantifiable in what he terms a relationship of Count-as-One. Chapter Four discussed how Badiou’s quantification of being centers on the denunciation of the Transcendent. In particular, we emphasized how Badiou’s theory
of Count-as-One provides a quantifiable representation of what we interpret to be evident in Balthasar’s qualitative reading of Ur-kenosis in the concept of subtraction.

Balthasar’s understanding of the Ur-kenotic Transcendent, unlike Badiou’s non-existent One, is impervious to annihilation, as no truly antithetical partner exists. As seen in Chapters Three and Five, Jesus Christ’s Incarnation and Passion defeat all that stands against the Divine. The violence of the Cross and Hell becomes part of Christ’s Ur-kenotic experience of the Transcendent. Jesus Christ exists in Ur-kenotic relationship \(1/\text{GOD}\) with the eternally actual Three Divine Persons \(\text{ONE} \angle (3)\). Simply put Jesus Christ’s mission puts all difference into a relationship with the Ur-kenotic Trinity.

Reviewing Badiou’s mathematical ontology, we saw by contrast how he demarcates being as fundamentally multiple, material and in a relationship to a non-existing “Transcendent” qua infinite numeric series.

Badiou’s numerically based metaphysics disavows any role for the essential. He posits, instead, that beings exist in relationship to an ontological void, or, an empty set that grounds the possible infinite regress of being and makes being’s multiplicity possible. The void guarantees that a being’s infinite plenitude, or, continual “resurrection” is an immanent, quantifiable event. In this sense, Badiou’s concept of the void bears comparison to Balthasar’s theory of ontological difference’s relationship to the Nothingness that separates the Divine and Creation. If this hypothesis holds, a being’s interior in-differing exists in transcendent relationship to the distance that separates us from the Divine and, thus, grounds our cognitive structures in a reality beyond our relationship to the void, or, Nothingness.

Given this account of Ur-kenosis, we turned in Chapter Four to the task of
clarifying the manner in which Badiou’s philosophy of being comprehends the subject, subject-object relationships, truth and love. Since Badiouportrays each being as characteristically multiple, the differentiations of beings on his account define reality in terms of unavoidable and often violent tensions. The subject’s affective response to this dramatic unfolding demands that she force her desires against those of other beings. By means of subjective forcing Badiou gives one a place at the event of truth’s disclosure (Chapter Five). For Badiou, truth is exposed in a revolutionary event through one of the four disciplines of science, art, politics, and love. Balthasar, by comparison, defines being as ontologically open and essentially related to universal truth regardless of its communication in various epistemological domains. For Balthasar, truth discloses itself for the subject when she relates to other beings in love—a love that looks to the Transcendent. Unlike Badiou, who sees truth and love as purely immanent acts, Balthasar views every particular discovery of truth as concomitantly a participation in the universal truth of Absolute Love, as elaborated in Chapter Five.

Correspondingly, in Chapter Five, we directed our attention to the manner in which the four leitmotifs of transcendence, immanence, relation and difference drive Balthasar’s understanding of the nature of being and how a subject’s consciousness develops and operates, as well as how she relates to other beings, reality’s spatiotemporal fabric and the Transcendent. For Balthasar these complex events are born in the mother’s love of her child, indeed, the mother opens the child to all Creation (esse commune) and its Transcendent source. In loving, the very distance separating the subject from the Divine opens a way to confidently examine all worldly differences. It is in the subject’s actualization of the differential in relationship to the Transcendent, Balthasar claims, that:
“[l]ove, which is the highest level of union, only takes root in the growing independence of the lovers; the union between God and the world reveals in the very nearness it creates between these two poles of being, the ever-greater difference between created being and the essentially incomparable God.”\textsuperscript{1257} In respective giving and receiving a ratio inaugurates that defines the subject as a being who knows she is loved and loves in turn. Consciousness is born in love and in this experience all a being’s future encounters are possible regardless of the differences they may face.

Consciousness develops in the reciprocal gifting of the subject and object. A being receives herself by opening herself up to other beings. The subject is \textit{transcendentally}, or, ek-statically drawn to the object’s epiphany. Correspondingly, an Ur-kenotic model of finite being allows Balthasar to account for being’s \textit{gestalt} (essence) as well as its quantitative characteristics. Truth is not reducible to quantity or the material for Balthasar. Hence, his Ur-kenotic reading of metaphysical principles challenges those formal systems, such as Badiou’s, that deny being a non-appearing, essential ground. For Balthasar, being’s abiding in difference is fluid to its appearance. Being remains infinitely meaningful because its essential form (\textit{gestalt}) is never finally reducible to its formalization or subjective observation. Any single truth of a being is authenticate but open-ended and, hence, in relationship to the whole of reality and the Transcendent. Truth comes from the ontological depths of being an interior “font” that never runs dry. Thus, Balthasar’s economic mode of the Ur-kenotic Divine insures that permanent and irreducible difference is necessary to a being’s perfection.

Chapter Five further developed these themes to show how the conscious believer sees in the person of Jesus Christ how the Transcendent unifies the diversity of beings in the world. In her loving response to Jesus Christ the subject is given a way to consciously and existentially live an integrated life. Jesus Christ’s total commitment to the Passion supremely reveals how one can consciously see in even the most negative and reactionary differences a way to achieve greater unification with all of Creation and the Transcendent. In loving the Father, Jesus consciously embodies the one way in which finite beings can exist in relational difference in the world.

The subject, Balthasar argues, exists in a *transcendent* relationship to the horizontal realm only in virtue of a pre-existing veridical correspondence to the Transcendent. Apart from this relationship to the Transcendent, Badiou’s contention that a being’s relationship to the truth resolves solely in historical quantifications ultimately goes unchallenged. As a cultic scapegoat, Jesus creates the Church through the Spirit. As a member of the Church, one sacramentally lives one’s essential groundlessness and relational differing in imitation of Jesus Christ’s selfless love.\(^\text{1258}\) Radiating God’s glory, Christian revelation opens one to the future.\(^\text{1259}\)

The Father gives the totality of Godself to the Son through the Spirit without substantial division of the Trinity. As a member of the Church, one participates in the Spirit’s freedom. In loving the world to the end, Christ creates the Church with the Spirit: “[t]he assertion that the Spirit searches the depths of God (the Father) and that this Spirit is given to us as the Spirit of Christ (I Cor. 2:10-16), is ‘clearly and definitely Trinitarian’. The whole context shows that this searching on the part of the divine Spirit

\(^{1258}\) See: *TL* 3, 300-01.

\(^{1259}\) See: *TD* 5, 482-87.
in the abyss of the Father’s love can (and must) also be our searching, in virtue of the Spirit of Christ that has been given to us.” Divine love is total and in “statu nascendi” for the believer, as the body is for the Lord and the Lord for the body (1 Cor. 6:13). The Christian, Balthasar states, can fully bear witness to the Transcendent’s love in the world for she is called to: “[a]ct in such a way, we are now told, as if you yourself, your fellowman and fellow object, owed your existence to a boundless grace.” To Balthasar’s way of thinking: “Christianity overcomes such uncertainty by its central assertion that God, in order to hold to the name of love, wills to be in himself gift and fruitfulness. It is his sovereign will to accord space within his unity to the “other”.

According to Balthasar, the faithful person is thus able to stand in for the unfaithful when we faithfully participate in Christ’s absolute love. Properly speaking, this spiritual substitution is possible because there is only “YES” in God and one can experience this absolute positivity in Jesus Christ’s love. The Divine never replaces human nature, but offers through Christ a way for finite beings to take their weakness and adverse relationships as a transformative experience of eternity and the Transcendent:

God…uses man in all his [man’s] existential doubtfulness and fragility and imperfectability as the language in which he expresses the world of redemptive wholeness. God, therefore, uses existence extended in time as

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1260 TL 3, 445. It must be noted that the Church is able to hold in unity its members and its divine orientation only through Jesus Christ’s person as human and Divine, for in this communicatio idiomatum: “it is only possible to apply qualities and attributes of the one nature to the other because both are united in the one person of the Logos—not by way of nature, but by way of person; certainly, the natures are ‘undivided’, but, however close the union, they are ‘unconfused’, ‘the properties of each remain unimpaired’,” TD 3, 222.
1261 GL 5, 633.
1262 E, 35.
1263 See: Hans Urs von Balthasar, Dare We Hope “That all Men be Saved? ” With a Short Discourse on Hell. (trans.) Dr. David Kipp and Rev. Lothar Krauth. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 211-54.
the script in which to write for man and the world the sign of a supratemporal eternity. Hence, the man Jesus, whose existence is this sign and word of God to the world, had to live out simultaneously the temporal, tragic, separating distance [from his own origin, i.e. God] and...the conquest [of that distance] through...elective obedience to the choosing will of the eternal Father.\textsuperscript{1264}

Love alone can hold the equilibrium between a being’s excessiveness of meaning and poverty of isolation that looms in her relationship to Creation, nothingness, sin and death.\textsuperscript{1265} Love is the generalized meta-language of kenosis. A being’s identity points to a theological construct that holds for all beings, for the human person is called to be receptive to love’s spontaneity, so Balthasar writes that: “theology is on the one hand an obedient repetition of the expression of revelation imprinted on the believer, and on the other, a creative, child-like free sharing in the bringing-to-expression in the Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{1266}

Thus a speculative reading of Balthasar’s theory of Ur-kenosis provides a way to bridge the hiatus between theological metaphysics and some of the philosophical drivers of postmodern thought that deny the Transcendent and essential. While this dialogue is in many ways still in its infancy and seems to many counterintuitive and paradoxical, Balthasar’s Ur-kenotic theory shows us how, by premising the Transcendent and essential, notions such as relationship, immanence and difference, so central to postmodern thought, become more accessible and vital. Our relationship to the Transcendent is not to be understood as only substantial, but also inclusive of the absolute difference separating us from the Divine, cosmologically and intimately, by

\textsuperscript{1265} See: \textit{Matt. 7}: 28-29.
\textsuperscript{1266} \textit{GL} 2, 28.
means of sin, death and Hell. These are converted and rendered meaningful by Jesus Christ in terms of Divine Love. Christ’s person and mission provide us a way to understand difference and immanence as fundamental structures of our conscious and ontological relationship to the Transcendent. The economic expression of Ur-kenosis establishes an analogy of difference that works with the analogy of being to transcendentally point us to the Transcendent.
Looking Forward

We have offered a speculative reading of Hans Urs von Balthasar’s theory of Trinitarian kenosis. With his kenotically based metaphysic, Balthasar presents a unique view on Jesus Christ’s identity and mission. Kenotically understood, Jesus’ immanent existence never rejects his perfect and Transcendent identity. The distinct nature of the Divine Persons defines and answers for the faithful a priori all other conceptual and actual differences. This finds clearest expression in Balthasar’s theological appropriation of Jesus’ death, descent and resurrection from Hell. The Son’s kenotic relationship to the Father and Spirit provides Balthasar with a way to better understand Jesus’ conscious and free nature, and by extension that of all human persons. Ur-kenosis reveals in Jesus Christ a way to better understand the human person’s relationship to other beings, the truth and love. Further, with Balthasar’s interpretation of Ur-kenosis a way is available for theologians to enter into dialogue with postmodernity by forwarding a new way to understand reality and being.

We have termed the human person’s analogous participation in Ur-kenosis a \[ subtractive \] operation. The \[ subtractive \] act offers a way to understand how a person can enter into relationship with the Transcendent and other immanent beings, as well as “self-empty” in a loving relationship. These are possible without being confined to a crude materialistic understanding of being. The \[ subtractive \] view of a being’s internal and external relationships provides a way for theologians to enter more fully into a cross-disciplinarian conversations about the nature of reality.
At first glance there seems little to recommend a dialogue between the theologian Balthasar, with his faith-filled conviction that reality as a whole is defined by a personal relationship to the Divine as revealed in the person and mission of Jesus Christ, and the atheist Alain Badiou, who avows that truth is fundamentally underpinned and explained in terms of mathematics, that is, from arguably the most formal and universal of logical systems. However, as this preliminary study has shown, there is good reason to see Badiou’s work as a foil and challenge to Balthasar’s theological vision.

Comparing our interpretation of Balthasar’s theory of kenosis with Alain Badiou’s mathematical ontology suggests an approach to some of the current challenges facing the Church’s traditional theological and philosophical methods. Balthasar was critical of formal and nominal approaches to reality favored by many scientists. However, the postmodern world has, for the most part, rejected the traditional Aristotelian-Thomistic worldview in favor of a hermeneutic that attempts to reconcile such formal systems as Einstein’s *Theory of Relativity* and the *Theory of Quantum Mechanics*. The points of intersection of these two systems argue against a substantially defined reality and a Newtonian sense of causality and an absolute space-time.

It seems fair to say that Badiou’s mathematical approach to being offers one a more readily available intellectual system to make some philosophical sense of these scientific advances. It also seems fair to state that if grace perfects nature theologians must also have a way of making sense of the latest mathematical and scientific advances. One does not adequately account for current scientific thought by arguing for its theological irrelevance or being satisfied that a distinction is made between the qualitative and quantitative although reality is singular. A kenotically determined
explanation of space, time and conscious observation, for example, can offer some theological appropriation of what Einstein mathematically forwards in his theories of general and special relativity. Likewise, the concept of the subtractive may suggest a rudimentary way to theologically better understand how causality and superposition are described by the so-called new physics.

The speculative approach outlined in this thesis can also help shape how the Church better comprehends the immense import digital technology has in influencing the development of our postmodern worldview. Two of the most important emerging technologies in this regard can be categorized under the following headings: (1) an Informational and Holographically based scientific worldview and (2) Artificial Intelligence. We will set out a précis of each of these considerations and suggest how a kenotically based metaphysic can be productive to the Church’s response to these developments.

According to Michael Talbot much of current scientific theory argues convincingly that both the cosmos and brain can be explained as a hologram. He explains that in 1982 the physicist Alain Aspect discovered that under certain circumstances subatomic particles could instantaneously communicate regardless of the distances separating them. He notes that the physicist David Bohm took these findings to mean that the: “universe is at heart a phantasm, a gigantic and splendidly detailed hologram.”¹²⁶⁷ Unlike photographs, holograms are able to present a three-dimensional image that contains the totality of information defining an object even when the original hologram is fragmented. Talbot explains that:

The three-dimensionality of such images is not the only remarkable characteristic of holograms. If a hologram of a rose is cut in half and then illuminated by a laser, each half will still be found to contain the entire image of the rose. Indeed, even if the halves are divided again, each snippet of film will always be found to contain a smaller but intact version of the original image. Unlike normal photographs, every part of a hologram contains all the information possessed by the whole.  

The hologram model of the universe places each being in mutual relationship regardless of the distances separating them. As noted in our interpretation of Balthasar’s theory of kenosis, all beings exist in implicit relationships given their common source and shared spatiotemporal framing.

The holographic model argues that subjective consciousness remains unified even when one’s perception of a being can no longer be verified in the world. The neurophysiologist Karl Lashley discovered in the 1920’s that removing various sections of a rat’s brain did not deter the underlining complex memories from being accessed by the rat. In this way, the holographic model suggests that reality and consciousness are not fundamentally to be explained in terms of the material. Badiou’s theory of a conscious being’s re-representation of an object does not logically contradict a holographic theory of reality. Similarly, Balthasar’s theory of conscious abstraction and synthesis of another being leads to an interior image that perdures in the subject’s memory against the original being’s historical change. Even when the original being is removed from the subject’s sensual sight, the kenotically based metaphysic we have advocated argues that the subject remains in a subtractive relationship.

Although Balthasar makes no reference to a holographic model of the universe, it is my contention that his theory of sin as “virtual” suggests a tentative crossover point.

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1268 The holographic principle is key property to many of the string theories and theories of quantum gravity being advocated.
Just as a hologram contains the total information of the object it represents, through sin the human person abstracts from her historical existence and creates a new image of who she is as a person. Thus, in our reading of Balthasar, the sinner creates an “avatar” or “holograph” of their self in Hell. A kenotically based metaphysic provides a way to explore the nature of sin and evil in terms that are conducive to the latest scientific understandings of the nature of reality. Certainly, further work must also be done to specifically investigate how a kenotically based metaphysic is congruent with our “scientific” understanding of the human person.

Badiou characterizes his work as post-humanist. It is seen to find source and explanation neither in the Divine nor in a traditional understanding of the human person, but rather, in the formal principles of mathematics. Over the last year Elon Musk, Bill Gates and Stephen Hawking have all gone on record warning of an immanent danger to humanity with the rise of Artificial Intelligence. Putting aside their concerns over the threat of intelligent machines and global catastrophe, an underlining question remains, that is, what metaphysical and theological approach will best explain humanity’s relationship to intelligent and self-aware machines? Certainly, Badiou’s mathematical ontology and rejection of a traditional concept of Transcendence seem relevant to how we understand the relationships of a computer programmer, the software programs she writes and the relative self-awareness of the machine, and their meanings. As we read Badiou, it seems plausible to assume that the mathematical foundations of biological consciousness are no less applicable to inorganic consciousness. However, Balthasar’s Trinitarian kenosis also sets out some interesting clues to how conscious awareness may establish itself in artificial intelligence. Indeed, a kenotically based metaphysic of the
subtractive’s relationship to the four themes we have explored in this thesis, namely, transcendence, immanence, relationship and difference are a viable starting point for framing all conscious activity—biological or artificial.

Without the continued development and application of the greater theological tradition, the Church will discount her mature engagement with the postmodern world in which she finds herself. For my part, I believe that Balthasar’s theory of Trinitarian kenosis will be central to the Church’s ongoing and productive encounter with the world.
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Appendix One

Law of Substitution of Equivalents

The law of substitution is formalized in mathematics in stating the following essential principle: “if we prove (construct an element of) \( F(a) \) and we have \( a = x \) then we also have \( F(b) \). For instance: we prove something about a function \( a \) and we know that \( b \) is equal to \( a \) then we know that the same property holds for \( b \) without having to redo the proof,” http://www.mathematik.uni-muenchen.de/~cm2010/coquand.pdf.

Axioms

Axiom of Extensionality

The axiom of extensionality states that: “For any sets \( X \) and \( Y \), \( X \) equals \( Y \) if and only if \( X \) is a subset of \( Y \) and \( Y \) is a subset of \( X \)” \( \forall x \in X \) \( \exists y \in Y \) \( x \neq y \) \( x \neq y \).

Axiom of the Empty Set

The empty set contains no elements. This set is unique is defined symbolically as: \( A \forall x (\neg x \in A) \), see: http://www.math.tamu.edu/~boas/courses/220-2003c/nov14.pdf. The empty set and nonempty set are opposites and together these two predications point to the fact that the empty set is the complement to the universal set. The universal set includes all elements within a framework of a given theory.

The Axiom of Subsets

The axiom of subsets in ZFC theory requires “the existence for any set \( A \) and a formula \( A(y) \) of a set \( x \) consisting of all elements of \( A \) satisfying \( A(y) \), [therefore,]

The Axiom of Union

Javier R. Movellan argues the axiom of union tells us that: “for any set \( x \) we can make a new set whose elements belong to at least one of the elements of \( x \). We call this new set the union of \( x \) and we represent it as \( *x \). For example, if \( x = \{1, 2, 3, 4\} \) then \( *x = \{1, 2, 3, 4\} \). More formally, the axiom of union forces the proposition:
\( A \cap B \cap C \cap B \cap D \cap A \), [Given any set \( A \), there exists a set \( B \) such that, for any element \( c \), \( c \) is a member of \( B \) if and only if there is a set \( D \) such that \( c \) is a member of \( D \) and \( D \) is a member of \( A \)], see: http://mplab.ucsd.edu/tutorials/settheory.pdf.
The Axiom of Separation

The axiom of separation or specification asserts that for any set \( X \) you can form a subset of it, \( Y \), such that \( Y \) consists of elements of \( X \) all of which satisfy a given property \( P \). See also: Weinstein, Eric W. "Separation." From MathWorld--A Wolfram Web Resource. http://mathworld.wolfram.com/Separation.html.

The Axiom of Replacement

In simplest terms, “[t]he Axiom of Replacement allows us to take a set \( X \), and form another set by replacing the elements of \( X \) by other sets according to any definite rule,” http://people.maths.ox.ac.uk/knight/lectures/replacement.pdf.

The Axiom of Foundation


Axiom of Infinity

David Foster Wallace sets out that there are two variants that are used to establish the axiom of infinity. He writes: “…[f]or a set \( S \) and a ‘definite predicate \( P \), there exists the set \( S \) that contains only those \( x \) \( S \) that have the property designated by \( P \). 2nd variant—There exists a set \( S \) with the following features: (a) \( S \), and (b) For any \( x \), if \( x \) \( S \), then \( \{x\} \) \( S \). (These are technically distinct versions of the Limited Abstraction Principle…Both versions do two important things, First, they establish that the empty set exists. Second, they define and validate the set-theoretic method of transfinite induction and, via this method, establish the existence of a denumerably infinite set \( S \) whose members are \( , \{ \}, \{ \{} \}, \{ \{} \} \ldots \), see: David Foster Wallace, Everything and More: A Compact History of Infinity (New York, NY.: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 266. Hereafter cited as Wallace. See also: Weinstein, Eric W. “Axiom of Infinity.” From MathWorld—A Wolfram Web Resource. http://mathworld.wolfram.com/AxiomofInfinity.html.
The Power Set Axiom

“The axiom of infinity also allows us to construct a power set of infinity such that it can be a subset of a larger infinite set: that \( I = \{\Omega\} \), that \( P(I) = \{\Omega, \Omega\ldots\} \). Infinity...allots for no more or less infinity. The power set of an infinite set continues *ad infinitum,*” Robert Wall, *Introduction to Mathematical Linguistics* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, INC., 1972), 174-187. In other words, “[f]or any set \( S \), there exists the Power set \( P(S) \) of \( S \),” Wallace, 288. The power set parameterizes the theoretical conditions for a set’s presentation in an event and in many ways announces for Badiou the end of classical theology’s dependence on the Transcendent. The Power-set axiom speaks to the inclusion of sets that is how one multiple can be the subset of another. Suppose, for instance, that we have a set \( A = \{a, b\} \). \( A \) has four subsets: \( \{a\}, \{b\}, \{a, b\}, \) and \( \emptyset \) (recalling that \( \emptyset \) is a subset of every set). The power set of \( A \), that is, \( P(A) \), has four sets as members: \( \{\{a\}, \{b\}, \{a,b\}, \emptyset\} \).

**Axiom of Choice**

The axiom of choice sets out that: “If \( S \) is a set of pairwise disjoint nonempty sets, the Cartesian Product of the members of \( S \) is not empty, every member of this Cartesian Product is designated a selection of set \( S' \). In regular English, it’s that from any \( S \) you can construct a subset \( S' \) with a particular property even if you can’t specify a procedure for choosing the individual members of \( S' \). One important consequence of the [Axiom of Choice] is the well-ordering principle, viz. that any subset of \( S' \) of any set \( S \) can be chosen and arranged in such a way that \( S' \) has a first member,” Wallace, 288.

Some scholars have questioned if Badiou has adequately shown how the axiom of choice differs from other mathematical calculations of ordering: “[t]he axiom of choice is the ontological statement relative to the particular form of presentation which is interventional activity...The consequence of this ‘empty’ stylization of the being of intervention is that, via an admirable overturning which manifests the power of ontology, the ultimate effect of this axiom in which anonymity and illegality give rise to the appearance of the greatest disorder—as intuited by the mathematicians—is the very height of order. There we have a striking ontological metaphor of the theme, now banal, according to which immense revolutionary disorders engender the most rigid state order,” Ricardo L. Nirenberg and David Nirenberg, “Badiou’s Number: A Critique of Mathematics as Ontology” *Critical Inquiry* 37 (Summer 2011): 598.

**The Mathematical Set**

A set is a collection of things and things here are interchangeable with numbers for the set of “\( X \)” things represents the number “\( x \)”. Set Theory can, thereby, be presented as a “bottom up” method of creating and combing numbers qua sets. Such a procedure, however, is unable to account for the paradox of self-reflexivity as Russell’s
paradox famously shows. Russell showed that in set theory a paradox arises when one considers the set of all sets that are not members of themselves—for such a set seems to state that to be a member of such a set is only possible if one is simultaneously not a member of itself. Peter Hallward writes: “The extensional or ‘combinatorial’ conception of a set proceeds instead from the bottom up; such a set is simply a result, the result of collecting together a certain bundle of elements [ignoring all properties]. In contemporary set theory (and in Badiou’s ontology), the extensional approach prevails, largely because Russell’s famous paradox concerning sets belonging to themselves demonstrated the vulnerability of any set theory which tries to define the notion of set” A Subject to Truth, 333.

The Generic Set and Universal Sets

Badiou asks us to consider that: “[t]he expression ‘\(x = a_1 \text{ or } x = a_2\), up to \(x = a_n\)’. This is an expression of the type \(F(x)\) since the terms \(a_1, a_2, \text{ etc.}\), are fixed terms, which consequently do not indicate any ‘empty’ place. Moreover, it is obvious that the set made up of \(a_1, a_2, a_n\) … is constructed by this expression, since only these terms can validate an equality of the type ‘\(x_3 = a_j\)’ \(j\) goes…to \(n\). Accordingly, because it is constructible, this finite set cannot be generic,” see: Theoretical Writings, 107. On this emblematic coalition Badiou further vouches: “[t]he notion that everything can be stated under the sole name of the set, and within the logic of belonging, is equivalent, as far as I am concerned to the materialist recognition of the one…the name of being ‘matter’ here serves, for being, as universal signifier, just as the set does for mathematics,” Theory of the Subject, 216. The universal set becomes a metaphor for the non-existing virtual One. This set can be seen as a notional entity that attempts to take on the characteristics that philosophers traditionally accorded to being.

Infinity, the Empty Set and the Void

Jason Barker elucidates on Badiou’s use of the axiom of infinity stating: “[t]here is a set to which nothing belongs which implies the existence of a limit ordinal. Since the axiom of infinity affirms the existence of at least one set, i.e. the null set, we can take that set as the first infinite number: \(\emptyset\).” Jason Barker, Alain Badiou: A Critical Introduction (Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2002), 154. For Badiou the empty set mathematically structures the metaphysical void.

The Site

The site provides a historical and material “place” for a relative autonomous being to extend her conscious and relational reach. The site describes reality in terms of plenitude because being is multiple. The site is constructed in retrospect offering a way for Badiou to conceive totality conceptually and being as inexistent: “[s]ince the inexistent which is made incandescent is the trace of the event, we have a limpid abstract formula: a post-evental body is constituted by all the elements of the site which invest the totality of their existence in their identity to the trace of the event,” see: Logics of the
Worlds, 467. The site presents a substantiative reality that allows for the generation of truth albeit one that remains incomplete for: “[a]s foundational multiples, sites which constitute the very material of the event, are fundamental to the structure of all multiplicity: simply, every multiple is ultimately founded, and every foundation constitutes a site,” Alex Ling, Ontology in Alain Badiou: Key Concepts (eds.) A. J. Bartlett and Justin Clemens (Durham: Acumen Publishing Company, 2010), 55.

The Event

Through conscious engagement of her context, the subject transforms this “site” into what Badiou terms “the event”. The event is an “extra-ontological” phenomenon that trespasses into the world of being much like Gödel’s theorem of incompleteness introduces into the pure world of mathematical theory the uncomfortable fact that no system can fully convey the truth of its assumptions and aporetic structures.