Horizons, 40(1), pp. 91–113. © College Theology Society, 2013
doi:10.1017/hor.2013.4

REVIEW SYMPOSIUM

Balthasar: A (Very) Critical Introduction. By Karen Kilby. Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2012. xi + 188 pages. $23.00 (paper).

FOUR PERSPECTIVES

I

In her new book, *Balthasar: A (Very) Critical Introduction*, Karen Kilby aims to pinpoint both what is worthwhile and what is problematic in Balthasar's theology. Since unqualified endorsements of Balthasar's oeuvre overshadow critical resistance to it, Kilby desires to correct this imbalance by emphasizing those aspects of Balthasar's thought that should worry his readers. For Kilby, these areas of greatest concern include Balthasar's unwavering confidence in his idiosyncratic aesthetic and dramatic presentations of revelation's import (chapter 3), the holistic and climactic tenor of his theological formulations (chapter 4), his seemingly unbounded knowledge of the triune God's inner life (chapter 5), and his narrow vision of gender difference, which relies on a truncated version of the nuptial metaphor conceived primarily in terms of the sexual act (chapter 6). In turn, she shows how each of these problem areas substantiates her weightiest charge that Balthasar's theology in its entirety exhibits a systemic deficit, that of his audacious "God's eye view" of the shape and meaning of divine revelation. This methodological omniscience has a global impact on Balthasar's project, thereby canceling out the various local attempts he makes to safeguard a rightful attitude of humility and wonderment in the face of divine mystery.

In chapter 1, Kilby situates her twofold critique of content and method within the general predicament that all readers face when introduced to Balthasar. The voluminous quantity of his literary output is always a challenge to its mastery. Its extensive reach is made more inaccessible by Balthasar's unsystematic and nonpropositional manner of writing, which twists and turns through an impressive array of theological, philosophical, and literary figures and their time periods, without clear indications of where description ends and where Balthasar's theological agenda begins. His failure to elucidate plainly the fundamental arguments that govern and connect the disparate pieces of his mammoth project makes it exceedingly difficult for anyone to maintain a solid grasp of what he is about, in order to engage him in a meaningfully constructive way. Kilby endeavors to overcome these impediments by teasing out some of the themes embedded in Balthasar's meanderings that turn out to be both crucial to his theological enterprise and deservedly

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2013.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press

unsettling to the conscientious reader. She hopes that once her readers recognize how Balthasar drives all of his key (and questionable) ideas forward with the same sense of absolute certainty, they will be far less likely to proclaim his authoritarian style as paradigmatic for today's theologians.

Chapter 2 provides contextual backing for Kilby's claim regarding Balthasar's "unfettered" theological program by marking the independence that characterized his intellectual journey. Disparaging and breaking away from his neo-Scholastic training, Balthasar joined with other innovators of his day to retrieve the patristic roots of Thomism and to stretch beyond it by utilizing other philosophical and literary resources for theologizing. Kilby makes much of the fact that Balthasar's preference for a chaplaincy in Basel over a professorship at the Gregorian University in Rome enabled him to abandon himself to his autonomous theological speculations without any of the external controls that are built into an official academic post. Living in Basel, he could converse with the renowned Protestant theologian Karl Barth and with the obscure doctor-mystic Adrienne von Speyr, both of whom influenced him profoundly. Basel was also the setting for his decision to leave the Jesuits in 1950 in order to partner with Adrienne to form their secular institute, the Community of St. John. Kilby accentuates Balthasar's increasing isolation from church and academy, which culminated in his absence from the Second Vatican Council, distancing him even further from the mainstream theological discussion and removing any impediments to his construction of a magisterial theological edifice seemingly impervious to criticism.

In chapter 3, Kilby agrees that two of the most notable outcomes of Balthasar's unbridled creativity are his repositioning of beauty's role at the heart of the theological enterprise and his dramatization of salvation history that recounts the triune God's vertical intervention into the horizontal play of human freedom in order to overcome sin and death by drawing creation into participation in divine life. Balthasar's aesthetic and dramatic modes of doing theology mutually affirm the dynamic act of divine self-disclosure where God is the sole Artist and Author whose mystery is not a problem that can be circumvented by the right amount of theological prowess. Kilby recognizes that the foregoing attestation appears to undercut her avowal that Balthasar the theologian writes as Balthasar the omniscient narrator of divine revelation. She solves this discrepancy by calling our attention to a vital distinction between the Balthasar who prescribes humility before divine mystery and the Balthasar who fails to follow through on his recommendation. For example, there is a significant difference between facilitating the transformative relationship between the subject and the glorious God who captivates her, and presenting one's detailed picture of what that glory

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2013.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press

looks like while pronouncing the blindness of those who do not see it in exactly the same way. According to Kilby, there are cases where Balthasar incorporates the first stance, for example, in his smaller work, *Dare We Hope?* However, in his trilogy, he also regularly falls prey to the second presumptuous tendency toward a totalizing vision.

Chapter 4 examines multiple instances of two common patterns that also bespeak Balthasar's belief in the indubitable efficacy of his theological conceptualizations. First, the pattern of "fulfillment" recurs in varied contexts when Balthasar evaluates several theories to uncover their strengths and weaknesses and arrives at another possibility of his own devising that capitalizes on the advantages of other approaches while eliminating their shortcomings. Though Kilby does not equate Balthasar's "fulfillment pattern" with Hegel's *Aufhebung,* one can reasonably deduce that Balthasar errs where Hegel does; he writes grand, sweeping metanarratives that mistake subjective hypotheses for comprehensive understanding. Similarly, Balthasar invokes the image of a "radiating circle" with lines fanning out from a transcendent hub, the content and contours of which are opaque to most of us but which are curiously transparent to Balthasar. Assorted permutations of the "radiating circle" occur when he points to the core mystery of the Cross that is never exhausted by Scripture and the tradition's manifold interpretations of it. Yet at the same time that Balthasar seems to be preserving divine mystery by maintaining theology's pluriformity, he ironically rises above it by intimately aligning his depictions of the Cross-event with the revelatory center that governs theological diversity. At this stage, it is important to note that Kilby never accuses Balthasar of an intentional duplicity that offers mystery and then takes it away. Rather, she contends that he unwittingly subverts his good intentions with an overreaching theological method.

Chapter 5 on the Trinity is a pivotal juncture in the book, because the centrality of trinitarian theology to Balthasar's entire project makes it an excellent test case for Kilby's dual critique of its content and methodology. Balthasar looks to the Cross to see the economic Trinity's revelation of the immanent Trinity. For him, this means that Christ's suffering and death is an economic expression of the eternal, kenotic character of divine life. For Kilby, Balthasar privileges his view of the economy as one that sees through and beyond revelation to the transcendent mystery of triune life and its innermost activity. Though devised as an analogy, his concept of "distance," which attempts to picture the relations between Father, Son, and Spirit, is misleading, because it diminishes the intimacy between the persons. More importantly, it is not readily understood what this arresting image is really meant to evoke. Given Kilby's perspective, the only thing that notions like "distance" can do is sabotage Balthasar's attempts to evade a theology of divine

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2013.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press

passibility. His is, in fact, an even more radical version of such a position that does not stop at arguing for the transformation of God through suffering; rather, it contends that there is eternally "room" in triune life for the darkness and loss of our sinful human existence.

Chapter 6 on Balthasar's interpretation of gender raises a host of questions. If, in his exegesis of Genesis 2, man is primary and woman is secondary with her role of "answering" or "facing" man, how can Balthasar still contend that woman and man are equal? What is his idea of equality? When he describes the relationship between the sexes, men are depicted as active, and women as passive or receptive. Are these postures of activity and receptivity really naturally divided between men and women? Or have they been socioculturally defined as such? If Balthasar believes that this distribution of behaviors is essential to the sexes, is he interpreting them solely through his view of the sexual act? Kilby's answer to this final question is a straightforward yes. Balthasar's predisposition to align men and women's natures with the roles he believes them to play in their marital union also pervades his use of nuptial imagery to portray the relationship between Christ and his Church. Christ is the active male, and the Church is the receptive female. At this stage, Kilby reasons that the questionable content of Balthasar's gender theory detrimentally affects his methodology. As he links his theologies of the cross and of the immanent Trinity to see a complete picture of the inner workings of divine life, so too does he unite his gender theory so closely to his speculations on Christ, Eucharist, and Church that he trusts he has uncovered the depth dimension out of which these theological truths find their meaning and coherence.

In chapter 7, Kilby reiterates her thesis regarding Balthasar's perilous method of the all-seeing eye that masterfully synthesizes and deciphers human and divine reality, and she reinforces her position by forestalling likely objections to it. First, is her critique simply an allergic reaction to the quest for continuity, unity, and completion? No, she is not opposed to a symphonic rendering of the whole, so long as God, and not the theologian, orchestrates the symphony. Second, is her opposition to Balthasar's lack of academically rigorous argumentation a denial of his reunification of theology and spirituality? No, but it does challenge the scope of Balthasar's undisputed spiritual and scholarly expertise. Third, is it not the case that all theologians are ambitious to a certain extent in their venture to speak about God in a coherent manner that shows the interlacing of God's revelatory interventions with human experience? Yes; however, Balthasar extends this undertaking to extremes of fullness and confidence that are neither advisable nor possible.

I have been heartened by Kilby's efforts to read Balthasar in a measured fashion, neither avoiding the difficulties in his thought that raise serious

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2013.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press

questions nor entirely jettisoning the value of his theological contribution. Leaning solely on either side of this hermeneutical balance leads a reader to exclude one or the other of her dual responsibilities of critical analysis and appreciative dialogue, which insure accurate interpretation of a theologian's life's work. I applaud Kilby's emphasis on wrestling with the difficult questions that Balthasar's theology raises because of the frequent absence of such queries in other expositions of his project. Chief among these questions are those Kilby asks in chapter 6 on gender and the nuptial metaphor. Balthasar's exegeses of Scripture and tradition that strictly define the nature of men as active and women as passive must be placed in conversation with feminist theologies. In addition to participating in this indispensable dialogue, I would suggest another type of interaction that can take place between the disparate portions of Balthasar's oeuvre. His conviction that God calls every woman and man to imitate Christ in a thoroughly unique way can be applied to his elsewhere narrow qualification of women's Christic imitation according to a classically feminine mold. In this way, one Balthasarian reflection can refine another. His claim for the irreducibility of each person's particular embodiment of Christ can critique his attachment to the cultural norms of his upbringing that group all women together in a universal character of feminine passivity. The tensions in Balthasar's thought that he left unresolved can be put to work in order to hone further his contribution to contemporary theology.

Contrary to Kilby's analysis, this exegetical technique of internal dialogue reveals that Balthasar's nonpropositional, reflective theological method is not an exhaustive one that explains away the mystery of the divine call to each person with a set of constraints provided by a particular theory of gender relations. Rather, Balthasar's writings evince a back-and-forth movement between divine mystery's ceaseless, immeasurable pull on the theologian through the concrete, historical moments that make up the tradition, and the theologian's perceptions of the tradition that are modulated by his precise sociocultural location. For example, in the case of Balthasar's theological anthropology and ecclesiology, he transitions from repetitions of the tradition's affirmations of God's authorship and artistry of human freedom and identity to renditions of gendered human personhood colored by his socially defined expectations for relations between the sexes. Balthasar's project never sees the end of this movement between multiple encounters with epochs and figures in the tradition and contextual understandings of these meetings. This open-endedness beckons Balthasar's readers to encounter the tradition for themselves and communicate its significance from the vantage points of their sociocultural positions that respond to and critique Balthasar's necessarily limited standpoint.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2013.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Balthasar's creative play with the trinitarian imagery of infinite distance, surprise, and eternal self-sacrifice is similarly unfinished. In this instance, he is experimenting with a combination of ideas from Gregory of Nyssa, Sergei Bulgakov, and Adrienne von Speyr, among others, to give thought and language to mystical experiences of triune love had by saints of the past and by Adrienne in the present. Though Balthasar takes the play of analogical language seriously, it is play nonetheless. As visual and literary art glimpses truth in ways that the logic of syllogisms cannot do on its own, so the practice of drawing analogies between creation's traces of the divine image and the Trinity itself gestures toward eternal truth without claiming total comprehension of it.

Balthasar's assorted attempts at phenomenological analogies of distance are reminiscent of Augustine's many tries at the psychological analogy that he repeatedly declares to be provisional. Surely, Balthasar would have done well to profess likewise the contingency of his exploratory analogies rather than to assume that we would recognize his continuity with previous apophatic theologians who reach unknowing through, and not around, kataphasis. Nevertheless, his reliance on their contemplative orientation throughout his trilogy gives us warrant to treat his meditations on the immanent Trinity as open spaces for us to question, supplement, modify, and dialogue with his hypotheses. Thus, Balthasar's theology will encourage more critical interventions like Kilby's, precisely because his theological method is spacious enough for unlimited exchanges between mutually enhancing perspectives.

DANIELLE NUSSBERGER
Marquette University

II

Karen Kilby's book is written with the analytical and circumspect voice of a detached observer who is simply offering commonsense descriptions of what any reasonable, fair-minded person would see if only he or she looked carefully. Yet the content of the description is, in her own words, "polemical" (13). Although she makes many skeptical observations along the way about the content of Balthasar's various theological claims (she is particularly concerned with things he writes about the Trinity and how he uses gender analogies in theology), the point of her book is not to argue with the content of his theology. Indeed, such an approach would be misguided because, as Kilby makes clear, Balthasar "does not, on the whole, *make* arguments. . . . [Balthasar] presents the reader with the approach he

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2013.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press

takes to be correct" (7, 48, 50, 65, 87, 90, 109). Insofar as Balthasar's writings persuade, they do so by a kind of hypnotizing, mesmerizing, and outright bullying of the reader to see things the way he does; in essence Kilby's point is that Balthasar is a sophist who uses manipulative rhetoric to hustle readers into buying his theological snake oil. Balthasar was his own publisher, Kilby reminds, and therefore was "never subjected to any external editorial scrutiny or intervention" (4). Kilby is simply aghast that Balthasar would be allowed to get away with writing what he does without regulation by some competent authorities; her book reads in many places as a *reductio ad absurdum* argument seeking to show the catastrophic consequences of theological anarchy. She frequently uses adjectives like "troubling" and "disturbing" to describe Balthasar's "fundamentally problematic" writings, and she cautions the reader to be "wary" (2) of his very poisonous "authorial voice." Kilby's book is a policing action against Balthasar's wanton and "unfettered" effort to speak from an "impossible" (147, 148, 150, 151, 159, 162) theological perspective.

It is her point about this "impossible" theological perspective that gives real polemical bite to Kilby's argument. She sums up the gist of her polemic against Balthasar's writings as follows: "Balthasar frequently writes as though from a position above his materials—above tradition, above Scripture, above history—and also, indeed, above his readers. He frequently seems to presume . . . a God's eye view" (13). Her concern with this supposed God's eye view recurs consistently throughout the book, and it has close affinities with Ben Quash's opinion that Balthasar's thought, despite his deceptive feigns otherwise, is reducible to being a Catholic species of Hegelianism (13, 64). In both Kilby's and Quash's interpretations, Balthasar comes at the Scriptures and the theological tradition with non-biblical and extratraditional prejudices (particularly with regard to gender) that he then projects onto the Bible and the tradition as if he had found them there all along. To prevent any reader from exposing his theological sleight of hand, Balthasar writes in a voice that creates the illusion that he has special access to God that none can question. "Balthasar, it would seem, is proposing to do theology in part on the basis of information not available to the rest of us, and information whose nature and value we cannot independently judge" (157). Kilby avers that her critical point about the illegitimacy of the God's eye view in Balthasar's authorial voice is not intended to be an *ad hominem* attack against Balthasar himself, but only against his books (13 n. 21). Nevertheless, even if she is unwilling to declare openly that Balthasar himself was a pathologically procrustean megalomaniac, she clearly presents Balthasar's writings as thoroughly plagued by a pathologically procrustean megalomania. Aside, however, from whether one finds that a

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2013.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press

credible distinction, there is no doubt that Kilby seeks to discredit Balthasar as an illegitimate and dangerous voice. She concludes her book by declaring it is "dangerous" to take Balthasar as one's theological guide, and the last line of the book states, "The one thing in my view one ought *not* to learn from him is how to be a theologian" (167).

What are we to make of Kilby's jeremiad? As an interpretation of Balthasar's texts it is entirely unpersuasive. It is a sneering, intellectually reckless book pretending to be a circumspect analysis. Her criticisms of Balthasar for his supposed procrustean *eisegetical* distortions of the Scriptures and theological tradition are merely asserted in most cases and not argued for with the necessarily detailed and precise evidence from Balthasar's primary texts and the texts he is supposedly perverting. The book is more in the genre of manifesto than scholarship. Kilby's own authorial voice is passive-aggressive, suspicious, condescending, and prone to undocumented declaration and negative insinuation. For example, in a few footnotes on pages 137 and 139, Kilby whispers Tina Beattie's opinions that Balthasar's use of gender analogies is motivated by an obsession with sexual intercourse and even a repressed sexual desire for Adrienne von Speyr. Although Kilby then asserts that this is not her own view, nevertheless the point is made, the discrediting idea planted, and she moves on with ostensibly clean hands. If one wanted to have a better understanding of Balthasar's writings, Kilby's book would not be the place to start, or to finish.

Yet Kilby's book is worth reading, even if it is not a helpful analysis of Balthasar. Indeed, it is not actually about Balthasar. As the last line of the book makes clear, this is a book about the nature of the theological enterprise itself. Kilby openly acknowledges that her preferred models for how theology ought to be done are Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth (162–65). Aquinas' and Barth's authorial voices are strong and confident, but not unbridled and manipulative like Balthasar's. Yet the difference is even deeper. Balthasar crosses the line from strong and confident to illegitimate arrogance, Kilby explains, in his presumption to write like a "retreat director" who knows truths about God his readers do not, and who wants his readers therefore to suspend "the argumentative and critical sides of one's intellect" so as to be better instructed by the spiritual master (160–61). There is certainly a place for retreat directors, Kilby assures us, but their authority is of a different kind. What is illegitimate about Balthasar is that he fails to respect this difference: "We find in Balthasar an unusual blend of theology and spirituality . . . the conflation of two distinct kinds of authority—the authority of the spiritual guide and the authority of the scholar" (161). Yet it is at this point that Kilby's own conflation of some things that need to be kept distinct becomes most apparent.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2013.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Kilby makes an effort to explain that her point is not that theology and spirituality should not be brought together, but merely that Balthasar does it poorly, and dangerously. It seems to this reader, however, that she is not persuasive in her disavowal. It seems that Kilby holds a maximally restrictive standard for allowing sanctity a role in theology. She wants to agree in general with Balthasar that sanctity can be a legitimate source of theology, and that prayerful experience can be validly explored as a resource for intellectual reflection (155–56). But she also wants to limit the sanctity and prayerfulness studied by theologians to the past, to the lives and teachings of the dead and canonized (157). In this way sanctity and prayerfulness remain simply types of "information" accessible to all theologians, irrespective of their own sanctity and prayerfulness, or lack thereof. Moreover, if the sanctity and prayerfulness of the canonized dead are valid sources of theology, they have limited value and certainly cannot be given the wide scope and governing status that Balthasar gives them.

What Kilby finds completely vexing is the dominant influence in Balthasar's theology of the living person of Adrienne von Speyr and her mystical, charismatic experiences. So if in theory theology and sanctity can be unified, in this particular case the outcome is so noxiously presumptuous that it cannot be allowed. And this is the way Kilby's argument works: the outcome of allowing Speyr's charismatic voice unfettered control over his own theology is a set of theological positions Kilby finds so distasteful that she then decides simply to invalidate the method of arriving at these positions. In so doing, Kilby essentially invalidates much of the Catholic theological tradition, and indeed most of the writings of the biblical authors she claims to respect, as well as the writings of those given the title Doctor of the Church. Could the writings of Saint Paul or the author of the book of Revelation survive a critique based on Kilby's restricted criteria? Could the writings of Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, or Thérèse of Lisieux survive Kilby's critique? Could Bonaventure, Francis de Sales, or even Augustine survive her critique? Unlikely. What all of these people—and many more besides—have in common of course is not simply that they are dead canonized saints, but that during their own lifetimes they wrote theology in the voice of spiritual guides who knew something about God from their own prayer life that their readers did not. None of these people shared Kilby's procrustean presumption that only "information" gleaned from the writings of the dead by living intellectuals—governed exclusively by their reasonable, logical, academically refined standards—was valid for theology. They did not make this presumption because they believed the Holy Spirit could, and did in fact, call some people to a higher holiness and wisdom than others so that they would become teachers for their contemporaries.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2013.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press

On a charitable and generous reading of her book, it is fair to say Kilby believes that too and did not intend to construct her own procrustean standard otherwise.

Two questions, therefore, are conflated in Kilby's book. First, was Speyr truly a genuine mystic with a unique relationship to God and a special vocation to know and teach about God, a vocation in which she enlisted Balthasar as an ally, or was she a fraud who has no claim on our attention? Second, is it ever valid for a Christian intellectual to be fundamentally guided in his or her own writings about God by the charismatic mystical teachings of a living contemporary, and hence to write in the voice of one who is called by God to a special teaching vocation? Kilby's book explicitly answers the second question in the negative, but she does not actually make an argument for her answer. Instead, she implicitly assumes that the answer to the first question is that Speyr is a fraud—and so too therefore Balthasar with his "God's eye" authorial voice—and then makes that answer the governing presupposition for her negative answer to the second question. In other words, Kilby's book is confused: it claims to be about Balthasar's authorial hubris, but actually it is about Speyr and her (possibly fraudulent) status as a Christian mystic; it claims to define the boundaries of what counts as legitimate Christian theology by prohibiting contemporary mystics from writing *bona fide* theology for their contemporaries, but actually it is simply expressing doubts about whether Balthasar was right in allowing Speyr's voice so much ruling status in his own writings. All of these are valid and important topics and questions, but Kilby's book does not help us to deal with any of them constructively and fairly.

KEVIN MONGRAIN
University of Notre Dame

III

Is Balthasar not implicitly claiming to be in a position to fit together the puzzle of all things, human and divine, while we creatures (especially postmodern intellectuals) all know that our reality cannot be comprehended in a systematic whole? Karen Kilby presents a cumulative argument, fitting together different elements in order to show that her critique is not targeting a peripheral aspect of Balthasar's theology, but rather the heart of it. In what follows I will question some of the building blocks in her argument in order to undo the massive character of her final judgment. She rightly points to certain ambiguities in Balthasar's work, but I do not agree that all elements should be

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2013.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press

interpreted in the direction of Kilby's diagnosis. I will argue that Balthasar's work contains the cure for its own disease.

Circle versus Fulfillment: Walking around the Statue

Kilby offers us a helpful range of critical questions that could be used to introduce not only Balthasar, but any theologian (think, for instance, of some of the stylistically akin authors of Radical Orthodoxy). How can theologians be so sure of what they claim to know? How do they present other voices and their own relation to them? What are the hidden presuppositions? What is their implied position?

Kilby provides the reader with a disclaimer, warning that Balthasar's oeuvre does not contain a classical theological argument but is rather an exercise in "novelistic theologizing" (114–15). "Novelist" is to be understood in the nineteenth-century sense of an author who has a perfect overview of the whole, full control of the story lines, and is omniscient about the novel's characters (even God). Kilby's advice is to listen to Balthasar's often original words and to explore his daring vision, but not to imitate his way of doing theology. But after finishing her (very) critical introduction, it is doubtful whether any student would still feel attracted to read Balthasar anyway. And if anyone would still dare to enter his theological world, how should one read him?

I would propose Balthasar's own metaphor: if you want to behold a statue, you cannot see the whole at once, you have to walk around it, to view it from different angles, discovering ever new aspects.[1] I would approach Balthasar's meandering writings as walks around the statue at the center, which is Christ. I appreciate Balthasar's way of presenting the variety of authors on whom he comments as many rays converging around the transcendent mystery of the Incarnate, which can never be contained in a system. Kilby, however, suspects that Balthasar's assumption that he is able to recognize all theological voices as rays around the center rests on the implicit presupposition that he himself is positioned above the scene, and thus able to see both the rays and the center of the radiating circle. This conclusion does not hold: just as one does not need to step out of our universe to gain the insight that the sun is the center around which the planets turn, so Balthasar does not need to transcend his fellow theologians by silently presuming a God's eye view.

1 Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Rede an der Verleihung des Mozart-Preises," in Elio Guerriero, *Hans Urs von Balthasar: Eine Monographie* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1993), 423. He even complicates the metaphor: he presents his trilogy as a garden with many statues with God as its center.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2013.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press

I agree with Kilby that fulfillment—Balthasar's other central image to deal with theological diversity—is far more problematic, even if presenting one's own theology as the final integration of all the preceding ones is a common vice. However, I would not interpret the circle and fulfillment as mutually reinforcing tools used secretly to gain control of the discourse. Rather, I see them as rival procedures for organizing differences, where the circle counters the tendency toward illegitimate systematization. Problems occur, as Kilby's example of Balthasar's theology of the cross proves, when the circle is combined with the pattern of fulfillment and leads to an unwarranted claim of comprehensiveness.

Picture versus Play: Seeing the Form as Fragment

My proposal to exploit the inner friction between the central images of "circle" and "fulfillment" and propose a nonharmonizing interpretation might seem to be at odds with Balthasar's aesthetic approach. Kilby exposes his aesthetics as a particular nineteenth-century idealist if not German romantic framework, with both their reputations inclined toward a misplaced harmonizing search for the whole that negates differences and discontinuities. However, in Balthasar's own reading of the roots of the Western aesthetic tradition in *The Glory of the Lord,* he stresses the inner tension between the two aspects of beauty: form and splendor. He presents the visible form as disrupted by an irreducible difference:

> This incomprehensible element is only a pointer, and remains so precisely in its fragility . . . since if we take hold of it too roughly, it escapes our grasp; it exists only as a breath of wind that has passed by; it does not remain long with one who thus receives its favour; it is more remembrance and promise than actual presence, more a spur to memory than a gift, offered to Tantalus and yet at once withdrawn from his grasp and, being thus inaccessible to "exact scientific method," it can only be interpreted from the point of view of Being which embraces it. . . . It is, as Claudel says, the hook with which the angel draws the bleeding heart towards eternity.[2]

So even in worldly beauty the experience of the whole is not a given that we could ever control, but rather reveals the form as fragment.

If Balthasar has an explicit criterion for judging aesthetic theories, it is his suspicion of unwarranted harmonization. This is, for instance, why he prefers

2 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, vol. 5, The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age*, trans. Oliver Davies *et al.* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 609–10.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2013.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Kant above Schiller and later idealist system-builders.[3] This emphasis on discontinuity, characteristic of his notion of worldly beauty, is even stronger in his understanding of divine glory, which is revealed in the "deformed Christ" (Bonaventure).[4] For instance, Balthasar criticizes Augustine for his "aesthetic theodicy,"[5] which explains suffering and evil as "black strokes" necessary to complete the whole color palette in the painting of creation, since Augustine presupposes a "contemplation of the world-totality from the vantage point of divine providence, which enables us to survey the 'whole pattern of the mosaic floor.'"[6]

My reaction to Kilby's chapter 3 ("The Picture and the Play") would be to acknowledge, along with Ben Quash and Kilby, that Balthasar did not indeed succeed in developing his dramatic approach as consistently as possible, especially when giving the impression that he has a total overview of the play of God and history. However, his theological aesthetics with its emphasis on the fragmentary could at this point deliver a critical counterweight to this impression.[7] Therefore I think Kilby misses the mark when she characterizes Balthasar as the one "who has 'already "seen the form,"' who is already in possession, *as it were*, of this central aesthetic experience—an experience relating not to some particular insight or set of insights but quite simply revelation as a whole" (55; my emphasis). The link between seeing the form and possessing the aesthetically experienced revelation is not Balthasar's, but Kilby's. Balthasar rather emphasizes the opposite: (theological) aesthetics is all about becoming expropriated and decentered. In a footnote (55 n. 23), Kilby responds to this objection that precisely Balthasar's stress on his receptive poverty and passivity can be a rhetorical device to present himself as being a mere instrument of God, and as such implicitly identify his theology with God's own voice. In addition, the emphasis on mystery over against system could serve the purpose of rendering oneself immune from rational arguments. This is another helpful question: Does a theologian's gesture of humility not hide a surreptitious claim to authority?

3 Ibid., 513.

4 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, vol. 2, Studies in Theological Style: Clerical Styles*, trans. Andrew Louth, Francis McDonagh, and Brian McNeil (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1984), 354.

5 Ibid., 128.

6 Ibid., 127.

7 There are other more problematic features in Balthasar's theological aesthetics that may have a negative influence on Balthasar's *Theo-Drama*. See Thomas Dalzell, *The Dramatic Encounter of Divine and Human Freedom in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity 105 (Bern: Lang, 1997).

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2013.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Suffering Glorified?

Above I noted Balthasar citing the French writer Paul Claudel (1868–1955) on beauty: "the hook with which the angel draws the bleeding heart towards eternity." Claudel, a major source of inspiration for Balthasar, seems to be "fundamentally blurring the distinction between love and loss, joy and suffering" (Kilby, 121). Kilby reproaches Balthasar for doing the same in his dramatic vision of the inner life of the Trinity in terms of eternal kenosis, self-giving, even self-annihilation. As such he would justify suffering in a "dramatic theodicy" and even, in Kilby's characterization, present the faithful's participation in Christ's suffering as pious sadomasochism.

On rereading passages in *Theo-Drama*, I noticed that in the chapter from which Kilby quotes, Balthasar himself insists that to live in Christ means to share in his suffering, death, *and* resurrection.[8] Rather than blurring the distinctions, he maintains a paradox that loses its consistency only when it is isolated from the larger whole of the drama of salvation, which involves the cross, death, and resurrection. Here Kilby's argument rests on a truncated representation of Balthasar's text. Moreover, she takes for granted that in the relationship between love and loss, joy and suffering, a clear distinction can always be maintained. To Balthasar's credit, his theological innovations resonate with the testimony of some major mystics of the last century (e.g., Edith Stein, Mother Teresa, Chiara Lubich) regarding their solidarity with the God-forsakenness of our age. Moreover, from both a feminist perspective and a liberation-theological one, Balthasar's radical kenotic theology has inspired a critical-constructive reception in search of resources to empower those who suffer.[9]

Numquam duo, semper tres: Reading Balthasar as Spiritual Exercises[10]

Kilby's point relates not so much to specific claims about Trinity, suffering, or gender (in a chapter that indeed contains embarrassing quotes), but

8 See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory, vol. 4, The Action*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994), 383–88 ("The Paradox of Christian Discipleship").

9 See Aristotle Papanikolaou, "Person, *Kenosis*, and Abuse: Hans Urs von Balthasar and Feminist Theologies in Conversation," *Modern Theology* 19 (2003): 41–65; on Balthasar and Ignacio Ellacuría: Georges De Schrijver, *Recent Theological Debates in Europe: Their Impact on Inter-Religious Dialogue* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2004), 263–338.

10 *Numquam duo, semper tres*, "Never two, always three": a traditional Latin motto warning youngsters not to be alone with another person, in order to prevent the development of "particular friendships."

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2013.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press

rather to the underlying methodological flaw: the manipulation of Balthasar's sources and his readers. In her conclusion Kilby suggests that Balthasar writes too much as a spiritual director, as such presuming an authority that must be uncritically followed. This is a helpful hint—the fact that Balthasar gave many retreats must have influenced his style. But Kilby overlooks what "spiritual director" means in the Jesuit tradition, which would have allowed a more charitable reading of some of Balthasar's features (e.g., indirection, the circle, the God's eye view).[11]

In the Ignatian spiritual exercises, the director is not positioned as an authoritative guide above the person he serves. Ignatius explicitly asks the director not to intervene as a mediating instance between God and the person. The director's task is marked by indirectness, simply providing the person in retreat with text fragments on which to meditate, in order to create space where God can reveal himself directly from the transcendent center to the person. Another typical aspect of the exercises is that one is invited to enter with one's imagination into biblical stories and to identify with the characters. In some meditations one is even asked to imagine oneself viewing the mystery of the Incarnation from the perspective of the Trinity itself. Balthasar's God's-eye perspective is perhaps based less on extraordinary mystical experiences *à la* Adrienne von Speyr and more on traditional practices of Ignatian imaginative empathy.

At the moment, I myself happen to do the "spiritual exercises in daily life." At one encounter my spiritual director told me that Ignatius recommends reading a spiritual book in addition to the exercises. Reading Balthasar is somehow analogous to those exercises. This was often the way I experienced reading Balthasar as a student: I did not see where he was going, but he made me think out of the box, about fragments no professor ever pointed at, opening my imagination for discernment. Maybe, then, this is the best advice to potential readers: never walk with him alone, always read him along with another voice.[12] Kilby herself has, among others, Karl Rahner at the back of her mind. In my case, I read the philosopher Theodor W. Adorno next to Balthasar, which made me more sensitive to the brokenness of all beauty.[13] On the contrary, those students and scholars who

11 See http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/.

12 See, e.g., Todd Walatka, "The Opening of the Political: Grounding Political Action in Hans Urs Von Balthasar's Theodramatic Christology through an Engagement with the Christology of Jon Sobrino" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2011).

13 See Yves de Maeseneer, "The Art of Disappearing: Religion and Aestheticization," in *The New Visibility of Religion: Studies in Religion and Cultural Hermeneutics*, ed. Graham Ward and Michael Hoelzl, Studies in Religion and Political Culture 1 (London: Continuum, 2008), 99–116.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2013.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press

concentrate on Balthasar alone often lack any critical distance. Indeed there must be something alluring in Balthasar's authorial voice, and I am grateful to Kilby for having brought this to light.

YVES DE MAESENEER
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

IV

Since others have already offered excellent summaries of Professor Kilby's book, I shall focus on its strengths and weaknesses. I shall begin with the good news. First, Kilby offers a very fine introduction to Balthasar's life, training, and the formative influences on his thought. Already in her introduction and first chapter, one gets a glimpse of Kilby's graceful writing style and her keen eye for what is central.

Next, I was struck by the sheer originality of Kilby's approach to Balthasar. I have read numerous secondary works, and they tend to follow one of two approaches. They either try to offer a systematic overview of Balthasar's theology in terms of the standard areas of theology, such as God, Christ, Trinity, and anthropology, or they try to get to the heart of Balthasar's work, either by approaching it through a central problem (e.g., Angelo Scola's anthropological approach) or by focusing on the center, with a view that the rest will "go without saying" (the approach of this author's own *Balthasar: A Guide for the Perplexed*[14]). Kilby has ventured into new territory by looking at themes that recur frequently throughout Balthasar's corpus. This unique approach gives Kilby's book a freshness that is not always found in the secondary literature, while, at the same time, allowing her the "critical distance" that she needs to keep from getting sucked into the Balthasarian vortex.

Third, Kilby's style is not only generally graceful and lucid; it is also rigorous. She routinely summarizes Balthasar's approach, asks difficult questions of it, predicts how Balthasar might respond, and then offers her final indictment. The style is reminiscent of a Platonic dialogue or Thomas Aquinas' *Summa*. It is enticing to watch Kilby's intellect at work; her ability to predict her "opponents'" objections is sometimes startling.

Finally, Kilby has done a great service for those of us who are generally favorable to Balthasar's project, for she has gathered into one well-written and thoughtful account nearly all of the objections that one is likely to find in a wide variety of thinkers, ranging from the resurgent neo-Scholastics to

14 Rodney Howsare, *Balthasar: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T&T Clark, 2009).

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2013.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the postmodern feminists. In short, all of us benefit from the wide range of Kilby's education and her ability to represent accurately a wide variety of voices.

The bad news begins with Kilby's central thesis, which, it turns out, determines all of the particular criticisms contained in the individual chapters. That thesis goes something like this: Balthasar commends a dramatic theology that avoids both the pietistic subjectivism of lyrical theology and the distant, purely objective or neutralist approach of epic theology. Nevertheless, she maintains, Balthasar violates his own method inasmuch as he is constantly surveying various theological positions from an aloof position, only then to pronounce the final answer on the matter. If this criticism is true, then Balthasar fails not because he doesn't do theology to Kilby's liking, but because he doesn't do it to *his own standards*. Fortunately for Balthasar, the charge is based on a fundamental misunderstanding. Indeed, the entire book hinges on this fundamental misunderstanding.

The mistake stems from the fact that Kilby has failed to recognize the significance of an extremely important, if cryptic, statement of Balthasar's, wherein he declares that his theology follows Goethe rather than Kant. This is important for numerous reasons, but let us begin with Kant. In his concise study of Continental philosophy, Simon Critchley makes the astute observation that analytic and Continental philosophy, which are seemingly *the* opposing choices in the contemporary scene, are in fact just different sides of the Kantian coin.[15] He explains this by saying that the analytic school is still doing philosophy in the key of Kant's first critique, while the Continental school is doing philosophy largely in the key of the second and third critiques.

This statement is relevant to Kilby's misunderstanding, because I think it also applies to the two allegedly opposing schools of theological thought in the United States: the Chicago and Yale schools. Without going into details, the seeming divide between these schools is premised on a fundamental agreement regarding the nature of knowledge—namely, that we cannot know the thing itself. They both, that is, accept the famous "turn to the subject." Once that turn is accepted, one can either engage in critical theology by scientifically scrutinizing the sources of the Christian faith to expose the irresolvable tensions in both Scripture and tradition, or one can opt for a more pragmatic "cultural-linguistic" approach that defends the rights of various communities to believe on account of the fact that we can never step out of our own presuppositions successfully enough to say something

15 See Simon Critchley, *Continental Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2013.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press

that is simply true. In short, postcritical theology has more than a little of Lyotard's famous "incredulity towards metanarratives."

The unfortunate fact for Kilby's thesis is that Balthasar refused to take a place at this Kantian table. His epistemology (sadly, there is no evidence in this book that Kilby has even read *Theo-Logic*) is simply not Kantian. It is, in fact, much closer to Aquinas', and this can lead to confusion. Consider the following from Aquinas: "The substantial forms of things as they are in themselves are unknown to us, but they shine forth to us through their accidents" (ST I, q. 77, a. 1, ad. obj. 7). It would be interesting to read this quote to graduate students in philosophy to see how many would mistake it for Kant! But there is a crucial difference, and it is the bit about "they *shine forth to us through their accidents*." In his excellent discussion of this passage Norris Clarke recommends that we substitute "operations" here for "accidents," because it better fits the context and is more in keeping with the Scholastic notion that we know things through their activities (*agere sequitur esse*).[16]

It would be almost impossible to overestimate the importance of this difference for Balthasar's project—thus the importance of the Goethe quote. Goethe also believed that the thing itself shines forth from the thing, and also, importantly, that it gives the thing its intelligibility, unity, luminosity, and, dare we say, its *beauty*. It is also crucial to realize that the approach of Aquinas drastically shifts our attitude toward the relationship between the whole and the part, and between truth and mystery. Because these two are central to Kilby's criticism, we should look at them.

In an astonishing passage, Kilby seems to have anticipated our concern: "Might there not be, it could be asked, underlying the criticisms I have been raising, something very like a modern anxiety towards wholeness, a refusal to countenance even its possibility? Is not my critique of Balthasar, in other words, in fact grist for the mill? Is this not just what one would expect from a thinker caught in the toils of modernity?" (149). But as soon as she moves into her answer to this objection, we see that she thinks that she can avoid being modern by being *post*modern. She does not realize, that is, that Kant anticipated both, and that postmodernism is just a phase of modernism.

We see this in her contrasting interpretation of Balthasar's notion that the truth is symphonic. For Balthasar, this means not only that we need a wide variety of viewpoints to express the multiple aspects of truth (e.g., no single gospel or even a harmony of the four would adequately give witness to the mystery of Christ), but also that difference does not preclude unity.

16 Norris Clarke, *Explorations in Metaphysics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 106–7.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2013.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press

In other words, the bassoon in this particular symphony *both* does something unique and individual *and* takes its part in a larger whole, which it presupposes. In order to appreciate its role, I must have some glimpse both of its uniqueness and of the whole to which it belongs. Indeed, for Balthasar, I must have something like an intuition of the whole before I can even speak of the part, and this is just another way of saying that the thing itself shines forth in the distinct parts and actions of the actual thing in front of me, allowing me to know what it even is.

In Kilby's reading, however, only the first aspect of Balthasar's meaning is given its due. She uses a variety of examples to show that one can never grasp the whole of the symphony but only ever gets a part. For instance, if I am sitting too close to the drums, the other parts of the symphony might be obscured. Or perhaps my hearing is limited. Here is her conclusion: "Revelation, one might say, allows us to catch *something* of the music, and to trust that there is indeed a whole symphony, but it does not allow us to *hear* the whole" (151). I suspect that this last sentence will warm the cockles of most modern readers' hearts because it sounds so "epistemically humble." It makes an enormous difference, however, whether this humility is understood in a Kantian or Balthasarian (Thomistic, Goethean) manner. Kilby's hand is shown in part by her choice of the word "trust" in that sentence. What she *knows*, in good Kantian fashion, is what we *cannot* hear (or see); what she *trusts*, in good Kantian fashion, is that there is a whole that we cannot hear.

What she underestimates are the problems one gets into when one goes down this path. First, the thing in itself either reaches us or it does not. Kant simultaneously needs it to (to wake up the categories of the transcendental subject) but cannot really let it. But he cannot have it both ways, and Fichte will have to make him more consistent by outing him as an idealist. But even worse, when one misunderstands the relationship between the part and the whole, one will inevitably turn the part into the whole. Is it not interesting that Kant, the man who set about to show reason's limitations, turns around and writes a book called *Religion within the Bounds of Reason Alone,* a book that neither Aquinas nor Balthasar, for all of their alleged "intellectual hubris," would ever write?

Let us return to Kilby's example of the person sitting *too* close to the drums. How would I know that this were the case if I didn't situate the drums against the backdrop of the whole symphony? Even more interestingly, why might I seek during my next visit to the symphony to get another seat? How would I know that I had missed anything? And if it is simply the case that one can only ever catch a glimpse anyhow, why would I want to get a *better* grasp of the *whole*?

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2013.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press

But it gets worse. If the whole does not shine forth in such a way that it can be grasped (in keeping with the mode of the recipient, of course), would it be possible to distinguish good composers from mediocre composers? Composers from mere conductors? Conductors from oboe players? Professional oboe players from amateurs? How could Salieri know to be envious of Mozart? And how could Mozart dare to write the *Jupiter* Symphony without first consulting the music faculty at Salzburg?

Balthasar's comments, then, about the dramatic structure of truth, have absolutely nothing to do with Kantian apophaticism. They recall, instead, Hegel's quip that Kant is the kind of philosopher who wants to learn how to swim before getting into the water. One cannot do theology in its proper sense while one is obsessing about the conditions under which theology can be done. One must get in the water. But the one who has gotten into the water has not forfeited her ability to talk about swimming. Indeed, she will be more qualified *both* to say something about swimming *and* to appreciate its mystery.

To return to our previous metaphor, do we really want to say that Mozart's unique ability to see a whole symphony in the midst of all of those notes and instruments precluded his appreciation of the mystery of music? To preserve the mystery of music, do we really have to have a world without composers?

RODNEY HOWSARE
DeSales University

AUTHOR'S RESPONSE

My book is a little unusual, I think, partly because it really is, at the same time, both a strong critique of Balthasar and a strong *appreciation*. The dimension of appreciation does not come through very clearly from these reviews—understandably, of course, because the critique is the more provocative element. But it is worth underlining that I have tried to do three things: to bring out what an interesting and important theologian Balthasar is; to give readers at least some feel for the creativity, excitement, and possibility of his thought; and to indicate ways in which it opens up new avenues that others can fruitfully pursue.

I find Yves De Maeseneer's description of his encounters with Balthasar as a student very helpful and entirely consistent with my own appreciation of Balthasar. It seems right to me that if one reads Balthasar in a fragmentary way, not necessarily knowing (or being concerned with) where he is going,

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2013.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and if one reads him as one inspiration alongside others, then he can be tremendously helpful for "think[ing] out of the box," expanding the imagination, opening new vistas.

And I agree also with Danielle Nussberger that if one reads some of Balthasar's discussions of the Trinity as "play," they are indeed valuable, provoking thought and expanding theological imagination. His is (as I have tried to make clear) undoubtedly one of the most "vivid" theological styles in print. Similarly, I would agree, as Nussberger suggests, that if one approaches Balthasar in order to explore and experiment with the various tensions in his thought, stimulating theology can emerge, as I think for instance the work of Gerard Loughlin shows.[17] In both cases, though, it seems to me that one will be reading Balthasar not as he offers himself to be read, but at least to some degree against the grain.

To scholars of Balthasar the *critical* line of the book is of course much more noticeable than its appreciative side, because the critical line is so much at odds with the deference—even reverence—with which Balthasar is usually treated. I have for many years felt uneasy with Balthasar's theology, and it is an uneasiness not captured by a traditional critique of a particular aspect of his theology or of his relationship to one or another of his sources. So I have formulated my uneasiness in the elusive claim that Balthasar tends to presume a God's-eye point of view, that he has a proclivity to place himself silently above history, tradition, Scripture, and his readers. But how does one set out to establish such a broad and even vague claim? I was well aware in writing the book that at each stage it would not be hard to call my argument into question. One can ask, at every step, whether there is not a different and a more charitable way to read Balthasar, or else whether the particular case under consideration might not be the exception, an idiosyncratic excess into which Balthasar may occasionally fall. It is this awareness that leads to the dialectical character of my own argument, and to the anticipation of objections that Rodney Howsare finds so striking. And it is for this reason that I think my argument works—if it works at all—on a cumulative level. At every stage, it is true, one can ask, "But couldn't he perhaps be understood otherwise?" But I hope that the sheer consistency with which the overreaching tendency of Balthasar's thought manifests itself may persuade readers that I am not simply engaged in an unfriendly reading.

17 Loughlin's creative use of the tensions in Balthasar's thought can be found in, among other places, his *Alien Sex: The Body and Desire in Cinema and Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2013.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Of course it is only to be expected that not all will be so persuaded. Yves De Maeseneer's review seems to me a very temperate and balanced articulation of the view of one who is precisely not persuaded, though he may acknowledge a degree of truth on the edge of my arguments. At most stages, he thinks, Balthasar can be read more charitably—or at least as containing "the cure for his own disease"—and so De Maeseneer is unconvinced by the "building blocks" of my case. I do not think he in fact deals with the full force of my position at each stage of his rebuttal, but then he could hardly be expected to do so within a review of only a few pages. It seems to me, then, that if one is going to find my case unpersuasive, De Maeseneer's articulation of its unpersuasiveness is a good one. It is beyond the remit of a short response to explain why at each stage I am in turn not persuaded by *his* case. Ultimately, I think, readers of the book can be left to judge between us. On the qualities of a specifically Ignatian spiritual director he is of course right, and his comments suggest that I need to find a way to articulate how, if Balthasar's voice is at times that of a spiritual director, it is precisely *not* that of a spiritual director in the Ignatian tradition.[18]

About Kevin Mongrain's review there is little that can be said, other than to warn the reader that at many points what he attributes to me is not what I actually say but what he judges me *really* to have meant. I never present myself as "aghast," nor do I use adjectives such as "poisonous," "hypnotizing," "mesmerizing," "bullying," "wanton," "deceptive," or "manipulative," nor write of "snake oil" or hustling readers. Furthermore, *pace* Mongrain, I do not present my own treatment as "polemical," and I do not actually make the hypocritically suggestive use of Tina Beattie's criticisms in footnotes on pages 137 and 139 that he claims. I quote her judgment once with explicit approval and refer readers at one point to her psychoanalytic approach, without inserting into my text or footnotes any of the details that he attributes to me. Otherwise, it is perhaps worth saying that I do not accept—and I think many others would not accept—a presumption that we must either take Adrienne von Speyr to be a "fraud" or else afford her experiences full authority.

Rodney Howsare, after some very kind remarks, argues that I go wrong at a fundamental level because I am trapped in Kantian thought patterns and have

18 In general I find myself unpersuaded by presentations of Balthasar's theology as deeply Ignatian, though this is an issue too complex to enter into here. In particular, whatever Balthasar's style as an actual retreat director, the fact that he tells us that Speyr would inform him, from a distance, of what was actually going on in the attitude of individual retreatants, might suggest something other than the standard Ignatian practice that De Maeseneer describes.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2013.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press

not attended enough to Balthasar's option for Goethe/Aquinas over Kant. My Kantianism seems to lie, in his view, in a presumption that we have no genuine access to, no real knowledge of, the things in themselves. But I don't know that there is any evidence that this really is my position. My instinct is not that in general we cannot really know things, but that we cannot necessarily have a grasp on the *whole of everything*, all at once, of a kind that Balthasar seems in places to suppose.

Howsare's comments on the symphony metaphor are instructive here. I had suggested that even if truth is symphonic (as Balthasar tells us), we might be sitting so close to the drums, or catching such a limited section of the symphony, that we are in no position to appreciate the whole. Howsare objects that if that were the case, we would be unable to decide to sit elsewhere on the next visit, or to judge Salieri an inferior composer to Mozart. But that is in fact precisely our position in relation to the totality that Balthasar describes as a symphony: we are unable to step back from the world and God's dealings with it to assess it as a whole and judge it either better or worse than some other world that (some other?) God created and redeemed, and we are even unable to choose to be differently located within it than in fact we are. Mozart and Salieri and the changing of seats simply do not apply here.

I am grateful to Danielle Nussberger for the careful précis of the book with which she opens her review, and to all the reviewers for their trouble.

KAREN KILBY
University of Nottingham

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2013.8 Published online by Cambridge University Press