

LACK OF SOCIAL DRAMA IN BALTHASAR'S THEOLOGICAL DRAMATICS

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[Balthasar values the temporal and historical dimensions of human existence, but the time and history that interest him are those of the individual subject. The author argues that an important reason for this is Balthasar's model of the Trinity, which is interpersonal rather than social. This indicates that Balthasar in his Theo-Drama retains a less dramatic approach based on the analogy of being. The result is that he focuses on the individual's relationship with God to the neglect of issues related to social justice.]

CRITICS OF HANS URS VON BALTHASAR have accused his trinitarian theology of being too other-worldly. Gerard O'Hanlon, for example, has suggested that Balthasar subsumes the history of the world into the inner-divine process in a way that does human history less than justice. He finds a relative neglect of history in Balthasar's theology and considers it open to the accusation of being "up in the clouds." Insufficient attention, he claims, is paid to the reality and importance of creation in its temporal, historical, and social dimensions.¹ Mauro Jöhri is unhappy with the pessimism he detects in Balthasar's view of worldly progress.² For his part, George de Schrijver contends that the limitations in Balthasar's ecclesiology stem from a lack of attention to the problems posed by the cultural and social

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¹ Gerard F. O'Hanlon, "The Jesuits and Modern Theology: Rahner, von Balthasar and Liberation Theology," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 58 (1992) 25-45, at 32; "May Christians Hope for a Better World?" *ITQ* 54 (1988) 175-89; *The Immutability of God in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1990) 170; "Theological Dramatics," in *The Beauty of Christ: An Introduction to the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. Bede McGregor and Thomas Norris (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994) 101, 108; and "The Legacy of Hans Urs von Balthasar," *Doctrine and Life* 41 (1991) 401-10, at 405-6.

² Mauro Jöhri, *Descensus Dei: Teologia della croce nell' opera di Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Rome: Lateran University, 1981) 389.

contexts of today. De Schrijver's strongest criticism, however, is that not enough cognizance is taken of concrete and historical reality. In his view, Balthasar's idea of analogical concordance appears to evacuate the historical dimension of humanity.³

In this article I argue that, while there is indeed a certain neglect of the social dimension in Balthasar, neither the temporal nor the historical are ignored. Whatever criticisms might be made about his lack of interest in changing social structures, clearly he does not undervalue the horizontal plane as such. But if time and history are taken seriously, obviously Balthasar tends to focus on the time and history of the individual subject. Hence the title of this article. While his dramatic theory formally allows for the interplay of various actors on the stage,⁴ I will show that in fact he tends to concentrate on the dramatic relationship between the individual and God. Finally, I will claim that a significant reason for this is his model of the Trinity, which is more interpersonal than social and bears witness to the preservation of an earlier and less dramatic approach in *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*.

THE TEMPORAL DIMENSION OF EXISTENCE

The central concern of Balthasar's *Theo-Drama* is the eschatological encounter of divine and human freedom. The eternal drama of the Trinity is understood to have opened up in Jesus Christ so that the world might be drawn in and take part in the ever-greater exchange of love in God. But the world is not thought to dissolve into God. Rather, its otherness is believed to be forever safeguarded by the otherness of God's eternal Other, the Son.⁵ This means that, for Balthasar, there is room, so to speak, for finite time and history within the eternal eventfulness of God's inner life.

With regard to time, Balthasar holds that if God draws created time into eternal time in the Christ-event and makes it a "gathered-into-God's-time" time, there is no question of finite time losing its distinctiveness in the eternal. If that process is said to begin in this world, when the transcendent

³ De Schrijver, *Le merveilleux accord de l'homme et de Dieu: Etude de l'analogie de l'être chez Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Louvain: University of Louvain, 1983) 337–38.

⁴ *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory 1: Prolegomena*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988) 298.

⁵ *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory 2: Dramatis Personae: Man in God*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1990) 330; also vol. 5: *The Last Act*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1998) 81–85; "What is Distinctly Christian in the Experience of God," in *Explorations in Theology 4: Spirit and Institution* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1995) 29–40; *Theologik 1* (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1985) 262.

dramatic horizon of the world's play comes close in Jesus Christ, any suggestion of God dominating earthly time "from above" is ruled out. And if he thinks that the true meaning of time lies in eternity, Balthasar will not accept that time is destroyed by being admitted to eternity by Jesus Christ.⁶ This is in line with the operative principle of *A Theology of History* that grace does not destroy nature but perfects it. In *Theo-Drama* created time is analogous to God's time. While the law of analogy refers created time to its prototype, it is also said to protect its intrinsic reality. Although finite time owes its origin to God, it has its own distinct being. In this view, in which there is no antithesis between time and eternity but an analogy, time is perfected by being taken into God's time, not annihilated.⁷

For Balthasar eternity is not the absence of time. Nor is it merely everlasting duration. Qualitatively richer than that, what is meant is best grasped in reference to his understanding of the event of "becoming" in God and the medium required for that event in the divine realm. While he concedes that words fail us here, he risks employing both concept and image in an attempt to say something about this mystery rather than nothing. He speaks about eternity in terms of an ever-greater "intensity," of an "elasticity" which is the divine medium for not only an everlasting but also ever-greater happening in God.⁸ What concerns us is that there is "room" in this conception of eternity for the finite. The modalities of eternity are such, according to Balthasar, that rather than interfering with created time, they are able to include it within their ever-greater dimensions so that created becoming can have a share in the "supra-becoming" in God. This means that finite time, as perfected in eternity, is allowed to remain the medium for the finite person's participation in the ever-greater love between the Son and the Father. So Balthasar's expansive conception of eternity does not only mean that created time is not crushed, so to speak, in eternity. The fact that the "timely" is thought to remain root and stem of finite happening in the eternal sphere, that time remains the medium for participation in the ever-greater event in God as far as allowing for a finite contribution, shows how seriously he conceives created time.⁹

That finite time is admitted to God's time is due for Balthasar to the time of the mediator, Jesus Christ.¹⁰ His understanding of the time of Jesus lets us see what he thinks finite time is, what it is for, and how it retains its integrity in its relationship with God's time. He recognizes that Jesus lives like everyone else in the world in a common, divided-up (*eingeteilt*) time.

⁶ *Theo-Drama* 5.110, 126.

⁷ *Ibid.* 5.57; 126–27; *A Theology of History* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1963) 39.

⁸ *Theo-Drama* 5.91–95; 131; 401.

⁹ *Ibid.* 5.130–31; "Eschatology in Outline," in *Explorations in Theology 4: Spirit and Institution* 423–69.

¹⁰ *Theo-Drama* 5.126–41.

But what finite time is and what it is really for becomes clear when Balthasar explains the time of Jesus as the medium for accepting his assignment (*Einteilung*). It is the openness of Jesus, his receptivity to all that comes to him from God, that explains his temporality. His time is his “waiting” for the revelation of God’s will. Unlike others, Jesus does not seek to “break out of time” and arrogate to himself a type of “eternity” in order to make sure things work out well for him. Jesus’ time, Balthasar contends, is lived as a refusal to anticipate his “hour,” the “hour” set by the Father. In other words, he lets God organize the whole of timely existence. His time, lived as patient receptivity, is understood as the medium required for his human freedom to express itself as openness to the will of God the Father.¹¹

This corresponds to Balthasar’s idea of how eternal time is lived in God’s inner life. There too, time is for self-gift, for personal freedom being lived as readiness and active “letting-happen.” In the economy, the incarnate Son’s “time-having” is thought to be the means of his willingness to be and do what the Father wants. The ultimate meaning of time then is “to have time” for God; it is the medium required for a free acceptance of what God wants. But the fact that Balthasar takes finite time seriously is seen in the way he does not allow the eternal background to the time of Jesus, as the incarnate Son, to dominate his worldly time. The Son’s existence in worldly time is not a game, Balthasar maintains. It is not a game played out from the vantage point of eternity, a game that is over from the start.¹² Nor does the Resurrection of Jesus do away with his worldly time. Rather, the appearances of the risen Christ are thought to demonstrate the possible co-existence of God’s time and worldly time.¹³ So the time of Jesus is taken seriously as is finite time in general. Good in itself, it is said to be liberated from the imperfections imposed on it by “the first Adam” by participating in the time of the risen Jesus. This does not mean its becoming something other than itself. There is no question of finite time, when it is taken into God’s time by sharing in the time of the risen Jesus, breaking out of its boundaries and disappearing into the perfections in God’s life. On the contrary, the redemption of created time is understood in terms of its being enabled to be itself within God’s time. In Balthasar’s view, therefore, time is not to be “skipped over” in favor of eternity.¹⁴

¹¹ *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory 3: Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992) 111; 162–63; also 5. 127–28.

¹² *Theo-Drama* 5.127; *A Theology of History* 32; *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation*, trans. Edward T. Oakes (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992) 371.

¹³ *Theo-Drama* 5.128; *A Theology of History* 89.

¹⁴ *Theo-Drama* 5.136.

THE HISTORICAL DIMENSION OF EXISTENCE

The fact that Balthasar's eschatology is overly cautious about forward-running historical development¹⁵ should not lead us to conclude that the historical as such is without theological interest for him. While it is true that he is not interested in the concerns of social theologies, this does not mean that the historical character of human existence is simply irrelevant in his view.

If Balthasar speaks about time being taken into God's time by means of the time of Jesus Christ, much the same is said of history. His eschatology envisages the taking of finite historical existence into the liveliness of God's existence, but there is no implication that history loses its distinctiveness in a synthesis with God's history. Just as he allows for no identity between secular and salvation history, there is no room in his view of happening in God for finite historical existence dissolving into the eventfulness of God's inner life.¹⁶ While there is a marvelous portrayal of the inner life of the Trinity in *Theo-Drama* and the focus is on the introduction of finite history into God's history, there is no question of the finite order not being respected. For Balthasar, this process has already begun. The history of Jesus Christ has already made it possible for the world to participate in God's own history. But the value he places on worldly history is clear from his insistence that Christians ought not to "dream themselves away" into heaven. On the contrary, one is to take up one's personal mission in *this* world.¹⁷ God's will is encountered in history; one's response does not take one out of history. While Balthasar gives priority to personal conversion, to the transformation of the heart rather than to social structures, he does not encourage persons to flee the world or to turn their backs on history.¹⁸ Rather, Christians are to take on a vicarious "for the world" stance after the example of Jesus who, historically, entered into solidarity with the world.¹⁹

In Balthasar's *A Theology of History*, history is said to be related to the history of Jesus Christ as promise to fulfillment.²⁰ As with time, the eventfulness of the incarnate Son's life is thought to be history's "world of ideas" and that which gives history its true meaning. But there is no devaluation

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 5.141–88.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 5.81–85; 117–19; 126; 130; 136; 2.330; *A Theology of History* 131.

¹⁷ *Theo-Drama* 5.117.

¹⁸ For his opposition to a flight from the world in Buddhism and neo-Platonism, see Balthasar, "The Fathers, the Scholastics and Ourselves," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 24 (1997) 347–96, at 357; see also Raymond Gawronski, *Word and Silence: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Spiritual Encounter between East and West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995) 19–24.

¹⁹ *Theo-Drama* 3.154–55; 231; 5.129–36; 392–94; *Engagement with God*, trans. John Halliburton (London: SPCK, 1975) 86–97.

²⁰ *A Theology of History* 21; 57–59; 112–23.

of the historical in this. If Jesus Christ is understood to communicate to history its true "idea" and help it to attain its perfection, there is no suggestion that history would otherwise have no meaning. Rather, history is thought to have its own immanent meaning apart from grace, a meaning whose proper content and distinctive character are not violated by the history of Christ. In *Theo-Drama*, it is not as if he accords only a Platonic shadowy existence to worldly history, as if the world had been waiting in the dark for the lights to come on and the curtain to open on God's play acted in Jesus Christ. In his view, there is already a play going on in front of the curtain;²¹ the play of the world—namely, history—is real and good in itself. Its being drawn into God's play by Jesus Christ only helps it to attain its perfection. Moreover, if the Logos is thought to be the "world of ideas" that gives history its true meaning, what makes for a genuine affirmation of the historical dimension is that Balthasar does not see this as emanating from some ahistorical height. On the contrary, taking seriously the real descent of the Logos into history in the Incarnation, he conceives of it as stemming from the very heart of history.²² All this makes it difficult to understand the claim that he allows the historical to be subsumed into the divine process in a way that does it less than justice. History is important to Balthasar, but as I shall now argue, it is the history of the individual subject that interests him.

EMPHASIS ON THE INDIVIDUAL

I do not claim that there is a basis for individualism in Balthasar's theology. Community was important to him, as is seen from his commitment to the Society of Jesus, the *Studentische Schulungsgemeinschaft*, and the Community of St. John. All the same, there remains in his theology a certain emphasis on the individual and the particular mission one has received from God, a claim borne out perhaps by his own departure from the Society of Jesus for a closer, more personal, following of Ignatius. The communitarian dimension of the Church does matter to Balthasar, but it is understood as the consequence of the individual's prior communion with Christ. Communion with God in Christ comes first, communion with others second.²³ This order of priorities is also evident in the sharp contrast he

²¹ *Theo-Drama* 1.129.

²² *Theo-Drama* 3.117–21; 125; 5.118–25; *A Theology of History* 12, 18–19, 65; "The Word and History" in *Explorations in Theology 1: The Word Made Flesh*, trans. A. V. Littledale with Alexander Dru (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989) 27–45, at 40.

²³ "Communio: Ein Programm," *Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift: Communio* 1 (1972) 4–17, at 12–15.

sees between the old and new dispensations.²⁴ If he accepts that God's partner in the old covenant was first and foremost the people, he thinks that this comes to an end in the transfer to the new era. In the new covenant, he contends, collectivity as such ceases.²⁵ His point is that one does not enter the Church by birth but in answer to a personal call. If God's word was previously addressed to the whole people, he argues that the Incarnate Word now addresses and calls the individual to relationship. In contrast to the Old Testament situation, God now speaks to the individual: to individual disciples, individual sick people, the individual sinner. Not that such encounters are judged to be private. For example, he notes that the blind man of Bethsaida (Mark 8:22–26) is brought to Jesus by fellow villagers.²⁶ All the same, support is found for his stress on the individual subject in Jesus' taking the man by the hand and leading him "outside the village," a walk that is thought to make the man a person. If sociology sees the human being as both a political animal and a singular being, Balthasar would argue that theology thinks otherwise. In his own approach, the accent lies on the singular. In his view, even the church community is a place of solitude, solitude being an "existential" of the Church.²⁷ The Church emerges ever anew from the individual's relationship to God in Jesus Christ. Being born of God is thought to "tear one out" of one's natural connectedness with others. One becomes a new creation whose social relations are possible only in virtue of one's relationship with Christ.²⁸

LACK OF SOCIAL DRAMA IN *THEO-DRAMA*

If time is for "having time for God" and history is the complex of events that ensues from such patient receptivity, what is important to Balthasar is the individual's refusal to anticipate God's will and his or her commitment to the mission assigned by God. If the essence of drama is the interplay of relationships and Balthasar's theodramatic theory allows for a coordination of the actors under the direction of the Holy Spirit,²⁹ what one finds in his *Theo-Drama* is that the real drama takes place in the heart of the individual. If the central concept of *Theo-Drama* is freedom, it emerges

²⁴ See "Conversion in the New Testament," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 1 (1974) 47–59, at 49–52.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 51–54.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 52.

²⁷ "Loneliness in the Church," in *Explorations in Theology 4: Spirit and Institution* 261–98.

²⁸ "Conversion in the New Testament" 56.

²⁹ *Theo-Drama* 1.298.

that what is important is the dramatic encounter between divine freedom and the freedom of the individual human subject.³⁰

Under the influence of Erich Przywara, Balthasar initially studied the relationship between finite and infinite freedom in the context of the analogy of being. The nonidentity of existence and essence in the human subject was said to allow for a better inner attunement and so a greater likeness to God and corresponding ability to reveal God in the world.³¹ Jesus himself was thought to be the *analogia entis* in person and, as such, was understood to be the singular instance of right relationship with God; he exercised his freedom to enter into harmony (*Übereinstimmung*) with his essence just as God freely harmonizes with the divine essence.³² By entering into relationship with him as the perfect analogy between God and humankind, by proportioning oneself to his proportion, the individual could share in his freedom and so come to a proper attunement (*Stimmen*) with God.³³ But in this framework, two related “one-to-one” relationships were implied. The first is the analogy between Jesus Christ and God, and the second between the individual Christian and Christ.

While this philosophical approach is not entirely left behind,³⁴ Balthasar’s *Theo-Drama* treats the question of freedom in a much more dynamic context, that of the theatre and of dramatic action. The Trinity, as an ever greater exchange of love between the divine persons, is understood in terms of an eternal play that opens up in Jesus Christ for the benefit of human freedom. Everyone is understood to have some role in the play. However, it is only in Jesus Christ that the acting area for others is said to appear. While the world’s natural play (the play in front of the curtain) is thought to be good and positive in itself, Balthasar asserts that it is only when God sends the Son that a genuine interplay between finite and infi-

³⁰ Thomas G. Dalzell, *The Dramatic Encounter of Divine and Human Freedom in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997).

³¹ See *Apokalypse der deutschen Seele: Studien zu einer Lehre von den letzten Haltungen* 1: *Der deutsche Idealismus* (Salzburg: Pustet, 1937) 418–19; “Verstehen oder Gehorchen?” *Stimmen der Zeit* 69 (1938) 73–85, at 74–75; *Theologik* 1.277–78; *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics* 1: *Seeing the Form*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, ed. Joseph Fessio and John Riches (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1982) 35–36; 467–69; 4: *The Realm of Metaphysics in Antiquity*, trans. Brian McNeill et al., ed. John Riches (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989) 408–9; *The Moment of Christian Witness*, trans. Richard Beckley (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994) 82.

³² *The Glory of the Lord* 1.467–69, 472; *A Theology of History* 74 n. 5, 18, 65, 79.

³³ *The Glory of the Lord* 1.475.

³⁴ The biblical concept of “image and likeness” (Genesis 1:26) is understood by Balthasar in terms of the analogy of proportionality. The internal ordering of the two poles of finite freedom, autonomy and theonomy, is now said to correspond to the order in the trinitarian life of God in which the divine persons freely harmonize with the one divine will (*Theo-Drama* 2.320–28).

nite freedom is possible.³⁵ If the philosophical approach spoke about a participation in the freedom of the *analogia entis* in person, now the fulfillment of the natural dramatic dimension of human existence is thought to be enabled by a participation in the action of the incarnate Son as the principal actor in God's play. This is a matter of sharing in his willingness to enter into his role, a participation in his "yes" to the mission the Father gives him. Despite the new context, the emphasis remains on the individual subject sharing in the self-transcendence of a singular figure. If one is to accept the part for which a script has been written, Balthasar maintains that one can do so only by participating in the freedom of the leading actor. In fact, he holds that it is only by sharing in the action of the unique person of Jesus Christ, the domain of his freedom, that a conscious subject may first be rendered a "person."³⁶ Sharing in the protagonist's "yes" empowers one not only to take on one's mission but also to appropriate one's very personhood.³⁷ Moreover, it enables a genuine encounter between human and divine freedom. Balthasar contends that this sharing in the "yes" of Jesus Christ is really a participation in the eternal yes-saying of the Son in the original drama of the immanent Trinity. In doing the Father's will on earth, the incarnate Son is understood to bring his freedom into line with his eternal self-giving stance.³⁸ Consequently, the individual's encounter with Christ is said not only to render him or her a person, but also to take him or her into the Son's eternal response to the Father. By being in relationship with Christ, one is enabled to take part in the relationship in God between the Son and the Father. One's "yes" to Christ is taken into the Son's eternal "yes" to the Father, one is enabled to enter a son or daughter relationship with God, but only by participating in the Son's filial relationship with the Father.³⁹

A consequence of this approach is that there is a certain emphasis on the individual in *Theo-Drama* as well. On the one hand, the individual is Jesus himself, the only Son whose "yes" to his unique mission is presupposed by his eternal "yes" in God. On the other hand, it is the individual who gains a share in the incarnate Son's mission and personhood and, as a person, is invited to take part in the one-to-one relationship in God. While the context is new, the emphasis is still on the individual in his or her relationship

³⁵ *Theo-Drama* 3.20–22, 41–42, 532–33.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 3.231.

³⁷ *Ibid.*; *Engagement with God* 39–43; "Drei Formen von Gelassenheit" in *Skizzen zur Theologie* 5: *Homo Creatus Est* (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1986) 31–37, at 33.

³⁸ "Jenseits von Kontemplation und Aktion?" *Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift: Communio* 2 (1973) 16–22, at 20; *Theo-Drama* 3.283–84; 4: *The Action*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994) 324–26; 5.87–89, 92.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 5.105–8; "What is Distinctly Christian in the Experience of God," in *Explorations in Theology* 4: *Spirit and Institution* 39.

with God. What is important to Balthasar is not time or history in general, but whether or not the individual will wait for the role (mission) for which he or she has been scripted and live it out in the world.

This raises a number of questions. Does not appropriation of categories from the world of the theatre imply a variety of actors? Moreover, since the essence of drama, be it stage-drama or the drama of human existence, is the relational interplay of actors, could it not be argued that there is a certain inconsistency between Balthasar's formal acceptance that the Holy Spirit, as the director of the play, coordinates various *dramatis personae*⁴⁰ and the fact that as *Theo-Drama* progresses the real action seems to be centered on one actor? While Balthasar thinks one can become a person only in relation to Jesus Christ as the leading actor in the play, could it not be argued that what renders one a person is the taking up of one's role in the natural play of human existence, a role defined in relation to other characters such as the members of one's family?

We also need to ask about the ultimate origin of this accent on the individual. It is possible to isolate several factors that give rise to it. For example, it is clear that Balthasar's theology bears the stamp of the Fourth Gospel and of Ignatius of Loyola. Much has been said elsewhere of the Johannine form of Balthasar's theology.⁴¹ But what is relevant here is that the Fourth Gospel can be understood to be directed to the individual believer.⁴² Moreover, the influence of Ignatius should not be underestimated. In Ignatius there were two centers of gravity. The first is the *Spiritual Exercises* that are directed to the individual; the second is the *Constitutions* that regulate the life of the members of the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits. Balthasar's interest lies in the former. When Jacques Servais relates Balthasar's writings to corresponding texts in Ignatius Loyola, he turns to the *Spiritual Exercises* rather than the *Constitutions*.⁴³ Perhaps this preference in Balthasar is confirmed by his own personal history. The influence of Adrienne von Speyr is clear. Her spirituality had a profound effect on him. What is relevant to my argument is that Adrienne lived in a distinctive world—a mystical world of contemplation, visions, and spiritual

⁴⁰ *Theo-Drama* 1.298.

⁴¹ See, e.g., Giovanni Marchesi, *La Cristologia di Hans Urs von Balthasar: La figura di Gesù Cristo, espressione visibile di Dio* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1977) 28–33.

⁴² See Joachim Gnllka, "Zur Christologie des Johannesevangeliums," in *Christologische Schwerpunkte*, ed. Walter Kasper (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1980) 92–107, at 96; *Das neue Echter Bibel Kommentar zum Neuen Testament* 4 (Würzburg: Echter, 1993) 10; John F. O'Grady, "Individualism and Johannine Ecclesiology," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 5 (1975) 227–61.

⁴³ Jacques Servais, ed., *Texte zum ignatianischen Exerzitenbuch bei Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1993).

allocutions, a world characterized by personal suffering.⁴⁴ Also pertinent is the fact that Balthasar decided to leave the Society of Jesus for a closer, more personal, following of Saint Ignatius. These are some of the factors that give rise to the accent on the individual subject in Balthasar's dramatic theology. Above all, however, I argue that this emphasis is based on his earlier mindset associated with the analogy of being. I now wish to show how the continuation of the analogy of proportionality in particular explains the lack of social drama in his *Theo-Drama*.

PRESERVATION OF THE ANALOGY OF PROPORTIONALITY

If Balthasar originally studied the question of freedom in the context of the analogy of being, it was the analogy of proportionality, not the analogy of attribution, which best suited his purposes. While the analogy of attribution is interested in the many-to-one relationship, the analogy of proportionality concerns a likeness relationship between two things. This likeness is based on the similar internal ordering in the two things in such a way that out of four terms, the second is related to the first as the fourth is related to the third. The early Balthasar employed this philosophical tool in a spiritual context as a framework for understanding obedient correspondence to God. Just as God freely enters into harmony with the divine essence, one is invited to realize freely a harmony between one's existence and essence. What made this specifically Christian was that such analogical correspondence was thought to be made possible by a mediating analogy of proportionality between the individual Christian and Christ. But if there was already a spiritual interpretation of the analogy of being in the early Balthasar, this is further developed in *Theo-Drama* where the spiritual construction is given a trinitarian background. If the earlier approach spoke about the participation of finite freedom in infinite freedom, this comes to be situated in a dramatic context in which the individual's freedom is said to participate in trinitarian freedom and specifically in the freedom proper to the eternal Son that harmonizes with that of the Father.

While the context is new, the elements of the analogy of proportionality are preserved. In the earlier schema, the analogy of proportionality between the individual Christian and Jesus Christ was understood to enable a graced participation in the analogy of proportionality between Jesus

⁴⁴ Adrienne von Speyr, *My Early Years*, ed. Hans Urs von Balthasar, trans. Mary Emily Hamilton and Dennis D. Martin (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1995); *Erde und Himmel, Ein Tagebuch 1: Einübungen*, ed. Hans Urs von Balthasar (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1975) 1034; *The Christian State of Life*, ed. Hans Urs von Balthasar, trans. Mary Frances McCarthy (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986). See also Balthasar, *First Glance at Adrienne von Speyr*, trans. Antje Lawry and Sergia Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1981) 18, 24–27, 35, 37, 45–46.

Christ and God. Now the individual's relationship with the incarnate Son is seen as enabling a participation in the Son's relationship with the Father. The earlier conception understood the analogical correspondence between Jesus and God in terms of Jesus freely identifying with his essence just as God eternally, but freely, harmonizes with the divine essence. The latter pole of the analogy was already conceived of as a dynamic operation of divine freedom, but the new schema understands God's life as a dramatic mystery of interpersonal freedom. Rather than talk of a free harmonizing of God's existence and essence, we now find an emphasis on the divine persons freely harmonizing with the one divine will. The eternal Son is thought to say "no" to divine autonomy *in the same way* that the Father says "no" to it in his giving himself away. The inner life of God then is grasped as a correspondence of fatherly self-gift and filial answering self-gift. This amounts to a common "no" to divine autonomy or, more positively, a common activity of saying "yes," a loving agreement between God and God.⁴⁵

Access to that event of interpersonal love is said to open up in the work of the incarnate Son. Balthasar's point is that the risen Jesus takes the "yes" of the individual subject into his own filial "yes" that corresponds to the original "yes" of the Father in the immanent Trinity.⁴⁶ In other words, relationship with Christ enables one to participate in the eternal relationship in God between the Son and the Father. If the context is new, it can be argued that the components of the analogy remain. In virtue of the individual's relationship with Christ, he or she can participate in the freedom of the Son as he exercises it in the same way as the Father. If the drawing of created freedom into God's freedom now means its finding a place in this synthetic unity of God's trinitarian freedom, its way into that mystery is still participation in the freedom of the incarnate Son.⁴⁷ This "in the Son" participation in the divine exchange of love points to the continuation of two analogies of proportionality. In the dramatic encounter of divine and human freedom two one-to-one relationships are indicated: the individual subject's relationship with the incarnate Son and the Son's unique I-Thou relationship with the Father. The individual transcends

⁴⁵ See *Theo-Drama* 4.326, 328; 5.88–89, 95–96.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 5.483–85; 373–384; 425–28; "Eschatology in Outline" 423–29; "What is Distinctively Christian in the Experience of God?" 29–40.

⁴⁷ *Theo-Drama* 5.518–21. While this text suggests a sharing in the *whole* life of God, the idea is not elaborated to the extent it is in other approaches. Bernard Lonergan, for example, develops a conception of the created person's graced participation in the divine relations of Fatherhood, Sonship, Active Spiration and Passive Spiration (Lonergan, *De Deo Trino 2: Pars Systematica* [Rome: Gregorian University, 1964] 235).

autonomy like the incarnate Son where the Son's self-transcendence corresponds to that of the Father.

However, it should be made clear that this results only in a certain accent on the individual and the individual's relationship with God. It is a matter of emphasis. It would be quite wrong to suggest that everything is reduced to this in his approach. For Balthasar, the world is richly populated. He does not understand the world with its many personal histories in terms of mechanistic relations between monads. All the same, in his view each individual's history is important. Above all, his interest is in the free "yes" of the individual subject to what God wants him or her to be in the world. This is the foundation of a theological personalism rather than a basis for individualism, but there remains an emphasis on *individual* persons and their freedom. This emphasis is evident in *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics* where the individual form (*Gestalt*) is seen as revelatory, but it continues into *Theo-Drama*. But against this emphasis, can we not ask about social forms? Are they not revelatory? Moreover, does the social dimension of salvation have to fade into the background in a theological dramatics? While *communio* is important to Balthasar, the accent on the individual's relationship with God makes for a certain imbalance in his approach. While it is possible to show that a number of factors give rise to this, obviously the preservation of the perspective of the analogy of proportionality is particularly significant.

AN INTERPERSONAL MODEL OF THE TRINITY

The continuation into *Theo-Drama* of this mindset gives rise to a particular model of the Trinity. Balthasar once accused Karl Barth's analogy of faith of representing a "christological restriction."⁴⁸ Yet, while Balthasar does recognize an analogy of being between the world and God apart from the work of Jesus Christ, his own theology can be characterized as christocentric. The relevance of this to my present topic is that the focus on the person and work of Jesus Christ gives rise in his idea of the immanent Trinity to a focus on the person and activity of the Son in relation to the Father and consequently to a certain neglect of the Holy Spirit. In other words, in Balthasar's conception of the inner life of God, the action appears to center around the eternal Son and his response to the Father so that what can be said to be operating is an interpersonal model of the Trinity rather than a truly social one.⁴⁹ The immanent Trinity is conceived

⁴⁸ *The Theology of Karl Barth* 242–43.

⁴⁹ Anne Hunt speaks of Balthasar meeting social models of trinitarian theology in their rejection of the psychological analogy. While she rightly notes that Balthasar's approach differs in that its primary concern is doxology, not praxis, I am

of as an ever-deepening I–Thou relationship (analogous to our experience of interpersonal relationship in this world) where the mutual love of the Son and the Father far exceeds the expectations of each. This is not to say that Balthasar’s immanent Trinity has no room for the Holy Spirit. We will see shortly that the Spirit is understood *to be* the mutual love of the Father and the Son and the fruit of that love. But we will also see that the Spirit remains in the background, as it were, as the somewhat anonymous and unknown divine person. What appears most important in the immanent Trinity is the eternal Son and the exercise of his freedom as answering love, as saying “yes,” as giving himself back to the Father.

These observations are confirmed by Raymund Schwager’s thesis that Balthasar’s dramatic theology is fully concentrated on the cross of Christ.⁵⁰ In *Der wunderbare Tausch*, Schwager draws back from Balthasar’s staurological focus and develops a dramatic theology that considers the whole life of Jesus, and so that everything is not reduced to the one level, he distinguishes four acts within the one drama.⁵¹ In *Jesus im Heilsdrama* he goes on to claim that Balthasar’s concentration on the cross means that the Holy Spirit, while given a greater role than in other Christologies and theories of redemption, does not attain his ultimate and proper significance. For that reason, Schwager distances himself further from Balthasar and decides to unfold his own dramatic model in *five* acts, where the fifth act deals with the post-Easter outpouring of the Holy Spirit and what he calls “the new gathering.”⁵² This lends support to my own view that in the immanent Trinity Balthasar’s concentration on the activity of the eternal Son results in a relative neglect of the Holy Spirit.

Against this, it is important to note that when Balthasar accuses Barth of a christological restriction, he is suggesting that in his own judgment he himself has avoided one. In addition, he is not content to settle for the psychological analogy in the search to understand the Trinity. He expresses himself in favor of a relational ontology in which not only is absolute Being thought to be love, but also relationality turns out to be a feature of every level of Being. In fact, the notions of intersubjectivity and dialogue run right through his theology and anthropology. Do not these points call my hypothesis into question?

arguing that what really distinguishes his model of the Trinity from current social models is that his model is more interpersonal than social (“Psychological Analogy and the Paschal Mystery in Trinitarian Theology,” *Theological Studies* 59 [1998] 197–218, at 198).

⁵⁰ Raymund Schwager, *Jesus im Heilsdrama: Entwurf einer biblischen Erlösungslehre* (Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 1990) 276.

⁵¹ Schwager, *Der wunderbare Tausch: Zur Geschichte und Deutung der Erlösungslehre* (Munich: Kösel, 1986) 305.

⁵² Schwager, *Jesus im Heilsdrama* 276.

Regarding Barth's christological restriction as applied to his analogy of faith, is Balthasar actually saying that he has escaped such a restriction himself through a greater trinitarian emphasis? Balthasar was impressed by Barth's christocentrism, and he advocated a christologically framed analogy of being. His reaction to Barth's analogy of faith rests on the view that without the Christ-event there is no relationship of analogy between the human subject and God. At that time he described Barth's approach to revelation in terms of an "intellectual hourglass" in which the sand runs from top to bottom, and in which there is no other point of contact between God and humanity than the center of the hourglass, Jesus Christ.⁵³ For Balthasar, if one is to take seriously Barth's creation-covenant formula, one must posit the existence of a real analogy in virtue of creation as such. His remarks then about Barth's christological restriction did not mean that he judged himself to have avoided such a restriction in virtue of a greater trinitarian emphasis, but that he had done so rather by salvaging what was present in virtue of creation.

Balthasar's preferred analogies for understanding the Trinity is here more relevant. He clearly finds the psychological analogy of Augustine and Aquinas based on the interior operations of the individual subject inadequate for gaining insight into the threeness of God. Drawing upon insights from Heribert Mühlen and, with some reservations, Richard of St. Victor, Balthasar turns to more social analogies. Two in particular can be cited. In the first, the Holy Spirit is thought to be analogous to the common work of two friends, the fruit of their "we." In the second, just as a child results from the unity of married love, the Holy Spirit is thought to result from the unity of the Father and the Son.⁵⁴ But I would argue that these analogies are not really social in the true sense of the word. Is it not more accurate to classify them as interpersonal analogies? In the first analogy, the third reality is grasped in reference to an interpersonal relationship between two friends. In the second, while Balthasar wants to rule out the subordination that occurs in the finite realm in the parent-child relationship, the analogy points to an ontological priority of the interpersonal relationship between the Father and the Son. Is it really a social analogy in the way that one based on a community of three equals might provide insight into the community in God?

This confusion of social and interpersonal brings us to the objection that intersubjectivity and dialogue run right through Balthasar's theology and anthropology as consequences of the relational ontology he espouses.

⁵³ *The Theology of Karl Barth* 197.

⁵⁴ "The Holy Spirit as Love," in *Explorations in Theology 3: Spiritus Creator*, trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993) 117-34, at 127; *Theologik 2* (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1985) 54-57, 149-51, 154 n. 37.

Could it not be said that the relationality he prefers is more accurately understood as interpersonal rather than social or communitarian? It is true that his interest is in the relational. But, as I have noted, the accent falls on the relationship between two subjects. This applies not only to relationality at the finite level but also the level of absolute Being itself. In Balthasar's view, Being is only love. But if the latter is formally described as trinitarian love, there is in fact a focus on the Son's I-Thou with the Father. Since this implies a certain neglect of the third person in the Trinity, it is necessary to consider the position of the Holy Spirit in Balthasar's conception of the inner life of God.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS INTERPERSONAL LOVE IN GOD

Uniting traditional Latin trinitarian theology, which understands the Holy Spirit as proceeding from the Father and the Son as the bond of their mutual love, and the traditional Greek trinitarian theology, which views the Spirit as the expression of God's outermost being, the *ekstasis* of God's love, Balthasar speaks of the Holy Spirit as both the mutual self-surrender in love of the Father and the Son and the eternal fruitfulness of that love.⁵⁵ But if the Spirit is said to be the unity of two divine persons and the eternal exuberance of their unity, the Spirit is also understood to be a person. For Balthasar, the "between" that expresses and seals the unity of Father and Son does so in as much as "it" is that unity personally. That unity is a "someone."⁵⁶ Again, as the eternal excess of love in God and the ever-greater fruitfulness of that love, the Spirit is understood as a personal "We" beyond the I-Thou between the Son and the Father as the product of their unity.⁵⁷ All the same, it is interesting to note that this "someone" is called "the unknown one beyond the Word."⁵⁸ The third person of the Trinity is said to be the common result (*Ergebnis*) of the Father and the Son, as the sum of their turning toward each other. But it is precisely in this that the Holy Spirit is said to have an anonymous face.⁵⁹ It is true that a clearer indication of the Spirit's proper personhood emerges in Balthasar's maintaining that the result can allow itself to become independent, to stand over and against the Father and the Son. As Kossi Tossou has explained, this shows that despite the anonymous face, the result is not simply identical

⁵⁵ See "The Unknown Lying beyond the Word," in *Explorations in Theology 3: Spiritus Creator* 105–16, at 107; *Theo-Drama* 4.326, 331; "Spirit and Institution," in *Explorations in Theology* 4.209–43, at 230.

⁵⁶ "The Unknown Lying beyond the World" 107.

⁵⁷ *Theo-Drama* 5.79, 89; *Theologik* 3 (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1987) 218; "The Holy Spirit as Love" 127.

⁵⁸ "The Unknown Lying beyond the World" 105–16.

⁵⁹ "The Holy Spirit as Love" 125.

with the Father and the Son.⁶⁰ Could it not be argued, however, that the person of the Spirit remains somewhat less differentiated than the two persons from whom he results?

Of particular relevance to my argument is Balthasar's idea of the Spirit as the freedom character of God's love.⁶¹ What is striking is the implied anonymity of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit does not reveal his own freedom, but the freedom of God.⁶² If, like Mühlen, Balthasar holds that it is the proper characteristic of the Holy Spirit to be "a person in two persons,"⁶³ he asserts that the Spirit's own truth consists of revealing the truth of the other two persons.⁶⁴ In other words, the Spirit is nothing other than the expression of the ever-greater love of the Father and the Son. While recognized as a person, the Spirit is understood to have no identity that is exclusively his own. One can only approach what is proper to the Spirit, we are told, through what is proper to the Son and the Father.⁶⁵ If it might be objected that this *kenosis* of the Holy Spirit is the particular form of something undergone by the three persons in God, the anonymity that results could hardly be regarded as something merely appropriated to the Holy Spirit. In fact, Balthasar claims that the very name "Spirit" indicates that anonymity is a proper characteristic the Spirit. The Spirit, he asserts, does not even have a name; what serves as his name could be applied to the entire Godhead: God is Spirit.⁶⁶ John Randall Sachs has pointed out that nameless does not mean impersonal.⁶⁷ However, my argument is not that the Holy Spirit is thought to be impersonal but that, in this conception of the inner life of God, the Spirit seems to remain in the background. Even as the personification of the freedom of God, the Holy Spirit remains unknown and anonymous. For Balthasar, anonymity and personhood are not opposites for the third person in God, but two aspects of the same reality.

All this supports my claim that the explicit action in God's inner life appears to take place between the Son and the Father. Indeed, the Holy Spirit is said to be the very personification of their interpersonal relation-

⁶⁰ Kossi K. J. Tossou, *Streben nach Vollendung: Zur Pneumatologie im Werk Hans Urs von Balthasars* (Freiburg: Herder, 1983) 315.

⁶¹ *Theo-Drama* 5.89; *The Glory of the Lord* 1.196; "The Holy Spirit as Love" 125; "Spirit and Institution" 232; *Prayer*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986) 127.

⁶² "The Holy Spirit as Love" 125.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 128; Mühlen, *Der Heilige Geist als Person in der Trinität, bei der Inkarnation und im Gnadenbund: Ich-Du-Wir* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1966) 10-11.

⁶⁴ "The Holy Spirit as Love" 127.

⁶⁵ "The Unknown Lying beyond the World" 112.

⁶⁶ "The Holy Spirit as Love" 127.

⁶⁷ John Randolph Sachs, *Spirit and Life: The Pneumatology and Christian Spirituality of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Tübingen: University of Tübingen, 1984) 62.

ship. If the Spirit is also understood to stand over and against the other two as subjective Spirit (analogous to the free subjectivity of the child that arises from the mutual love of its parents), as their personal “We,” as the eternal increase and surplus of their already perfect love, to the extent that the Spirit can be thought of as calling the Father and Son to an ever-greater self-gift as the occasion of wonder and surprise in God,⁶⁸ it can still be argued that these have meaning only as functions of the I–Thou at the heart of the divine life. My argument is, therefore, that while Balthasar does have a developed pneumatology,⁶⁹ his understanding of the eventfulness of the immanent Trinity is such that the main focus remains on the other two persons and particularly on the Son in his “yes” to the Father. Does this accent on the Son’s I–Thou with the Father not point to a preference for the interpersonal over the social in his idea of relationality in God? Moreover, does it not bear out my hypothesis that the analogy of proportionality schema is preserved in *Theo-Drama*?

CONCLUSION

Against claims that Balthasar’s theology neglects the temporal and historical dimensions of existence, it is not true that the horizontal plane is without theological interest for Balthasar. He does take the temporal and historical dimensions of human existence seriously, but the time and history that concern him most are those of the individual subject. The refusal of individuals to anticipate God’s will and the willingness to live out their

⁶⁸ See *Theo-Drama* 4.326; “Improvisation on Spirit and Future,” in *Explorations in Theology 3: Spiritus Creator* 135–71, at 127–28, 145; “Spirit and Institution” 230–32; *Theo-Drama* 5.78, 88; *Theologik* 3.218, 136.

⁶⁹ While it must be accepted that Balthasar does allow an active role in the economy for the third person of the Trinity, e.g., in his seeing the Spirit as the one who reinterprets in the Church the paschal “silence of the Word” (see *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics 7: Theology: The New Covenant*, trans. Brian McNeil, ed. John Riches [San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989] 157, 209–11, 225, 234, 152, 160, 253–54, 489, 504–5), this does not detract from my claim that in the immanent Trinity, although the third person is said to call the Father and Son to a greater self-gift, the Spirit still tends to remain in the background. Furthermore, despite the conception of the Spirit’s economic activity that is based on the idea of “trinitarian inversion,” the “alternating” of active and passive roles between the Son and Spirit (see *Theo-Drama* 3.520–23; “Spirit and Institution” 230–32), it can be argued that Balthasar does not sufficiently attend to the full extent of the Spirit of Pentecost’s active role. Although he speaks about the Holy Spirit being active in mediating personal missions and charisms and establishing offices to build up the Church, he emphasizes this aspect of the Spirit’s activity over the role of effecting communitarian love in the Church. All the same, I am not arguing that this pneumatology is responsible for the emphasis in Balthasar’s idea of the Trinity on the interpersonal over the social, but that it results from that emphasis.

mission in history are what are important to him. This accent on the freedom of individuals was initially given a conceptual framework by the analogy of being, and the analogy of proportionality in particular, and this perspective continues into *Theo-Drama*. Individuals become more themselves by being taken into the "yes" of the incarnate Son to the Father. But even in the very life of God the preserved schema results in the action centering around the Son in his response to the Father. This is not to say that Balthasar's idea of the Trinity is a basis for individualism in the world. His understanding of personhood would rule that out. However, his view of the event in God's inner life, with its accent on the answering love of the only Son, is complemented in the finite realm by an emphasis on the response of the individual subject to God. In his book on Karl Barth, Balthasar accepted that if Barth had moved in the direction of analogy, he never gave up the desire for a theology of happening. A possible corrective to the imbalance in Balthasar's own approach might be a movement beyond his version of the analogy of being with its interest in the one-to-one relationship, a recognition of a properly social dimension to the happening in God, and a fuller appreciation of the social character of happening in the world.