

Karl Rahner's Theological Logic, Phenomenology, and Anticipation

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Abstract

This article provides an update on the logic undergirding Karl Rahner's theology of mystery through a dialogue between Rahner and Jean-Luc Marion. It focuses on Rahner's account of truth in Aquinas and Marion's Gifford Lectures on revelation. Marion's distinction between "alethic" (modern-epistemological) and "apocalyptic" (phenomenological-Christian) logics elucidates anew Rahner's commitment to mystery as deep, abiding truth. Also addressed is Marion's Balthasarian concern about Rahner and "anticipation," expressed as criticism of the "anonymous Christian." The article aims to encourage future, robust theological reflection on truth, an always timely endeavor.

Keywords

anonymous Christian, apocalyptic, Thomas Aquinas, God, Jean-Luc Marion, mystery, Karl Rahner, revelation, truth

For the past sixty years, Karl Rahner's theology of mystery has been the touchstone for Catholic treatments of mystery. His chief text on mystery, "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology" (1959), an essay that grew out of Rahner's teaching, still needs deeper analysis after all these years.¹ Particularly desirable is an

1. Karl Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4 (Baltimore, MD: Helicon, 1966), 36–73; German: "Über den Begriff des

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update regarding the Rahnerian logic that undergirds the mystery essay, this logic's relationship to present-day philosophy, and its standing with respect to still unresolved criticisms of Rahner, particularly from Balthasarians. By "logic," I mean "an ordered approach to truth." Rahner's mystery essay presents a steadfast Christian commitment to truth, in which truth can never be reduced to modern-scientific perspicacity, nor can it devolve into mindless religious, political, or economic assent. The present article is a theoretical venture aimed at elucidating Christian witness to the abiding interplay of faith and reason, which is directed at vigilant apprehension of truth.

I interpret Rahner here in dialogue with French phenomenology, a broadly influential strand of contemporary thinking that, in the main, has arrayed itself against Rahner's theology in favor of Hans Urs von Balthasar's.² In particular, I choose Jean-Luc Marion as an especially formidable thinker regarding logic, truth, and revelation. The dialogue has already been initiated, both in secondary literature (including the pages of *Theological Studies*) and in Marion's own references to Rahner.³ This article deepens the inquiry. It does so by reading Rahner's interpretation of Thomas Aquinas's theory of truth together with Marion's recent thinking on truth at the juncture of phenomenological philosophy and theology. My central distinction comes from Marion, who distinguishes between two different approaches to truth: "alethic" and "apocalyptic" logics.⁴ Put briefly, "alethic" characterizes the governing logic of modernity, which imposes the constraints of human reason on revelation and cancels mystery (as in modern scientism). "Apocalyptic" names the governing logic

Geheimnisses in der katholischen Theologie," in *Menschsein und Menschwerdung Gottes: Studien zur Grundlegung der Dogmatik, zur Christologie, theologischen Anthropologie und Eschatologie*, Sämtliche Werke, vol. 12, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (Freiburg: Herder, 2005), 101–35. Later in this article I include cross-references to the German, listing the English translation pages, then the *Sämtliche Werke* pages. *Theological Investigations* will be cited by *TI* and volume number. Otto Schärpf has recently provided a glimpse into this teaching with Rahner in "Seminar über das Geheimnis (1957–1958)," transcript by Otto Schärpf, <http://host-82-135-31-182.customer.m-online.net/Geheimnis.pdf>.

2. This tide, however, may be shifting, as the work of Emmanuel Falque evidences, including his announcement of a "second generation" of the so-called "theological turn" in French phenomenology. See Emmanuel Falque, *Metamorphosis of Finitude: An Essay on Birth and Resurrection*, trans. George Hughes (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 43, 45; Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon: The Borderlands of Philosophy and Theology*, trans. Reuben Shank and Matthew Farley (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 93–94; Falque, *The Loving Struggle: Phenomenological and Theological Debates*, trans. Bradley B. Onishi and Lucas McCracken (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018).
3. See Peter Joseph Fritz, "Karl Rahner Repeated in Jean-Luc Marion?" *Theological Studies* 73 (June 2012): 318–38, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040563914529897>. That article drew a response: Ryan Duns, "Beneath the Shadow of the Cross: A Rahnerian Rejoinder to Jean-Luc Marion," *Philosophy & Theology* 28 (Fall 2016): 351–72, <https://doi.org/10.5840/philtheol2016102461>. Explicit references by Marion to Rahner will be considered and duly noted below.
4. Jean-Luc Marion, *Givenness & Revelation*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 34 and *passim*.

of Christianity (and contemporary phenomenology, at least in Marion's hands), which allows revelation without constraint and preserves mystery. I argue, using Marion's terms, that the governing logic of Rahner's theology is apocalyptic and set against alethic logic, and that this becomes clearest—surprisingly—in Rahner's idea of the human person's anticipation (*Vorgriff*) of divine Mystery.

The Rahner–Marion dialogue supports a Christian logic centered on God as the mysterious Truth who at the same time cannot be anticipated yet is inevitably anticipated. Such an account needs constantly to be renewed because Christian logic, as it approaches truth, is never merely theoretical, and should charge “the understanding to will or not to will to accept the coming of God who gives God's self in and *as* the event of Jesus.”⁵ Let us keep this last point in mind as we proceed into the seemingly abstruse—yet necessary—thickets of theory.

Rahner's Interpretation of Thomas on Truth

Rahner engaged deeply and lastingly with Thomas Aquinas. A major example is his 1938 lecture, “Thomas Aquinas on Truth.”⁶ This too infrequently noted text belongs to the fecund time of Rahner's career when he produced better known works like *Spirit in the World* (1939) and *Hearer of the Word* (1941). Its focus provides particularly fruitful inroads for dialogue with Marion. Thus I shall offer extended exposition and running commentary.⁷

“Thomas Aquinas on Truth” sets out “to present, in brief outline, the essence of truth as seen by Thomas.”⁸ Rahner's further intention is to show how Thomas might guide theology in its pursuit of truth.⁹ He insists from the start that Thomas is a theologian,

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5. Marion, *Givenness & Revelation*, 117, emphasis original, English translation slightly modified.
 6. The lecture was written in German and first published in a Portuguese translation (*Revista portuguesa de filosofia* 7 [1951]: 353–70), only to be released decades later in German (“Die Wahrheit bei Thomas von Aquin,” *Schriften zur Theologie*, vol. 10 [Zürich: Benzinger, 1972], 21–40). Karl Rahner, “Thomas Aquinas on Truth” in *TI* 13 (New York: Seabury, 1975), 13–31. For the German original, I shall reference Rahner, “Die Wahrheit bei Thomas von Aquin,” in *Geist in Welt: Philosophische Schriften, Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 2, ed. Albert Raffelt (Freiburg: Herder, 1996), 301–16. References given in parentheses will be to page numbers of the English translation, with occasional cross-references to the German if revision was needed.
 7. A refreshing exception to the underappreciation of “Thomas Aquinas on Truth” is a recently published chapter by Louis Roy, who foregrounds it in his appreciative critique of Rahner's “epistemology” from a Lonerganian point of view. See Louis Roy, *Engaging the Thought of Bernard Lonergan* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016), 121–40.
 8. Rahner, “Thomas Aquinas on Truth,” 13.
 9. The essay that follows “Thomas Aquinas on Truth” in the *Schriften/TI* is “Possible Courses for the Theology of the Future,” *TI* 13: 32–60. Both are set within a part of that volume dedicated to theology as a science. Clearly Rahner is proposing Thomas as a guide for theology's future scientific pursuits.

not a philosopher; in fact, none of his works could be characterized as exclusively philosophical.¹⁰ Yet he is philosophically interesting. His thought on truth is especially ripe for theological–philosophical dialogue. In fact, for the purposes of analysis and despite his early insistence, Rahner treats Thomas for most of the essay as a philosopher (consistent with the reigning paradigm in the 1930s), so as to draw out his reasoned logic. Rahner proposes, “creatively to reconstruct the original line of reasoning of the philosopher [Thomas] himself.”¹¹ He makes his case in three parts, concerning, respectively, three of Thomas’s “basic ideas”: (1) judgment; (2) the agent intellect (*intellectus agens*); and (3) God as pure being and pure thought.¹² This threefold case results in a theological conclusion.

Rahner’s discussion of “judgment” invokes a similarity between Thomas and Immanuel Kant. Thomas and Kant largely agree on how to begin a metaphysics of truth. One starts with “the agreement of an act of cognition with its object” (Kant) or “*adequatio rei et intellectus*” (Thomas). But in comparing Kant and Thomas, Rahner qualifies this shared starting point. He calls the agreement of intellect and object/thing “a provisional approximation, a mere description.” An approximation of what? A description of what? Rahner states that any metaphysical enquiry directs itself toward “something which is already familiar to us from the first, but which we fail to comprehend precisely for this reason [i.e., because it is so familiar].”¹³ For Thomas, metaphysical enquiry proceeds from a “something” (truth) that is incomprehensible precisely in its familiarity.

The meaning of “intellect” emerges when one discovers that for Thomas, “truth at the human level is located in judgment.”¹⁴ More specifically, truth lies in the content of the judgment as opposed to the act of judging. Truth lies in judgment “and not in the forming of a concept.”¹⁵ This distinction between judgment and concept-formation is important. Rahner likens it to a similar distinction from Martin Heidegger. Concept-formation, or “concretizing (*konkretisierende*)” synthesis, would be what Heidegger calls a “predicative synthesis (*prädikative Synthesis*).” This synthesis is a “constitutive element of judgment and so too of truth” (“the reality itself”), which Heidegger would call a “veritative synthesis (*veritative Synthesis*).”¹⁶

Characteristically, Rahner does not cite his source here, but the referent is Heidegger’s *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1929). Near the beginning of this text, Heidegger discusses the “essence of the finitude of knowledge.”¹⁷ He differentiates

10. Rahner, “Thomas Aquinas on Truth,” 13.

11. Rahner, “Thomas Aquinas on Truth,” 14–15.

12. Rahner, “Thomas Aquinas on Truth,” 16.

13. Rahner, “Thomas Aquinas on Truth,” 16.

14. Rahner, “Thomas Aquinas on Truth,” 17. Rahner unfolds this idea with respect to specifically human intellection in Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, trans. William Dych (New York: Continuum, 1994), 123–32.

15. Rahner, “Thomas Aquinas on Truth,” 17/306.

16. Rahner, “Thomas Aquinas on Truth,” 17/306.

17. Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 5th edn., trans. Richard Taft (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 18–24 (§5).

between different “syntheses” that occur between thinking and sensing (“intuition”) to constitute the essence of finite (human) knowledge: “veritative” and “predicative” syntheses.¹⁸ “Veritative synthesis” refers to the original unity of knowledge between “universal intuition” and “pure thinking,” and so operates at an ontological register.¹⁹ “Predicative synthesis” signifies a subsequent representation of veritative synthesis in concepts.²⁰ Rahner seems to have in mind that Thomas’s account of judgment centers on the being toward which the act of judging refers, rather than on the subjective act of judging. For Heidegger, something similar holds true in Kant, where “predicative synthesis” pertains to a subject, but “veritative synthesis,” which is prior to and enables “predicative synthesis,” pertains to “something wholly other.”²¹ Rahner alters Heidegger’s terminology of “veritative” and “predicative” syntheses into “affirmative” and “concretizing” syntheses. As with Heidegger’s terms, Rahner assigns ontological priority to the former over the latter, though without dismissing the latter’s necessary role in human pursuit of knowledge of the truth.

This opening discussion leads to a substantial consideration of the complexity of human judgment, which includes sensible and intelligible elements.²² Thomas agrees with Kant that thoughts and sensation, concepts and perceptions, must go together, lest they turn up empty or blind.²³ Sensibility is an ontological, not simply instrumental, determination of human knowledge. Through sensibility, which for Thomas is passive and receptive, “the real thing [can] imprint its image upon the receptivity of the knower, and so reveal itself of itself.” In this way, sense experiences are always genuine (they really receive reality), though prior to judgment (information they gather remains mostly unprocessed).²⁴ Rahner’s inquiry into judgment in Thomas, then, leads to a consideration of the light of the active understanding by which judgment can occur.

For Thomas, as with Aristotle, Kant, and G. W. F. Hegel, the truth of a judgment resides not in an “object” like “an idea, a light of God, [or] God himself,” but in “a formal *a priori* of the spontaneous intellect itself.”²⁵ There are multiple possible ways that this formal *a priori* could be discovered through a transcendental deduction, and

18. The distinction is originally made in Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 20, and elaborated throughout the book. Heidegger names a third synthesis, “apophatic synthesis,” but Rahner does not discuss it.

19. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 20, 42.

20. See, e.g., Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 45.

21. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 81.

22. This complexity accounts for the length and intricacy of *Spirit in the World*, in which Rahner intends to differentiate between the specifically human (as opposed to divine or angelic) apprehension of truth, which involves a complex interaction of sensibility (as *praesentia mundi*, or presence of the world), intellection (as *oppositio mundi*, or standing opposite the world), and conversion to the phantasm (the unified interaction of sensitive world-presence and intellectual world-opposition). See Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, 77, 238.

23. Rahner, “Thomas Aquinas on Truth,” 18.

24. Rahner, “Thomas Aquinas on Truth,” 20.

25. Rahner, “Thomas Aquinas on Truth,” 21. See also Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, 202–26.

Rahner names a few. But he prefers another approach: to find how, for Thomas, the assurance of a judgment's truth may be achieved "by a reduction to the first principles." By these Rahner does not mean the "mere principles of formal logic," like non-contradiction. Instead, he means ontological principles—"veritative" as opposed to "predicative"—that apply absolutely to all existing things.²⁶

These principles are "evident," but not in the sense of being objectively subsistent.²⁷ Thomas disallows metaphysical intuition as much as Kant does. Nor would Thomas say that these principles are evident in the sense that a proper understanding of their intrinsic meaning would make them recognizable as objectively existent and valid. This is the error of the pre-Kantian, modern "ontological argument for the existence of God."²⁸ First principles do not have an objective existence independent from other beings.²⁹ The first principles become evident through the light that operates as the "*a priori* form in which an intellect, of its own spontaneity, apprehends ... sensory material." The intellect's "dynamic outward movement," or its "hunger" (Rahner alludes to Hegel), which opens toward the "totality of all possible objects of human knowledge," constitutes the "condition of expressing a judgment."³⁰ This openness does not allow for direct vision of absolute being but always directs itself to things perceived through the senses. That said, it also transcends sense experience, apprehending the "transcendental determinations of being" from which "first principles are formed."³¹ The first principles become evident "once we abstract (*absehen*) from the evidence of sense experience as such."³² Rahner summarizes: "The evidence of the first principles ... is the matter-of-fact realization that in every judgment a person makes in this-worldly knowledge, the metaphysical validity of these principles is affirmed, and this affirmation is the implicitly set *a priori* condition for the possibility of this-worldly knowledge."³³ Every true judgment affirms implicitly the metaphysical principles that make it true.

Rahner then returns to the idea with which he began the discussion of judgment. For Thomas, the definition of truth in terms of "agreement" or "*adequatio*" does not imply a comparison between the reality known and the reality in itself.³⁴ There is no gap between reality in itself and reality as experienced that would necessitate such a comparison. "Agreement" must be seen in terms of the intellect's reflection upon

26. Rahner, "Thomas Aquinas on Truth," 22.

27. Rahner, "Thomas Aquinas on Truth," 22.

28. Rahner, "Thomas Aquinas on Truth," 23.

29. Rahner, "Thomas Aquinas on Truth," 24.

30. Rahner, "Thomas Aquinas on Truth," 24.

31. Rahner, "Thomas Aquinas on Truth," 25–26.

32. Rahner, "Thomas Aquinas on Truth," 26/312, ET modified.

33. Rahner, "Thomas Aquinas on Truth," 26/313, ET entirely revised: "Die Evidenz der ersten Prinzipien ist vielmehr die sachliche Einsicht, das in jedem Urteil, das der Mensch in seiner innerweltlichen Erkenntnis setzt, die metaphysische Geltung dieser Prinzipien bejaht wird und daß diese Bejahung die implizit gesetzte apriorische Bedingung der Möglichkeit der innerweltlichen Erkenntnis ist."

34. Rahner, "Thomas Aquinas on Truth," 27.

itself. Through self-reflection, the intellect exceeds the limitations of sense intuition and avoids being absorbed by an object's particularity. Still the intellect does not become unmoored from sense intuition. Thus self-reflection accesses an ontological level where universal and particular, intelligible and sensible, converge. Judgment consists primarily in a "veritative affirmative synthesis" that operates at the level of first principles. Thomas's descriptor for this level, or the characteristic proper to it, is *lumen intellectus*.³⁵ This light of the intellect consists in "an implicit, if ever so formal assessment of being in general, only in an embrace of being itself, and so ... in an implicit affirmation of pure being, of God himself."³⁶ This light makes knowledge possible. It comes from God, who is pure being.

At this point Rahner quotes from Thomas's *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate* q. 22, a. 2, a passage that caused considerable controversy in twentieth-century Catholic theology.³⁷ The article treats the question "whether all things desire God himself (*utrum omnia appetant ipsum Deum*)."³⁸ It answers, "All things naturally desire God implicitly, but not explicitly."³⁹ Rahner directly quotes the response to the first difficulty: "*Omnia cognoscentia implicite cognoscunt Deum in quolibet cognito* (all knowers implicitly know God in anything known)."³⁹ He glosses this quotation, stating, "Truth is possible only in being as such (*Wahrheit ist nur im Sein überhaupt möglich*)."⁴⁰ Rahner's point is that the truth of a judgment hinges on the veritative synthesis, which he has displaced from its Heideggerian meaning.⁴¹ Heidegger wishes to discover the essence of *finite* knowledge in an original unity-in-plurality of intuition and understanding.⁴² For Rahner, the veritative synthesis has greater depth than finitude, since the truly original unity-in-plurality

35. Rahner, "Thomas Aquinas on Truth," 28.

36. Rahner, "Thomas Aquinas on Truth," 28/314, ET revised.

37. At the center of this controversy was Henri de Lubac, *The Discovery of God* [1945], trans. Alexander Dru with Mark Sebanc and Cassian Fulsom (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), for which Aquinas, *De Veritate* q. 22, a. 2 is the programmatic text.

38. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* q. 22, a. 2, quaestio and corpus, Corpus Thomisticum, <http://www.corpusthomicum.org/qdv2201.html>. Translation mine.

39. Rahner, "Thomas Aquinas on Truth," 28.

40. Rahner, "Thomas Aquinas on Truth," 28/314.

41. In addition to the displacement considered in the following sentences, the theology of truth that Rahner develops out of his interpretation of Thomas will introduce a term Heidegger judges unacceptable: love. The relationship between knowledge and love is a pivotal topic for Rahner, though it receives no attention in "Thomas Aquinas on Truth" and, consequently, little attention here (see "Apocalyptic Logic and Anticipation" below). This has to be so to maintain a tight focus. In his wider corpus, Rahner carefully parses knowledge and love, which he associates in his trinitarian theology with the Word and the Spirit (and grace), respectively, with due awareness of their plural unity. Here I treat the first side of those dualities. A more extensive conversation between Rahner and Marion (along with Heidegger and others) would necessitate careful consideration of love, which for Marion, too, is associated with the Holy Spirit.

42. See also Peter Joseph Fritz, "Karl Rahner, Friedrich Schelling, and Original Plural Unity," *Theological Studies* 75 (June 2014): 284–307, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040563914529897>.

is the unity of being and knowing in God.⁴³ This original unity-in-plurality is affirmed implicitly in each human judgment, the key moment of coming-to-knowledge (*Erkenntnis*), which implicitly tends toward God (*appetant Deum*). Rahner evidently expects his reader to recall the rest of Thomas's answer, "*nil est cognoscibile nisi per similitudinem primae veritatis* (nothing is knowable but through a likeness of first truth)."⁴⁴ Judgment's bearing upon the thing in itself is a *similitudo* of God as first truth.

As he works toward his conclusion, Rahner speaks once more of "affirmation," this time "of being in its formal structures."⁴⁵ Such affirmation occurs in every judgment. This transcendental condition for all human knowledge (including self-knowledge) consists in standing before "the absolute spirit ... through the transcendence of our spirit."⁴⁶ This is what Rahner earlier referred to as the "already-familiar." Absolute spirit already acts through finite spirit every time that finite spirit operates. Here Rahner enriches his thinking on the "veritative synthesis." He observes: "For Aquinas an instance of knowledge is true, i.e. embraces being in general, to the extent that it simultaneously [and] necessarily is an opening of the knowing subject's own being; therefore—to put it in modern terms—every instance of knowledge is also always already an existentiell matter of man. For the more being presents itself to him, the more it brings him to himself and before himself."⁴⁷ Thomas's teaching on truth rests on the transformative meeting of being (absolute spirit, or God) and the being proper to the human knower (finite spirit) at the point of affirmative judgment (veritative synthesis). Confrontation with a "wholly other" this-worldly object entails, however implicitly, a face-to-face with the Wholly Other God. Judgment involves God's revelation, where God strikes experience as both already-familiar and Wholly Other, both unveiled and "most-hidden (*verborgenste*)."⁴⁸

On this note, Rahner ends his lecture. In keeping with his introduction, which insisted that Thomas's philosophy of truth always serves theology, he concludes a largely philosophical disquisition by referring to Thomas's devotional hymn *Adoro Te Devote*. Rahner writes, "The most personal of existential factors, and the most metaphysical at the same time, is that which Thomas has expressed in these words: *Adoro te devote latens Deitas, quae sub his figuris vere latitas*." He continues, "Everything is a parable—*figura*—of God, who is always being unveiled yet at the same time always hidden in the parable."⁴⁹ While Thomas recognizes the proper autonomy of philosophy, he also treats truth as not merely a philosophical issue—philosophy of truth serves a theology of the hidden God.⁵⁰ One might expect a text that presents Thomas's

43. Rahner, "Thomas Aquinas on Truth," 29.

44. Aquinas, *De Veritate* q. 22, a. 2 ad 1.

45. Rahner, "Thomas Aquinas on Truth," 30/316, ET revised.

46. Rahner, "Thomas on Truth," 31/316, ET revised.

47. Rahner, "Thomas Aquinas on Truth," 30/316, ET completely revised.

48. Rahner, "Thomas Aquinas on Truth," 30/316, ET revised.

49. Rahner, "Thomas Aquinas on Truth," 31/316, ET revised.

50. Karl Rahner, "On Recognizing the Importance of Thomas Aquinas Today," in *TI* 13: 3–12 at 11. Beyond the two sources on Thomas already cited, see Karl Rahner, "An Investigation of the Incomprehensibility of God in St. Thomas Aquinas," in *TI* 16: 244–54.

theory of truth as centering on human judgment and the light of the *intellectus agens* to conclude by saying that truth is a matter of the human intellect's uncovering of the unknown. Instead it ends by presenting Mystery, appearing though shrouded⁵¹ on the Cross and in the Eucharist, as the highest truth. Rahner unfolds this idea in a later lecture on Thomas' continued importance for twentieth-century theology (1970): "The '*adoro te devote latens Deitas, quae sub his figuris vere latitas*' must not always be said lyrically, but [taken] as being the innermost essence of all theological thinking and discovery."⁵² Thomas's philosophy and theology derive their precision and depth of insight from his recognition that truth is not primarily something we grasp, but that by which we are grasped. Truth is not to be rationalized, but adored. Theologians, Rahner implies, should take notice. Since Rahner adopts this Thomistic insight, he shares common ground with Marion.

Marion's Distinction: *Aletheia* v. *Apokalypsis*

In his recent Gifford Lectures, published as *Givenness & Revelation* (2016), Marion distinguishes between *aletheia* and *apokalypsis* as two ways that truth becomes manifest.⁵³ The former corresponds to modern metaphysics, which purveys an epistemological approach to truth that precipitates epistemological (and consequently moral) limitation of revelation. The latter is employed by contemporary phenomenology (Marion has in mind largely his own), which gives primacy to phenomena as they appear from themselves, rather than to the consciousness to which they appear. Such phenomenology promises to reopen revelation after its modern foreclosure.⁵⁴ Likewise, *apokalypsis* resonates with patristic and medieval Christian accounts of truth and revelation. Thus the idea of *apokalypsis* constitutes a nexus between today's phenomenology and deep Christian theological traditions. In formulating this idea, Marion argues in a manner similar to Rahner's treatment of Thomas.

Marion commences his explanation of the *aletheia*–*apokalypsis* distinction by clarifying how these terms are *not* to be understood. He does not, à la Heidegger, draw a contrast between the two along the lines of Greek *aletheia* versus Judeo-Christian

51. This phrase alludes to Gerard Manley Hopkins's English translation of *Adoro Te Devote*. The translation is available online at <http://www.rosarychurch.net/mystic/aquinas.html>.

52. Rahner, "On Recognizing the Importance of Thomas Aquinas Today," 9, ET entirely revised: "Das '*adoro te devote latens deitas quae sub his figuris vere latitas*' muß nicht dauernd lyrisch gesagt werden, aber das innerste Prinzip alles theologischen Denkens und Erkennens sein" (for the German, see Rahner, "Bekenntnis zu Thomas von Aquin," in *Dogmatik nach dem Konzil: Theologische Anthropologie und Eschatologie*, Sämtliche Werke, vol. 22/2, ed. Albert Raffelt [Freiburg: Herder, 2008], 637–43). Rahner puts emphasis on "*latens*," as he presents Thomas as a thinker of God's hiddenness par excellence.

53. Marion, *Givenness & Revelation*, 34.

54. In this way, *Givenness and Revelation* builds off of the trajectory of thought Marion opened in his *magnum opus*, *Being Given* (especially §24), which began to discuss the phenomenon of Revelation. See Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 234–47.

apocalyptic.⁵⁵ Instead, he traces the distinction to modernity. He poses the modern problem between the terms as follows: “The dissimulation of revelation as *apokalypsis* takes its origin from the interpretation of *aletheia* as truth, in the sense of certainty’s showing of a clear and distinct representation in evidence.”⁵⁶ Prior to the modern period, Christian theologians saw revelation as *apokalypsis*, as God’s free self-disclosure whose only condition was God’s steadfast love.⁵⁷ The onset of modernity led to an eclipse of this understanding of revelation. With modernity came a focus, first among intellectuals and eventually in the wider culture, on epistemology and epistemic conditions. In order for something to count as true or truth, it must be known with certainty. The primacy of love as *apokalypsis* principle of logic collapsed in favor of knowledge narrowly conceived, *aletheia* taken as “unconcealment” or “knowing [as] seeing and knowing directly.”⁵⁸

During modernity, truth as unconcealment occurs according to conditions set by two principles: (non)contradiction and sufficient reason.⁵⁹ These guarantee truth, which is now regarded as propositional. Marion adduces the early Jesuit thinker Francisco Suárez (with whom Rahner has a complex relationship) as emblematic of this propositionalist reduction. For Suárez, revealed truth comes as a *propositio sufficiens* (a proposition modeled on the principle of sufficient reason).⁶⁰ Truth is sharply circumscribed. Rather than appearing from itself, it appears within strict, externally imposed limits: hence Johann Gottlieb Fichte’s critique of revelation (1793) and Kant’s setting of religion within reason’s boundaries (1794).⁶¹ In effect, Marion argues that modern, epistemological thought on revelation specifies the grander metaphysical

55. Marion, *Givenness & Revelation*, 34.

56. Marion, *Givenness & Revelation*, 35.

57. This sentence expresses succinctly Marion’s distinctive understanding of the term “apocalyptic,” which he derives from earlier Christian traditions and directs against modern thought. Twentieth- and twenty-first-century theologians and philosophers have interpreted apocalyptic diversely, often leading to misunderstandings when they are read together. A thinker like Walter Benjamin and a theologian like Rahner’s most famous student, Johann Baptist Metz, emphasize the “interruptive” dimension of apocalyptic, or the tendency of God’s revelation to come like a thief in the night. This emphasis bears some resemblance to Marion’s view of apocalyptic, inasmuch as he will write of phenomena as events that cannot be anticipated. More central for Marion, though, is the comprehensive yet still mysterious character of *apokalypsis*, as this sentence suggests (God’s steadfast love is an infinitely broad condition). In this respect, Marion resembles Rahner. For an in-depth consideration of diverse theories of apocalyptic, see Cyril J. O’Regan, *Theology and the Spaces of Apocalyptic*, Père Marquette Lectures in Theology (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2009). On Rahner and apocalyptic, see Peter Joseph Fritz, *Karl Rahner’s Theological Aesthetics* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 205–60, especially 237–51.

58. Marion, *Givenness & Revelation*, 45.

59. Marion, *Givenness & Revelation*, 35.

60. Marion, *Givenness & Revelation*, 35–36.

61. Marion, *Givenness & Revelation*, 31–32.

project that he describes elsewhere as the reduction of things to objects.⁶² An object is “the conditioned representation of the thing, as the thing conditionally.”⁶³ When revelation as a “thing” (a neutral or positive term) is treated as an object, it comes to depend on conditions set for logical propositions. In the process, it loses “the phenomenal autonomy and spontaneity of a thing showing itself from itself.”⁶⁴ Indeed, the central issue between *aletheia* and *apokalypsis* is that of phenomenality, of something's right and power to appear. Consequently, it is an issue of logic—alethic or apocalyptic logic—thus of *Logos*.

Can the *Logos*, God the revealed Word, manifest itself from itself, or must it manifest itself according to the conditions set by modern metaphysics?⁶⁵ The two logics Marion has identified answer this question differently. Alethic logic insists that manifestation must occur on the order of the object, which a subject can fully see, know, and control—that is, which it can fully anticipate. So long as the *Logos* allows itself to be mastered by the human subject, it has the right and power to appear; otherwise not. Apocalyptic logic allows for a broader range of phenomenality, including the manifestation of a person, which is not reducible to the gaze that foresees it. Such a logic would allow the *Logos* to appear of its own right and power. Apocalyptic logic leaves open the possibility of a phenomenon that appears as “an event, sprung up from nowhere else than from its own abandonment to itself,” or in Marion's now famous term, a “saturated phenomenon.”⁶⁶ The person who encounters such a phenomenon should not have designs on setting conditions for it, but “must accept to see it without foreseeing it.”⁶⁷ Marion avers, “Under *aletheia* or unconcealment, the *I* always determines the phenomenon through anticipation, whether this is the anticipation of its

62. Jean-Luc Marion, *Negative Certainties*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 166.

63. Marion, *Negative Certainties*, 166, Marion's emphasis removed.

64. Marion, *Negative Certainties*, 166.

65. Marion, *Givenness & Revelation*, 47. It is worth noting here that Marion, like Rahner, discusses the revelation of truth within a trinitarian framework that cannot be treated thoroughly within this article's brief span. My focus on *Logos*/logic should not imply that Marion, Rahner, or I ignore the Holy Spirit. For Marion, the revelation of the *Logos* is paramount for opening logic beyond *aletheia* to *apokalypsis*. That said, this logic is, as the title of the Gifford Lectures' fourth chapter has it, trinitarian. Relying on Augustine's *De Trinitate*, Marion describes the Holy Spirit as the divine person who brings about and completes the revelation to which apocalyptic logic pertains. See Marion, *Givenness & Revelation*, 112–13. A longer and more involved Rahner–Marion dialogue would have to treat the Holy Spirit, grace, and love, but as already indicated, that is impossible here.

66. Marion, *Givenness & Revelation*, 48. For his initial discussion of the phenomenon as event (and vice versa), which feeds into his initial sketches of the saturated phenomenon, see Marion, *Being Given*, 159–73. And for further developments on which he draws in *Givenness & Revelation*, see Jean-Luc Marion, “The Event, or the Happening Phenomenon,” in *In Excess: Studies in Saturated Phenomena*, trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 30–53.

67. Marion, *Givenness & Revelation*, 49.

apperception, or that of its intentionality.”⁶⁸ The “I” assigns a significance to the phenomenon in advance. By contrast, the “I” under *apokalypsis* or uncovering becomes a “witness,” one who sees but does not foresee, who knows but does not completely understand the phenomenon she has encountered.⁶⁹ In this way, the saturated phenomenon constitutive of apocalyptic logic extends phenomenality, in opposition to alethic limitation of it.⁷⁰ Alethic logic aims to effect “positive certainty through a categorical assertion on an object,” while apocalyptic logic can effect “a negative certainty on the boundaries of the power of knowing.”⁷¹ Apocalyptic logic centers on the phenomenon (e.g., the *Logos* as self-uncovering event), rather than on the human subject who would know an uncovered proposition.

Given this theoretical framework, we can now return to Rahner’s interpretation of Thomas on truth. Rahner discusses human judgment in terms of two syntheses. Predicative synthesis has to do with representation and concept-formation, which he characterizes as secondary to (predicated upon) veritative synthesis, which has to do with judgment’s apprehension of truth. Judgment in the veritative synthesis occurs on an ontological level prior to formation of concepts. These two syntheses roughly correspond to Marion’s two logics. Alethic logic is predicative; apocalyptic, veritative. I shall defend these claims first by associating Marion’s reading of *apokalypsis* with Rahner’s appropriation of Joseph Maréchal’s reading of Aquinas’s *De Veritate* q. 22, a. 2, and then by suggesting a convergence between Marion’s use of the alethic–apocalyptic distinction to criticize modern metaphysics with Rahner’s use of a revised position on Mystery to criticize neo-Scholastic theologies.

Maréchal, Thomas, Rahner, and Apokalypsis

Even on a cursory reading, Maréchal’s influence on Rahner’s “Thomas Aquinas on Truth” is undeniable. In addition to implicit clues, the reader is explicitly pointed twice in Maréchal’s direction.⁷² In lieu of a broader discussion, I wish to discuss briefly a small point from Maréchal’s *Le point de départ de la métaphysique, Cahier 5* (1926), which I believe created a field of resonance for Rahner’s theology of truth. When Maréchal invokes Thomas’s *De Veritate* q. 22, a. 2, he makes an interesting parenthetical comment: that it must be interpreted through *Summa theologiae* 1, q. 84, a. 5 and 1, q. 88, a. 3.⁷³ Maréchal does not elaborate on his suggestion. I intend to, connecting this suggestion to Rahner’s thinking on the veritative synthesis, which I consider “apocalyptic.”

68. Marion, *Givenness & Revelation*, 52.

69. Marion, *Givenness & Revelation*, 52, 59, 53.

70. See Marion, *Givenness & Revelation*, 56.

71. Marion, *Negative Certainties*, 6.

72. Rahner, “Thomas Aquinas on Truth,” 15n5, 25.

73. Joseph Maréchal, *Le Point de départ de la métaphysique: Leçons sur le développement historique et théorique du problème de la connaissance, Cahier V: Le Thomisme devant la Philosophie critique*, 2nd edn. (Paris: Declée de Brouwer, 1949), 450.

Summa Theologiae 1, q. 84, a. 5 asks, “Whether our soul knows everything [including material things] in eternal ideas (*utrum anima nostra omnia quae intelligit, videat in rationibus aeternis*).”⁷⁴ Thomas answers in the affirmative, relying on Augustine’s authority.⁷⁵ But he immediately qualifies this “yes,” pointing out Augustine’s difference from Plato. While the latter held that material things can be known through self-subsisting forms, Augustine contends that the “*rationes*” of creatures exist in the divine mind. They are not self-subsistent, but owe existence to their Creator. Thomas proceeds to an explication of how things are known, stating that human beings know material things “in [and by] a principle of knowledge.”⁷⁶ This principle is the “uncreated light” of the divine mind “in which all eternal ideas (*rationes*) are contained” and of which the “intellectual light within us is nothing other than a participated likeness (*participata similitudo*).”⁷⁷ Thomas proceeds, “By the seal of the divine light in us, all things are shown (*demonstrantur*) to us.”⁷⁸ But this participation is partial, and depends on an exigency of human knowledge: we know material things, which are not isomorphic with eternal ideas of them. Thus human intellectual light must contend with “intellectual species,” which the intellect derives from things in time and space.⁷⁹ Thomas will add to this two articles later, in 1, q. 84, a. 7 (the article on which Rahner bases *Spirit in the World*). “Phantasms,” which the senses derive from things in space and time, also prove necessary for human knowing. These points specify the basic idea from the *De Veritate* that God is known implicitly in human knowledge of things. Divine light is apprehended through the light of the human intellect, but implicitly rather than explicitly, because of the layers of participation that intellectual species and phantasms represent.

Summa Theologiae 1, q. 88, a. 3, which asks whether God is the first object known by the human mind, teaches something similar. God cannot be known directly, but only through creatures. Nevertheless, in keeping with the idea that the human intellect participates in the light of God’s mind, Thomas argues that while God is not an object of knowledge, God “is the first cause of our power of knowing (*primam cognoscitivae virtutis causam*).”⁸⁰ Human persons do not bear within them a “perfect image of God,” such as Christ had, which would allow human persons to “know God immediately (*statim*).” In us, Thomas explains, “the image is imperfect.”⁸¹ Once more, human knowing knows God implicitly rather than explicitly. Rahner thinks similarly in the crucial part of *Spirit in the World*, on the “possible intellect.” This distinctively human

74. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 84, prooemium (hereafter cited as *ST*); translations are my own.

75. Aquinas, *ST* 1, q. 84, a. 5, *sed contra*.

76. Aquinas, *ST* 1, q. 84, a. 5, *corpus*.

77. Aquinas, *ST* 1, q. 84, a. 5, *corpus*.

78. Aquinas, *ST* 1, q. 84, a. 5, *corpus*.

79. Aquinas, *ST* 1, q. 84, a. 5, *corpus*.

80. Aquinas, *ST* 1, q. 88, a. 3 ad 2.

81. Aquinas, *ST* 1, q. 88, a. 3 ad 3.

mode of intellection consists in an image of God's knowing.⁸² Human knowing is possible; God's knowing, actual.⁸³

Here we have a paradox. The human intellect's activity, which participates *in divine light*, seems, in principle, able to unconceal all things (*aletheia*). But as *participating* in divine light—imperfectly—the human intellect must, even in its activity, be receptive to the uncovering (*apokalypsis*) of things. Things uncover themselves to human judgment, which must adjudicate their truth based on impressions both sensible (phantasms) and intelligible (species) made in things' uncovering and arrival to the human knower. Through these things, human persons come to recognize that they stand before God's absolute intelligence, which is given and shown, but nevertheless remains unseen. The locus of this recognition is the veritative synthesis, which consists in the unity of sensibility in its engagement with phantasms and the intellect in its grappling with the species. The veritative synthesis is the subjective correlate to *apokalypsis*, which occurs first and foremost on the side of the things ("saturated phenomena," perhaps?), which are all the more revealed and revealing in that they reflect divine light.

Maréchal's suggestion for interpreting *De Veritate* q. 22, a. 2 has helped us to link Rahner's thinking about the veritative synthesis to Marion's category of *apokalypsis*. To cement the connection between Rahner and Marion with respect to apocalyptic logic, we must return to the theme of mystery.

Marion, Rahner, and Mystery

In the Gifford lectures, Marion makes a major advance in his phenomenology, at least as it relates to Christian theology. He restates a principle that he set down in *Reduction and Givenness* (1989): "So much reduction, so much givenness (*autant de réduction, autant de donation*)."⁸⁴ This principle followed from a detailed historical-systematic study of Edmund Husserl and Heidegger and their shared maxim, "So much appearance, so much being (*soviel Schein, soviel sein*)."⁸⁵ This Husserlian-Heideggerian thesis rested on the phenomenological idea (or operation) of the reduction. Something that appears has being, whether or not that thing actually exists, inasmuch as the phenomenologist brackets out consideration of its existence (performs the reduction). Marion digs more deeply than this thesis, finding that the amplitude of "being" discovered by the reduction with respect to an appearance rests on the fact that the appearance gives itself. The reduction discovers that which it allows to be given. The reduction allows the given by clearing away conditions for the given to give itself. To

82. Rahner subtly revises Thomas, downplaying Thomas's hierarchical characterization of human knowing as "imperfect." Instead, Rahner emphasizes the manner of knowing peculiar to human persons, irrespective of hierarchical positioning.

83. Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, 241–64.

84. Jean-Luc Marion, *Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger, and Phenomenology*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 203.

85. Marion, *Reduction and Givenness*, 203.

the extent that reduction is performed, the given gives: "So much reduction, so much givenness." Marion carries this formula forward in *Givenness & Revelation* by positing a new, related one: "So much *mysterion*, so much *apokalypsis*."⁸⁶ Mystery's hiddenness and apocalyptic uncovering are inversely proportionate.

Even the thesis, "so much reduction, so much givenness," is entirely opposed to alethic logic. Marion's radicalization of the reduction aims to overturn the conditions modern epistemology places on phenomena (even in the case of Husserl, who models phenomena on objects). "So much reduction, so much givenness," sets down *in nuce* an agenda for accepting phenomena as they give themselves from themselves, without setting prior conditions on them.⁸⁷ *Givenness & Revelation* follows upon several phenomenological texts in which Marion pursues his agenda philosophically, and it broadens openings toward theology in more recent works like *The Erotic Phenomenon* (2003), the set of essays gathered in *The Visible and the Revealed* (2005), *In the Self's Place* (2008), and *Negative Certainties* (2010).⁸⁸ With "so much *mysterion*, so much *apokalypsis*," the concern is explicitly and specifically theological, though hardly without implications for phenomenology, which according to Marion's "broadening [of] the theater of phenomenality" should have room for God's incomprehensibility (Mystery) and, consequently, revelation.⁸⁹

Marion distills his new principle from Jesus's saying in the Synoptic Gospels, "Nothing is veiled that will not be uncovered, or hidden that will not become known" (Matt 10:26; cf. Mark 4:22 and Luke 8:17).⁹⁰ Jesus reveals that mystery and apocalypse do not relate as opposites. Rather, mystery "defines the background, the reserve of the unseen, the ground that is recognized after the fact and in contrast to that which cancels it, illuminates it, and consecrates it, the *apokalypsis* itself."⁹¹ The idiosyncrasy of Marion's verb-choices aside—"cancels" and "consecrates" seem not to agree with one another—the point should be clear: mystery remains, and remains incomprehensible, even in its full revelation. The greater the depth of mystery, the more, not less, there is to be revealed that will be revealed. The theological coordinates of mystery

86. Marion, *Givenness & Revelation*, 75.

87. This sentence combines ideas from Marion's two favorite texts, one each from Husserl and Heidegger, brief quotations that provide the initial impulse for his phenomenology of givenness. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, trans. F. Kersten (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic, 1998), §24, 44; Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), §7, 51. See Marion, *Negative Certainties*, 201–202.

88. Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Marion, *The Visible and the Revealed*, trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner et al. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008); Marion, *In the Self's Place: The Approach of St. Augustine*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

89. See Marion, *Negative Certainties*, ix and 206.

90. Marion, *Givenness & Revelation*, 75.

91. Marion, *Givenness & Revelation*, 75.

and apocalyptic function to break the modern, epistemological attachment to truth based on certainty (*aletheia*), which *would* cancel mystery. Taken together, mystery and apocalyptic allow for incomprehensibility and indetermination as “positive qualification[s] of that which is to be known,” and not as disqualifying knowledge.⁹² So *apokalypsis* “consecrates” mystery, esteems it, holds it as sacred and eternal. With this idea of the positive character of incomprehensibility and indetermination, we return to Rahner.⁹³

Rahner’s essay, “The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology” (1959), diagnoses a fundamental misunderstanding of Mystery in neo-Scholastic theology, where a focus on epistemology inhibits consideration of ontology.⁹⁴ Rahner paves the way back toward ontology, which for him, in a way different from Marion, is a positive term irreducible to modern metaphysics. He does so by discussing how Mystery is not primarily a matter of epistemology. He effects this shift by distinguishing between the negative and positive senses of Mystery. Neo-Scholastics (modern metaphysicians in Marion’s sense) espouse a negative view of Mystery, where Mystery is a provisional reality, presumably to be surmounted in the beatific vision. On this view, it seems as if God withholds information from rational creatures, but is willing to reveal all once these creatures attain heaven. The positive view of Mystery, which Rahner espouses and which he contends coheres with deeper patristic and medieval traditions, holds that God is Mystery not as withholding God’s reality from view, but by self-revealing with such plenitude that no creature can fully apprehend everything revealed.

The neo-Scholastic concept of mystery has three aspects: (1) a mystery is defined as the property of a statement; (2) mysteries are regarded as plural; and (3) these plural mysteries are comprised of provisionally incomprehensible truths.⁹⁵ This last point is perhaps most important, because it reveals that a “mystery” is identified as such based on its orientation toward “*ratio*,” human reason: “The silent presupposition throughout is that we are dealing with truths which should strictly speaking have come within the scope of reason with its power to see and *comprehend*, but in this case do not meet its demands.”⁹⁶ This means that mystery is a matter of information—insufficient information. The neo-Scholastic concept of mystery leaves Catholics unable to deal with “the mysteries of faith” except in a mode of ignorance, blind assent, and negative regard, as part of the Catholic’s unfortunate pilgrim condition here on earth. For the neo-Scholastics, “mysteries of faith” must be revealed by God, but they cannot account for why. No positive connection is wrought.⁹⁷ Thus Rahner calls this a “purely negative

92. Marion, *Givenness & Revelation*, 206.

93. It should be noted at this point that the theme of incomprehensibility brings Marion to refer directly to Rahner’s work on Thomas. See his reference to Rahner’s “An Investigation into the Incomprehensibility of God in Thomas Aquinas,” on Marion, *Negative Certainties*, 225n70.

94. Rahner, “Concept of Mystery,” 36–48.

95. Rahner, “Concept of Mystery,” 38.

96. Rahner, “Concept of Mystery,” 39, emphasis original.

97. Rahner, “Concept of Mystery,” 44.

definition” of mystery.⁹⁸ We could also call it an alethic account of mystery that corresponds to the predicative synthesis Rahner discusses in “Thomas Aquinas on Truth.”

Rahner offers a different definition of mystery, which adopts a richer account of reason, a more robust ontology, and thus a more soundly *theological* concept of mystery, since *God* as trinitarian mystery, rather than propositions as “mysteries,” is foregrounded.⁹⁹ Rahner’s concept of mystery has three aspects: (1) “mystery” is defined as the “whither (*Worauffhin*)” of human transcendence; (2) Mystery is regarded as one (or three-in-one); and (3) Mystery is permanent, abiding, eternal, uniquely self-evident and self-sufficient.¹⁰⁰ Echoing “Thomas Aquinas on Truth,” Rahner explains that the incomprehensible Mystery of God “has always been familiar to us,” nonetheless it remains “the unsurpassable (*Unüberholbare*).”¹⁰¹ Human reason starts from, is constantly sustained by, and finds its completion in divine incomprehensibility, not perspicuous knowledge.¹⁰² The beatific vision is not the end of a “pilgrim knowledge” that becomes clear and distinct in heaven. Instead, it consists of “immediate sight of the mystery itself.” Rahner’s is a positive view of mystery: “The incomprehensible has of course its positive side. It has a blessed content which can be known even though it cannot really be expressed.”¹⁰³ This positive view of mystery has its own logic, an ontological (as opposed to merely epistemological) logic that would best be described as apocalyptic in Marion’s sense. The alethic measure of God’s revelation that pervades neo-Scholastic (quintessentially modern, metaphysical) theology gives way here to a “mysterious event” of apocalyptic *being measured* by God.¹⁰⁴

Near the beginning of the “Concept of Mystery” lectures, Rahner quotes—in yet another place—Thomas Aquinas’s *Adoro Te Devote*. After posing a series of rhetorical questions regarding how a mid-twentieth-century Christian can find orientation amid the various doctrines of the church, he says, “Man, faced with this multiplicity of assertions, need not be the victim of modernistic simplifications of religion if he finds himself as he really is, the being in the face of the nameless mystery which he adores: *Adoro te devote, latens Deitas*.”¹⁰⁵ A proper concept of mystery proves pivotal for Christian thought, prayer, and life, because it allows for the type of depth that can, in turn, help to make straight the way for God’s revelation. So much *positive* Mystery, so much *apokalypsis*—and adoration besides.

Apocalyptic Logic and Anticipation

We have now marked a significant convergence between Marion’s phenomenology of revelation and Rahner’s theology of mystery, which roots itself, I have been

98. Rahner, “Concept of Mystery,” 40.

99. See especially the lectures’ conclusion, Rahner, “Concept of Mystery,” 72–73.

100. The catalogue of attributes in #3 appears in Rahner, “Concept of Mystery,” 57–58/121–22.

101. Rahner, “Concept of Mystery,” 57–58/121–22.

102. Rahner, “Concept of Mystery,” 56.

103. Rahner, “Concept of Mystery,” 55.

104. Rahner, “Concept of Mystery,” 52.

105. Rahner, “Concept of Mystery,” 37.

suggesting, in his “Thomistic” approach to truth. A difficulty still remains, though: the degree of the “already-familiar” in Rahner’s “Thomas Aquinas on Truth” and “Concept of Mystery,” which is structurally related to his controversial philosophical idea of a *Vorgriff*, or anticipation, of absolute being.¹⁰⁶ Marion has been among the most vocal recent critics of this “anticipatory” streak in Rahner’s philosophy and theology. In this final portion of the article, I contest Marion’s fear regarding Rahnerian “anticipation,” namely that somehow Rahner teaches that the human person can anticipate God in the sense of foreseeing (or forestalling) God’s revelation, thus obviating it and calling into question distinctively Christian life. I contend that the “already familiar” in Rahner’s logic is not an epistemological-alethic imposition on God’s revelation, but an example of the rapport with revelation that Marion aims to describe in the principle, “so much *mysterion* so much *apokalypsis*.” I shall support this contention not by exegeting Rahner, but by examining Marion’s own texts in dialogue with other contemporary phenomenologists, relating them at the end back to Rahner.

Let us begin with a passage from Marion’s *Negative Certainties*. Marion seeks to liberate the phenomenon from its status as object, which it holds for Kant, Husserl, and many who follow in their wake. He uses an anecdote from the artist Wassily Kandinsky to show how this liberation may occur. Kandinsky encounters one of his own paintings, turned on its side, which given this new orientation strikes the artist with a mysterious, incomprehensible “inner glow.”¹⁰⁷ Marion explains that this inner glow bursts forth from the painting because the artist finds himself unable to recognize or to understand it, given the painting’s altered orientation. Though the artist sees the painting’s colors and forms perfectly well, he cannot “foresee them . . . because they answer to no expectation, strategic foresight, or project that [he] could have conceived for them in advance.” The artist finds himself unable “to describe them by anticipation.”¹⁰⁸ The painting’s inner glow appears precisely because the subject who encounters it *could* have anticipated it, yet did not. This encounter with the painting’s inner glow proved a turning point in Kandinsky’s career. Thereafter he allowed paintings to appear on their own initiative, by releasing them from the conventions of representational art. Something similar applies to phenomenology; when it releases phenomena from object-ive strictures, it can allow them to appear as events—thus really to appear.

Anticipation is the enemy of true phenomenology, which bases itself on the principle, “so much reduction, so much givenness.” And of course we know that this phenomenological principle blossoms into a theological one, “so much *mysterion*, so much *apokalypsis*.” Presumably anticipation is the enemy of a theology based on this principle. *Givenness & Revelation* argues just this.

106. For definitions of *Vorgriff* see Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, 225–26; idem, *Hearer of the Word*, 121–28. Karen Elizabeth Kilby has wrestled mightily and influentially with this idea in “The *Vorgriff auf esse*: A Study in the Relation of Philosophy to Theology in the Thought of Karl Rahner” (PhD diss., Yale University, 1994); and, *Karl Rahner: Theology and Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2004), especially 19–31, 76–79.

107. Marion, *Negative Certainties*, 175.

108. Marion, *Negative Certainties*, 176.

Marion insists that “revealed religion” involves a surprise encounter of persons with something beyond our capacity for anticipation, rather than something anticipated that “adherents” might have discovered on their own. He states, “Revealed religions assert themselves upon witnesses who, to begin with, find themselves neither prepared for nor most often convinced of this communication—indeed, they are often hostile to it.”¹⁰⁹ This last phrase is most important. Marion develops, in preparation for his phenomenological descriptions of Christian revelation, the thesis that “a correct understanding of the concept of revelation must account for the inevitable resistance that it cannot help but encounter.”¹¹⁰ Revelation provokes; it is not readily appropriated. In fact, it appears precisely as contradictory, as defying conditions. We have already seen this with respect to the distinction between *aletheia*, which sets prior “reasonable” conditions for revelation, and *apokalypsis*, which takes revelation to be reasonable precisely because it defies epistemological conditions and presents its own set of conditions. Even further, not only does revelation’s rationality (apocalyptic logic) include the possibility of resistance. It implies the possibility of refusal—a “no” to revelation.¹¹¹

It is no wonder that Marion’s reflections on revelation lead him to criticize the idea of the “anonymous Christian,” a(n) (Rahnerian) idea that would seem to obviate a “no” to revelation. During his explication of the *aletheia*–*apokalypsis* distinction, Marion relates *apokalypsis* to William St. Thierry’s thinking on desire. He cites William’s idea that “willing consists in loving, and signifies nothing else,” and the maxim that follows from it when one considers the relationship of the human will to God: “*Voluntas enim haec aliquantus jam amor Christi est*—this will is in a certain sense already the love of Christ.” Marion immediately adds a telling qualification: “This maxim, above all, must not be understood as a medieval anticipation of the implicit faith of the ‘anonymous Christian,’ as if every will were unconsciously oriented toward Christ.”¹¹² The reference to Rahner is obvious, with the implication that his hypothesis of the anonymous Christian rests on a theory of unconscious orientation toward Christ, which would be a wayward understanding of willing. That is, the “anonymous Christian” idea seems to ground itself in a conception of desire that precedes an explicit drawing of people toward the Father through the Son. The anonymous Christian is one who anticipates God’s love, in a sense too strong to be acceptable. William of St. Thierry teaches nothing of the sort.

Instead, William of St. Thierry’s maxim amounts to a recognition of something straightforward: a will wills according to what attracts it. Even further, a loving will wills more the more it loves Christ. William’s maxim helps Marion to establish two different trajectories which one’s willing (as with one’s knowledge) can follow. The first is an “alethic” path, according to which the configuration of one’s will would

109. Marion, *Givenness & Revelation*, 1.

110. Marion, *Givenness & Revelation*, 2.

111. Marion, *Givenness & Revelation*, 4.

112. Marion, *Givenness & Revelation*, 44.

anticipate the love of Christ. It would perform something like Christic love before being explicitly drawn toward the Father by Jesus Christ through the Spirit. The second is an “apocalyptic” path, where one’s loving will would be elicited and drawn forward by Christ in the Spirit. Should any anticipatory arrangement obtain, it would be on Christ’s side, anticipating “my” will. William traverses the latter road. Given Marion’s criticism of (an unnamed) Rahner, one could rightly infer that Marion would place Rahner on the former trajectory.

If this is Rahner’s proper way of proceeding, then one could conclude further that Rahner’s theology falls under the ban suggested by Marion’s consideration of anticipation in *Negative Certainties* (the example of Kandinsky). The theologian of the “anonymous Christian” would be someone who ignores the dual possibilities of resistance and refusal concomitant with an authentic notion of revelation. If Marion means to imply this, then he has effectively reinscribed Balthasar’s strident critique of Rahner in *Cordula oder der Ernstfall* (1966), which accuses Rahner of eliminating the drama (or emergency, *Ernstfall*) of Christianity.¹¹³

Other recent phenomenologies call into question this hard and fast rejection of anticipation. We can see this in two leading thinkers on the phenomenology of anticipation, Jean-Yves Lacoste and Neal DeRoo.¹¹⁴ Lacoste insists that consciousness inevitably has an anticipatory character: “a consciousness that would not anticipate is evidently an unthinkable consciousness.”¹¹⁵ DeRoo agrees, and provides a helpful schema for differentiating anticipation from similar gestures of consciousness, namely protention (an “‘empty’ striving” of present consciousness into future time) and expectation (a “clarifying intuition that can ... be confirmed [or disappointed] in a fulfillment”).¹¹⁶ Anticipation “is a waiting for the future based on our interpretation of the present *and* an interpreting of the present so as to make possible the arrival of the anticipated.”¹¹⁷ Such waiting shows that “our experience always points to its limits, to what is beyond it.”¹¹⁸ Marion is resistant to Rahner’s thought insofar as it centers on anticipation (as expressed in the “anonymous Christian”) and interprets the future in terms of the present. Marion contends that Rahner points to the limits of experience but does not really allow God’s revelation to operate outside of them. Lacoste and DeRoo can help us allay such concerns. Lacoste points out that “anticipation receives

113. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Moment of Christian Witness*, trans. Richard Beckley (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994), 109.

114. Jean-Yves Lacoste, “Phenomenology of Anticipation,” in *Phenomenology and Eschatology: Not Yet in the Now*, ed. John Panteleimon Manoussakis and Neal DeRoo (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 15–33; Neal DeRoo, *Futurity in Phenomenology: Promise and Method in Husserl, Levinas, and Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 41–53.

115. Lacoste, “Phenomenology of Anticipation,” 32.

116. “Anticipation is not merely one thing we can do among others, one conscious act among others, but is in a sense determinative of conscious acts in general.” DeRoo, *Futurity in Phenomenology*, 53; for the distinction referred to here, see 43.

117. DeRoo, *Futurity in Phenomenology*, 52.

118. DeRoo, *Futurity in Phenomenology*, 53.

its meaning from what it anticipates,” rather than the other way around, and that anticipation is not self-enclosed.¹¹⁹ Anticipation, precisely in its structuring of all conscious life, has an eschatological valence that reflects the interplay of realized and future eschatology, the already and the not-yet.¹²⁰ In light of Lacoste and DeRoo’s reflections on anticipation, the fact that Rahner presents a logic that incorporates an “already familiar” should not vex us so much. This “already familiar” is incomprehensible in the strict sense, both in time and eternity. For Rahner, as well as for Marion, the meaning of “anticipation” comes from the side of the incomprehensible Trinity—not, at least not first, from the side of the human subject.

Still Marion’s concern with the “anonymous Christian” may remain, inasmuch as Rahnerian, anonymous-Christian anticipation is “unobjective.” Marion’s critique of Rahner may, in fact, oscillate between the concern that Rahnerian anticipation anticipates too much and too little. Marion may agree with von Balthasar’s lampooning of this Rahnerian idea in his fictional dialogue in *The Moment of Christian Witness* between “the Christian” and “the Commissar”: “*The Christian*: We love him [Christ] inclusively, unobjectively. / *The Commissar*: Ah, so your belief is without an object.”¹²¹ But we have seen precisely that Marion directs his phenomenology of revelation against treating God as an object. When Rahner speaks of unobjective belief, he opens exactly the same way of thinking that Marion advocates: a way to think, believe in, and love God as “thing” (rather than “object”). The dialogue with Marion, supplemented with insights from Lacoste and DeRoo, can help us to recognize that Rahnerian belief may be without object, but not without the thing itself, the *Logos*, accessible through a veritative synthesis that links, by anticipation, the senses, intellect, and the very life of God.

Conclusion

Rahner made numerous contributions to twentieth-century Catholic theology, so many that it may seem absurd to rank them in importance. Nevertheless, his theology of mystery should likely be counted as the most pivotal. He initiated this contribution with a creative retrieval of Thomas Aquinas, who was, at least in the early decades of Rahner’s career, seen as *the* standard for Catholic theology. Rahner identified in Thomas’s philosophy of truth an insight into the ontological depth of human judgment (the veritative synthesis) that, if properly understood and applied, could restructure the very logic of modern Catholic theology, reorder its approach to truth. It would redirect Catholic theology from an approach to truth characterized by concerted attempts to uncover it through intellectual and propositional effort toward an approach to truth

119. Lacoste, “Phenomenology of Anticipation,” 27.

120. See DeRoo (commenting on Lacoste), *Futurity in Phenomenology*, 47–48.

121. Balthasar, *Moment of Christian Witness*, 128. See an important treatment of this exchange in Philip Endean, “Von Balthasar, Rahner, and the Commissar,” *New Blackfriars* 79 (1998): 33–38, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.1998.tb02804.x>.

committed to allowing it to arrive to the extent and in the manner that it gives itself—fully yet incomprehensibly.

This Rahnerian vision for a Catholic theo-logic (to borrow a Balthasarian term) has, I hope, been clarified through dialogue with Marion’s phenomenological account of revelation and truth under the auspices of givenness. While here and elsewhere I contend that, for all Marion’s criticisms of Rahner, they are kindred spirits, I considered the theme of anticipation to highlight the complexity of the Rahner–Marion dialogue. Regarding the *Vorgriff*, the unthematic anticipation of God’s being and truth, given in each instance of human knowing (or loving), Rahner and Marion may, in the end, disagree. Rahner will certainly defend it. Marion will judge it an imposition on truth’s right and power to provoke resistance and rejection. The “anonymous Christian” will continue to loom. Still Rahner and Marion agree where it really counts: reality is deep, abiding mystery. This mystery is not cruel inscrutability, not noumenal evasion of limited human consciousness, but the luminous sea that invites nothing our adoration—and (here theory shows its pastoral import) provides us with buoyancy even when and where we are weakest. Or we could go slightly beyond the express words of Rahner and Marion and say that this mystery demands a life of vigilance, patient waiting for mystery’s arrival by its own right and power, in its own time (see, e.g., Mt 25:1–13). Mystery is not completely foreign. Even if it cannot be foreseen, it is always familiar because it has marked us from the time of creation. We are its image (Gen 1:26–27; Ps 8:5; Is 64:8; 1 Cor 11:7). Likewise, it has been promised as our end (1 Jn 3:2). If we cannot fully expect it, still we anticipate it.¹²²

Author Biography

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