

Lead Us Not into Temptation

Balthasar's note on Hegel's "Theo-logy"

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Abstract:

Filsafat Hegel yang bercirikan dialektika yang berdasarkan identitas merupakan puncak pemikiran filosofis tentang agama/ Allah dan akal budi yang sintesanya gagal didapatkan oleh para filsuf pendahulu. Sintesa Hegel ini juga sekaligus mengoreksi beberapa segi filsafat modern waktu itu, yakni antara lain tentang hubungan Subjek dan Objek serta perlunya metafisika dalam filsafat. Namun di mata von Balthasar sintesa Hegel ini juga mengundang pertanyaan seputar hakikat Allah pada dirinya sendiri. Dengan optik *empat serangkai perbedaan ontologis* Balthasar mengungkapkan kelemahan "teo-logi" Hegel sekaligus menyelamatkan teologi itu sendiri dan praksis fundamental kristen: cinta.

Keywords: *reconciliation, principle of identity, metaphysical confusion, fourfold ontological distinction*

Hegel for Balthasar is one of the most prominent philosophers with whom he discusses intensely in all over his trilogy¹ because he "lays the final stone" for "the building of the uncompletable bridge"² to integrate philosophy and theology. Hegel's philosophy (of religion), on the one hand, synthesizes all of the entire past religious history of the world, and on the other hand, opens the path into the future philosophical reflection.³

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- 1 "Von seinem ersten bis zu seinem letzten Werk denkt Balthasar Aug in Aug zu Hegel." P. Henrici, "Zur Philosophie Hans Urs von Balthasars" in Lehmann, Karl/Kasper, Walter (eds.), *Hans Urs von Balthasar. Gestalt und Werk*, Köln: Communio, 1989, 247.
 - 2 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord. A Theological Aesthetics. Vol. V: The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age*. Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1991, (latter abbreviated with *Glory V*), 572.
 - 3 Balthasar cites the hegelian influence: "God is dead says a Lutheran Hymn. Therein comes to expression the consciousness that the human and the finite, the fragile, weak, and negative, is a moment of the divine itself. All of that exists in God: otherness, finitude, and negativity are not outside him. They are otherness and negativity become conscious as an internal moment of the divine nature. Let us translate: the idea of the Trinity is respect to the Cross, the question remains open as to how far it is a singular historical event and how far it is the necessary and supreme representation of the most general law of being", Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Teodrammatica volume 5. L'ultimo atto*, Milan: Jaca Book, 1986, 205.

From a certain perspective, sharing with Karl Barth⁴ we can say that Hegel is a representation of modern man who wants to understand God in the perspective of the current thoughts; he is a model of modern man who wants “to give an answer to every man who asks for a reason of the hope” (1Ptr 3:15). His main effort is to put together the entire achievement of ancient philosophy boldly marked with interest in metaphysics and modern philosophy with its anthropological turn. Here I present some points of Hegel’s philosophy of religion in which he deals with the place of God in the entirety of his philosophy. But, I limit myself in presenting Hegel’s philosophy in so far as Balthasar deal with it; in other words, I will not look into the first hand writings of Hegel, but read Balthasar’s interpretation of some subjects of Hegel’s philosophy as they are found especially in *Glory of the Lord* vol. V.

1. Hegel’s Principle of Identity

Read against the background of modern philosophy, Hegel’s philosophy in a certain sense contests the defective concepts of some contemporary philosophies that tend to reduce truth to representation (*Darstellung*), subjectivity and experiential knowledge.⁵ Modern philosophies tend to satisfy themselves with the *form* of thought, and neglect its *content*.⁶ They emphasize that truth is immediate and natural. True philosophy, Hegel holds, must transcend the form, not because it has no place in philosophy, but because philosophy recognizes the form for an other purpose: a right comprehension or formation of a concept.

Hegel’s early writings *The Difference between the Systems of Fichte and Schelling* (1801) and *Faith and Knowledge* (1802), witness to sharp criticism against illuminism, against a form of intellectualism that loves abstract and formal thinking, at the price of regarding content as subjective opinion. Formalism turns philosophy into making the right procedure of thinking and neglects considering seriously what thinking deals with. By so doing, formalism turns philosophy off. Contrary to this formalism, Hegel puts philosophy back to its nature, that is, the search for *arche*. Reason fundamentally searches for truth. Hegel’s cynicism toward this formalism is clear

4 “La filosofia hegeliana non è stata affatto la scoperta casuale di un singolo individuo genialmente dotato ... bensì la voce possente e impressionante di un’intera epoca, la voce dell’uomo moderno, o di quello che, dal 1700 al 1914, si chiamò l’uomo moderno.”, K. Barth, *La teologia protestante nel XIX secolo – I. Le origini*, Milan, Jaca Book 1979, 441.

5 Cf. Vito Mancuso, “Hegel: la salvezza trinitaria della storia” in Coda, Pierro and Tapken, Andreas (eds), *La trinità e il pensare. Figure percorsi prospettive*, Roma, Città Nuova, pp.24-28, here p. 27.

6 P. Henrici, *Op.cit*, 255.

in this, “the eternal is void for comprehension, and that infinite void of comprehension can be fulfilled only with subjectivity and feeling”.⁷ For Hegel rationalism of the Enlightenment is “romantic irrationalism”.

The second point of Hegel’s criticism of the contemporary philosophy is about the wiping out of metaphysics. Wiping out metaphysics from philosophical investigation is non other than removing the hearth of philosophy, consequently, making philosophy without soul. We read this from Hegel:

“Philosophy [*Wissenschaft*] and ordinary common sense thus co-operating to bring about the downfall of metaphysics, there was seen the strange spectacle of a cultured nation without metaphysics, like a temple richly ornamented in other respects but without a holy of holies.” (*Preface* of the first edition *The Science of Logic*)

“However, the author, in face of the magnitude of the task, has had to content himself with what it was possible to achieve in circumstances of external necessity, of the inevitable distractions caused by the magnitude and many-sidedness of contemporary affairs, even under the doubt whether the noisy clamour of current affairs and the deafening chatter of a conceit which prides itself on confining itself to such matters leave any room for participation in the passionless calm of a knowledge which is in the element of pure thought alone.” (*Preface* of the second edition *The Science of Logic*)⁸

Hegel’s philosophy is far from destructive criticism. Criticism toward contemporary philosophies does not end in itself but in a reconstruction of a new way of comprehension that transcends shortsightedness of the contemporary philosophies. He looks for a way to reconcile modern philosophy with its characteristics and the achievements of ancient philosophy. The harvest of modern philosophy, such as subjectivity and freedom, need

7 G.W.F. Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, 124, as cited from V. Mancuso, *Op.cit*, 25.

8 This preface is written few days before Hegel’s sudden death. We can easily find the same tone in other works where Hegel expressedly insists the importance of metaphysic and religion for philosophy. In 1800 he reviewed his *The Positivity of the Christian Religion* (1795-1796) where he distance set himself away from Kantian philosophy stating “the following essay does not profess to inquire wheter there are positive commands and doctrines in the Christian religion. An answer to this question in accordance with universal concepts of human nature and God’s attributes is too empty; the frightful chatter, endlessly prolonged in this key and inwardly vacuous, has become so wearisome that it is now utterly devoid of interest. Hence what our time needs instead perhaps is to hear some one proving the very opposite of what results from this “enlightening” application of universal concepts”. G.W.F. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, (trans. T.M. Knox), Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979, 172. Here Hegel opposed to an ahistorical method of illuminism but he does not fall into dogmaticism. We can also notice Hegel’s contestation of the contemporary philosophies in his *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences in Outline* where he names the contem

to be maintained, but metaphysics and religion as the horizon of the ancient philosophy cannot be ignored because they are critical instances for reason to pursue truth beyond mere “appearances”. Only in keeping the two united can truth be achieved, because “the truth is the whole”. He adds that, “The whole, however, is merely the essential nature reaching its completeness through the process of its own development”.⁹ This means, on the one hand, truth must be searched for not in the single achievement of each philosophy of the era, while on the other hand, truth has to confirm and correspond with the fruits of each philosophy. Hegel sets as his project a search for the reconciliation of opposites: “the formal task of philosophy is to transcend fractures”.¹⁰

To carry out the project Hegel begins by putting philosophy in line with the metaphysical tradition where knowing God is the ultimate purpose of philosophy.¹¹ It is important to listen what Hegel understands as the aim of philosophy: “The objects of philosophy, it is true, are upon the whole the same as those of religion. In both the object is Truth, in that supreme sense in which God and God only is the Truth.”¹² It is God, the

porary philosophies as “the misery of our age” (*Encyclopedia* § 90) and insists the importance of religion and metaphysics “la religione è per l’autocoscienza la base dell’eticità e dello Stato. Può dirsi l’errore mostruoso del nostro tempo questo voler considerare tali cose inseparabili come separabili tra loro, anzi come tra loro indifferenti. ... I principi della ragione della realtà hanno la loro ultima e somma garanzia nella coscienza religiosa, nella sussunzione sotto la coscienza della verità assoluta” (*Encyclopedia* § 552 as cited in V. Mancuso). The same insistence we can read also in Preface of *Philosophy of Right* where he underlines the importance to save philosophy from its decadence, “Only a clear insight into the necessity for this difference can snatch philosophy out of the ignominious condition into which it has fallen in our day.” (as cited by V. Mancuso).

- 9 G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*, (Trans. by J. B. Baillie), London: Allen & Unwin, 1931, Preface § 20.
- 10 Hegel uses a term *Anstrengung des Begriffs* meaning effort to comprehend which combats against the half-and-half measures of popular philosophy “which seeks a comfortable pillow of sound principle to sleep again”. William Wallace, *Lectures and Essays on Natural Theology and Ethics* 1892-1894
- 11 It is noteworthy that the same intention is found in Balthasar’s works. He reads the western history of philosophy from a certain point of view, that is, from christian revelation. His three volume germanistic dissertation *Apokalypse der deutschen Seele* is all about “a theo-phenomenological reading” of history of German philosophy where the primary question posed to those philosophies (and philosophers) whether and how they receive and comprehend truth, that is God. His reading reveals christian element in those “secular philosophies”. P. Henrici, *op.cit.* p. 239, E.J. Bauer, “Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988). Opera filosofica”, in *La filosofia cristiana nei secoli XIX e XX. Correnti moderne del XX secolo*, (E. Coreth, W.M. Neidl, G.Pfligersdorffer, eds), Roma, Città Nuova, 1995, pp. 340-363, here pp.346-348.
- 12 *Encyclopedia*, § 1. Balthasar cites from “Philosophy has the aim of knowing truth, of knowing God, for He is absolute truth and therefore nothing else is worth the effort in comparison with God and the explication of God” *Glory V*, 574.

Absolute, that becomes then final purpose of Hegel's philosophical investigation. Thus is God also the Truth for which philosophy searches and at the same time it is God who guides the search for the solution of modern philosophical problems.¹³ Following this argumentation we come to know that there is a close relationship between theology and philosophy. This is not at all new because the ancient philosophy knows this relationship. In Aristoteles work we read about God who is the motor of the universe, the unmoved mover.¹⁴

Considering God as Truth and the Absolute, Hegel reconciles fracture between subject and object. Against subjectivism of representation Hegel underlines the importance of content and concept. "Content flows in the concept."¹⁵ Hegel holds that truth does not depend on the apprehension (*Auffassen*) nor the conceptual comprehension (*Begreifen*) of *I qua* individual consciousness.¹⁶ Truth has nothing to do with the content of sensuous certainty of the *I*. In other words, Hegel maintains that truth is *objective, an essential reality*. But he adds that Truth is not the *bare fact of being*, an immediacy. It comes to us *through* sense-certainty, notion, knowledge, and individual consciousness. The concrete *I* knows the Truth through concrete fact, *this* certain reality. Consequently, Truth is objective and at the same time *mediated*, something which is not *per se* certainty. It comes to us *through* something else, the ego, through a knowledge which only knows the object because the object *is*, though it can as well be as *not* be.

"It is not only we who make this distinction of essential truth and particular example, of essence and instance, immediacy and mediation; we *find* it in sense-certainty itself, and it has to be taken up in the form in which it exists there, not as we have just determined it. One of them is put forward as existing in simple immediacy, as the essential reality, the *object*. The other, however, is put forward as the non-essential, as *mediated*, something which is not *per se* in the certainty, but there through something else,

13 We can also say that condition of possibility of this reconciliation is reason's reception of God. In this context we understand Hegel's saying "but because I am a rational Being, my task is to praise God – (not man!), this is my vocation and I will fulfill it" *Faith and Knowledge*, 185. Originally Hegel cited the saying of Ephittet, but the bracketed words are Hegel's.

14 Cf. *Encyclopedia*, § 573. See W. Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers*, Oxford, Oxford Uni. Press, 1967.

15 G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen der Religionsphilosophie*, cited from Aniceto Molinaro, "Annotazioni intorno a una 'teologia hegeliana'" in M. Löhrer & E. Salmann, *Mysterium Christi. Symbolgegenwart und theologische Bedeutung*, Roma, Ateneo S. Anselmo, 343.

16 Hegel's philosophy can be perceived as a continuous effort to purify subject in order to comprehend the totality of truth. It does not mean to erase Subject, the achievement of modern philosophy. Hegel does not intent to turn kantian *sapere aude* into medieval *noli altum sapere sed time*. He intent to synthesize objectivity of truth and free subject who comprehend the truth. Cf. V. Mancuso, *Op.cit.* p. 31.

ego, a state of knowledge which only knows the object because the *object* is, and which can as well be as *not* be. The object, however, is the real truth, is the essential reality; it *is*, quite indifferent to whether it is known or not; it remains and stands even though it is not known, while the knowledge does not exist if the object is not there"¹⁷

The citation above has a decisive meaning because there Hegel affirms that in the face of Truth, Subject *must* deny himself to be the source of truth in order to comprehend the Truth. Only in this way can Subject enter into the Truth; but on the other hand the Truth can be grasped by a Subject only, and only if, he *willingly* (and therefore *freely*) lets Truth into himself. Otherwise the Truth remains out there – something merely objective. In this negation, the Subject affirms its identity that cannot be mixed up with the Truth; and at the same time it is affirmed that the Truth is not barely objective because it become – when the subject assent to – a part of the subject. This is Hegel's synthesis of Subject and Object, freedom and necessity. In this there is no opposition, because Truth is identified with God. In God the opposites are reconciled. This is the principle of identity.¹⁸

God, as the principle of identity, lies in the center of Hegel's philosophy. In God "consciousness and content are inseparable".¹⁹ Without God consciousness falls into a void; this is the miserable result of illuminism, against which Hegel is ardently critical. God without consciousness can not be God because God must be in relationship with human being. God invites human being to be in communion with Him. Therefore, Hegel thinks, consciousness cannot be separated from God and at the same time God is indissoluble from consciousness. This consciousness is not only that of God, but also that of human beings. God is the God of human being, if He is recognized *freely* by human beings as a Subject. "Man is man when he is in God; God is God when he is the God of man"²⁰

This close relationship between God and man, Hegel sees, is best understood in terms of love. Love dissolves oppositions, contradictions, and separations, hence unification is possible because unity and identity lie in the depth of those oppositions. Between lover and beloved there arises an awareness that they are by their very nature not opposed to each other at all, even though there are *concrete and actual* differences and otherness. The

17 G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1931, 151.

18 "Freedom is characteristic of the Absolute when Absolute is placed as something interior" and "necessity is characteristic of the Absolute as much as the Absolute is viewed as something exterior, as an objective totality". *Differenza tra il sistema filosofico di Fichte e quello di Schelling*, 89 as cited in Vito Mancuso, *Op.cit.*, 33.

19 G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Religionsphilosophie vom Jahre 1831*, in G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke*, Bd. 16, Frankfurt/M. 1986 (Suhrkamp-Taschenbuchausgabe), 48.

20 Vito Mancuso, *Op.cit.* 34

more that sameness is found between the two, the greater the possibility for intense love to grow.²¹ But love does require sacrifice. In the name of love man renounces his individual interest, refuses to occupy himself and sets aside his property, will, and individual feelings in order to attain new higher and richer self identity. Only through this *self-transcendence* (*Selbstaufhebung*) can love bear fruit.

The relationship between God and man seen in terms of love is manifested clearly in the event of incarnation and reaches its culmination on the cross. In incarnation, God takes finitude upon Himself in Christ. Finitude, according to Hegel, is identical with pain, debilitation, weakness, negativity, humanness, mortality,²² which is in opposition to the Whole whose characteristic are “happy consciousness”, comprehensive and living. God’s taking on finitude therefore means that God becomes non-God. He becomes Nature, renouncing Himself and extending Himself into what is foreign to Him. The only aim of this *self-estrangement* is to destroy and annihilate (*aufheben*) the extreme form of finitude, which is evil. That is the meaning of the death of Christ. The death of the incarnated has a far reaching impact for human beings. God overcomes death by dying; God now not only reigns over the living, good, and positive, but also over death, evil, and darkness. God definitely wins over man and world. God reconciles all in Himself, in Him there is no more contradiction and opposition. He is the One, and at the same time He is the Whole: *hen kai pan!* Yet, the cautious eyes of Balthasar note a danger, that is, finitude, individual life, is treated as an “organ” of infinite life; individual form, as such, *must* willingly suffer dying for the sake of the whole because only through death of individuals does God reconcile the whole in the spirit of love.

2. Against Hegel and the Loss of Being

Hegel’s intention to pursue reconciliation, in Balthasar’s view, begins on the right track, but not in the end. Hegel in the Johanne spirit names God as love, and struggles to make sense of Christ and the church he founded. However this does not last long, because the notion of love step by step disappears into the interior of absolute knowledge. Hegel turns a Sovereign God into a cold all-reconciling system: the Old Testament concept of God’s sublimity and transcendence often presented in prohibitions

21 “In love man has found himself again in another; because it is a bond of life, it presupposed a separation, an evolution, and the developed multifaced character of the same. And the more forms in which life becomes vital, the more points there are at which it can unify itself and be sentient, and can be love all the more intensely.” *Hegels theologische Jugendschriften* p. 322 cited from *Glory V*, 575.

22 “The pain is the course taken by finitude”, cited from *Glory V*, 575.

to make any image of God is changed into a rational concept of God.²³ For Hegel the Jewish faith in God is unsustainable because the idea of God is abstract, empty, and lifeless. Nevertheless He remains infinite and severely demanding. This kind of God threatens human freedom because He demands total obedience. He is jealous and never allows the Jewish people to have other cults and deities. This God also plants in the heart of the Jewish people a spirit of hatred against other nations. Accordingly, Hegel thinks, "Israel as a people have descended to Hell in the infamy of their hatred and what remains of this today as a sign among the Gentiles is the ideal of the one who is most rejected".²⁴ To sum up, for Hegel Jewish religion is outer, legal, dividing, sublime. Against Jewish abstract religion, in *Early Theological Writings* Jesus is presented as the Son of God who fosters the principle of love that reconciles the divided and enforces morally rather than legally. But again here Hegel presents selective features of Jesus in order to put him in contrast with the Jewish religion. He underlines the close relationship of Jesus with God and his disciples that reaches its highest manifestation in love and in the eucharist with his disciples. Balthasar notes that Hegel fails to recognize the historicity of Jesus *as such*. His historicity of Jesus is transient toward the formation of the Absolute Knowledge, absolute Spirit.²⁵

God and Jesus as presented above serve Hegel's intention to reconcile opposites in the Absolute Spirit. For the sake of this reconciliation Hegel reconstructs the contents of religion and faith in to a philosophical order; faith is no other than knowledge. Faith is a particular form of knowledge that begins with "a sense-presentation" – such as symbols of sacraments, dogmatic formulas, historical stories of Bible – and its contents are rationally harmonious with the overall system. Faith is absorbed into a philosophy or a philosophical reordering, so that its form as well as its content is changed under the constraint of that system. Consequently, it is not surprising that Hegel comes to the conclusion that what was historically revealed (*geoffenbart*), is forever manifest (*offenbar*). "Revealed religion is manifest religion, because God has become wholly manifest in it". Here everything accords with the concept, therefore there is nothing mysterious any more about God.²⁶ For human reason, God is no longer mysterious

23 Hegel places Jewish conception of God among other religions dependent on culture such as Egyptian, Greek, Indian religions and Islam, G.W.F. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, (trans. T.M. Knox), Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979, 182ff.

24 Cited from *Glory V*, 580.

25 Besides, in *Phenomenology of Spirit* theme of historical Jesus (and historical Church) is dispensed with under the title of the "Unhappy Consciousness" G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1931, 561ff

26 Cf. *Glory V*, 584.

and hidden. What is regarded as sublime in God according to the Jewish tradition now submerges in the light of reason. While Hegel is no timid thinker. He maintains the sublimity of God: God remains *above* all the manifestations perceived by reason, but at the same time He is *within* them and distinct from them. However, according to Balthasar, Hegel reduces *above* and *within* into total “*in*” in the Spirit.²⁷

The question raised here is whether this God is real or merely a creation of the mind. Tracing back to the logic of the philosophical investigation set up at the beginning: “The objects of philosophy, it is true, are upon the whole the same as those of religion. In both the object is Truth, in that supreme sense in which God and God only is the Truth.”, Balthasar sees Hegel believed that the logic of theology and philosophy, the logic of revelation and reason, are identical. This identification is “the gravest and most decisive” objection to Hegel’s philosophy in Balthasar’s point of view.²⁸ This identification of God with reason makes clear that Hegel’s philosophy of religion is not at all theological reflection in the general sense because Absolute Reason is not God as known in religious tradition and this God does not transcend reason and creatures, but parallel to them. This God serves as the *reconciliation* of opposite concepts.²⁹

In Balthasar’s eyes this identification trails into “metaphysical confusion”.³⁰ Hegel ignores the ontological distinction between God and the

27 Balthasar, *Glory V*, 585. *Totality* is found in the heart of Hegel’s philosophy. It is “a total metaphysics” (as in the Jena lectures and in the *Encyclopedia*), “total consciousness” (as in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*), “inner rhythm of the conceptual laws and structures (as in the great *Logic*), or “the evolution of unconscious into conscious Spirit” (as in the *Philosophy of Nature*), “the increasing development and self-integration of the conscious Spirit (as in the *Philosophy of History*), or “the self-apprehension of absolute reason through its different stages” (as in the *History of Philosophy*), and “the completed self-contemplation of the absolute and infinite Spirit within the finite worldly-human Spirit (as it is in *Aesthetics*).

28 On this identification Barth notes that Hegel’s philosophy is “a big question, a great illusion, and perhaps a big promise”, for Hegel’s dialectic penetrates an impasse of relation between philosophy and theology, history and the Absolute on the one hand, however it betrays theology because the Hegelian dialectic cannot recognize dialectic of grace founded on God’s freedom, on the other. Barth, *La teologia protestante nel XIX secolo*, Vol I, Milan: Jaca Book, 1979, 465.

29 This is not by means to say that Hegel’s philosophy is a bad theology because either philosophy or theology has its specific logic of which one cannot confused each other. Hegel’s philosophy of religion is indeed philosophy in strict sense which deals with religious matter with proper philosophical method and approach. To value philosophy from the point of view of other disciplines, in this case from theology, would not respect the autonomy of each. Cf., Aniceto Molinaro, “Annotazioni intorno a una ‘teologia hegeliana’”, in *Mysterium Christi. Symbolgegenwart und theologische Bedeutung*. FS Basil Studer, Roma, Ateneo S. Anselmo, 1995.

30 *Glory V*, 628ff. Balthasar traces this “metaphysical confusion” back to Greek philosophy where Pythagorean philosophy seeks harmony of physical and psychical world and identified

world: between Being and Existents (the third distinction) and between God and Being (the fourth distinction).³¹ Here Balthasar following Thomist metaphysics on *distinctio realis* underlines that the world is not strong enough to provide an ultimate foundation for itself because the world as finite being cannot ground its existence on any other finite being which has no necessity for itself. Grounding the world on an other finite being is like “hanging the world in the air”; only God is the sole sufficient ground for both Being and the Existents. It is true that God is the sole sufficient ground for both Being and the existent, but this grounding on God keeps God free. In other words the grounding of the world on God does not depend on necessity, there always remains an event of absolute freedom, and thus of grace. If this freedom is not secured, the grounding must refer back to Plotinus’ *unicum* and the world as “a mathematical necessity”. This distinction between necessary foundation of the world leads to a similar distinction between Being and its expressions or between essence and existence. Holding tenaciously to the doctrine of analogy, Balthasar asserts that a biological and evolutionary way – akin to Schelling and Hegel – to interpret God (Being) as ways and stages of the Absolute Spirit in search of Itself must be rejected because it identifies Being with its explications and particularly it does not “explain how the Spirit which is still only in search of Itself achieves such perfection which presupposes, not only a luminous intelligence, but a superior and playful freedom”.³² Being is richer than its expression, “more” than what is projected on to the phenomenal surface. It is this “More” which Hegel does not see.³³ Another ontological distinction which Hegel overlooks is that the *esse* of creation is not identical with the *esse* which God is. This distinction emphasizes that God cannot be counted

them. This *logic* did not permit in principle anything which is superior to the physical and psychical world, and thus there is no place for epiphany or contemplation of *theion* (theology). In the modern era Descartes, Leibniz, and Spinoza make direct parallelisation of spirit and matter which prevented the emergence of transcendent spirit, for they hold that the (human) spirit could create a genuine expressive form of itself within the sphere of the material. Then in Hegel the spirit is identified with Reason emerging and enriching itself through the elimination (*Aufhebung*) of existences.

31 *Glory V*, 67-68. Cf. Aquinas, *De Ver.* q. 27 a. 1 ad 8 for his understanding of “*distinctio realis*.” For Balthasar the ontological distinction can be unfolded into four parts: the first is that between the I and the Thou; the second is between being and existents; the third one is between essence and existence; the last one is a “theological difference”: between beings and being itself who freely and gratuitously puts everything into existence. Cf. *Glory V*, 429-450. See also Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002; John D. Caputo, “Heidegger’s ‘Difference’ and Theologic Distinction between *Esse* and *Ens* in St. Thomas,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 20 (1980): 161-181.

32 *Glory V*, 621.

33 Existential experience of this “More” taken philosophically can be paralleled with *pathe* of Aristoteles as the dreadful moment when things befall me that could not be other – the

amongst worldly existents nor amongst fixed and objectified things. God is Wholly Other than the world, but Balthasar shares with Nicolas of Cusa that God is Wholly Other only as *Non-Alliud*, because He covers all finite beings with his indivisible Being in order that the finite being is able to participate in His reality. He is Non-Alliud in order that his self-disclosure can be accepted according to the way of the one who receives. He is Non-Alliud in order that he can be known and loved. What Hegel fails to recognize is that God is not other than Absolute Spirit or Absolute Reason. That is to say that God is a part of this world, his Being is not other than that of the world, he projects the fourth ontological distinction onto the second.

Being conscious of the fourfold ontological distinction, Balthasar saves philosophy from “forgetfulness of Being” and “loss of Being”.³⁴ He observes the history of Western philosophy showing that right from Pythagoras and on, philosophy moves forward to “over-simplification”. Rarely does philosophy examine seriously Being, frequently it begins with a description rather than wonder about Being, and if it begins with wonder, then it also has the impulse to answer: why these things should exist at all. Philosophy tends to change the primary question of philosophy: why is there something rather than nothing with the consequence of identifying Being with necessity. This inclination reaches its culmination in the philosophy of Spirit where in the first phase Descartes, Leibniz and Malebranche leave Being out of the epistemological view by building an aprioristic immediacy of relation between God and Spirit. It is a somehow mystical where Spirit (human mind) is bound with God.³⁵ This mystical bound then is gone in Kant and in place of it Kant puts the immediate relation to God in the moral and autonomous self-appropriation of the will. Regarding this transformation, Balthasar notes that “not only does glory collapse into the beauty of the world, but it becomes prayerless self-glorification of the Spirit”. With this development metaphysics comes to an end:

moment that is disclosed when I bewail my fate or a fate ineluctably apprehended when I cry out ‘that this could be other’ – and it cannot.⁴⁷ Here we discover that the discipline I named earlier is not one we ourselves can teach ourselves, it must *befall* us, and dreadfully so, to be well learned. As such a befall-ment (an accident of the most genuine kind) it appears as a gift, though never as a gift we ourselves might have sought out or requested. Cf. P.L. Hemming, “The Nature of Rationality: Does Love Trump Reason?”, 16.

34 See P. Eicher, *Offenbarung. Prinzip neuzeitlicher Theologie*. München: Kösel, 1977, 328ff.

35 There are citations from Descartes’ work: “We should pull everything down and start again and close our eyes and ears, turn away from all the senses and banish all the images of corporal things from the spirit in order to become free for the contemplation of truth.” Descartes, *Principes de la philosophie*, 571 as cited in *Glory V*, 455 or “It is an (intuitive) *première notion* that all reality or perfection, which only exists objectively in ideas, must exist formally and eminently in their causes’ so that if we possess the concept of a being which grounds both itself and us, then this being (God, ed.) must also exist.” Descartes, *Rèspones*, 371 as found in *Glory V*, 458.

man takes the throne of God and takes control of the world. The “more catastrophical” development is found in the philosophy of Hegel and other idealists where the Absolute within the world can be identified with God for whom all else can be sacrificed and consumed for a future goal. Being/man is supposed to be subordinated to the whole and becomes a means to an end. Viewed from the fourfold ontological distinction: if I am no more than a means, then so too is the Thou with whom I communicate and love. Either the I or the Thou is debased and reduced to the status of being a machine-part in the absolute process. This means the loss of human existence or Being, which is the testimony of God’s Glory. To sum up, this decadence of philosophy has the sole reason: forgetfulness of Being or unawareness of the fourfold ontological distinction.³⁶

Balthasar’s awareness of the fourfold distinction saves also theology from the over-simplification of rationalism which imposes human thought upon the totality of revelation and from the threat of positivism which objectifies the revelation in an event. Away from an over-simplification, a true theology always safeguards speaking-of-God in analogical sense between God and the transcendentals of Being: *verum*, *bonum*, *pulchrum* and *unum*. With analogy, theology is not at all trapped into putting God in opposition with finite Being, but both of them are harmonious each other. Theology being aware of ontological distinction will not confuse *verum*, *bonum*, and *pulchrum* of the world with the Glory of the Lord (the fourth distinction). Consequently, for theology *bonum* as personal action and historical-dramatical *self-giving*; *pulchrum* as *self-disclosure*, and *verum* as *self-speaking* are qualities of Being as such which are harmonious with each other in a reciprocal relationship and because of which the totality of Being reveals richness, unlimitedness and unexhaustedness of Being (God).³⁷ The transcendental also serve as epistemological theology for they are different aspects of presentation (*Er-scheinen*) as much as Being presented as content given to reason. True theology, accordingly, trains man to “learn-to-see” the self-manifestation of God: that God does not come primarily as Master (*verum*) or Redeemer (*bonum*), but to “disclose Himself”, to reveal his Glory and radiate it to all. In this sense theology is not reconstructed according to a certain man’s need³⁸ or speculation, but obedient to the theological structure of revelation.

Again, the fourfold distinction safeguards the fundamental Christian act: love. The fundamental Christian act is always found in danger of one-

36 E.J. Bauer, *Op.cit.*, 356.

37 *Glory* IV, 22

38 We present here some expressions to describe this tendency “projection of the human personality on to impersonal Being”, “a mere transcendence of human longing”

sidedness. In the one hand it is not rare that Christian tends to take the world seriously in the face of a spiritualistic flight from the world; but in the other Christians frequently tend to take the piety of the world seriously in the face of an over-positivation of religion. Christian is caught in the tension between the two and trapped into Kiekergaardian logic *either ... or*. Thanks to the Ignatian spirit, Balthasar views a Christian as the *contemplativus in actione*, one who is active and spontaneous and at the same time receptive.³⁹ The first character, active and spontaneous, is the condition of the possibility of the fundamental human act of a loving preference for the will of God because only on this basis can man's freedom be secured in front of God. In his freedom man takes on to himself the Christian task: to experience the presence of absolute love, to actualize it, and to make it visible within his love for his neighbor. This love for neighbor for the Christian is more than doing good and being morally upright because this love is at the same time a demonstration (*Erweis*) and realization (*Vorweis*) of love which itself wholly transcends man's capacity, and thus also an indicator (*Verweis*) of that transcending love. Once man fulfills the demand of love, he experiences that love as greater than himself, he can only testify to that Love (the third distinction). Receptivity as the second characteristic reveals that self-denial opens up one's will to that of God, the one who fulfills his existence. In the face of this rich and absolute Being, man is aware of his poverty, and then as the first step – unlike Hegel's conception of man as a "closed" entity which through seizing and hoarding of the parcel of others, takes for himself – man is fundamentally characterized by a letting-be, an *ekstasis* out of his own self. In this self-dispossession, man becomes capable of managing to recognize and affirm the infinitely rich abundance and giving out of Being and in so doing he comes to his fullness. Here Balthasar is conscious of the second and forth ontological distinction in which personal and free depths of self-giving of absolute Being first poured out in the mystery of Creation making it possible for the *I* to recognize itself as the son calling and loving *Thou*, Abba.⁴⁰

In conclusion, I would say, on one hand, Hegel is the most influential modern philosopher whose philosophy provides possibilities to be adopted into Christian theology without any difficulties – even his philosophy is

39 The English version mistranslates the subject, instead of Ignatius, it writes Thomas. The original text sounds: "und von Ignatius her entsteht entsprechend erstmals in dieser Klarheit, das Problem zwischen aktiver Spontaneität des menschlichen Geistes (Handeln in Weisheit) und kontemplativer Rezeptivität desselben Geistes gegenüber der göttlichen (vielleicht kirchlich vermittelten) Weisheit".

The term *receptive* here refers back to Thomas famous distinction between God and Being, according to Thomas the *essential* is *limitation* and *capacitas receptionis*

40 *Glory V*, 626.

such fascinating, that many theologians come to follow his insight⁴¹ – because Hegel makes use of the subject-matter of Christian theology: revelation, bible and above all Spirit, but on the other hand, we must be cautious of Balthasar's warning that Hegel's philosophy is like "an amalgam of Christianity and anti-Christianity" because for the sake of achieving Absolute Knowledge and a comprehensive system he reordered the richness of the Christian faith and tradition in a such harmful way, that his concept of God is not God as believed according to the Christian faith. Balthasar's consciousness of the fourfold ontological distinction safeguards the Christian faith, theology and philosophy from this Hegelian titanism whose aspiration is to put everything under the power of reason.⁴²

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41 Just to mention here I present some works: Bloch, E., *Subjekt-Objekt. Erläuterungen zu Hegel*, Frankfurt: stw, 1985; Brito, E., "Hegel und die heutigen Christologie" in *IKZ* 6 (1977), 46-58, *Ibid.*, *La christologie de Hegel*, Paris, Cerf, 1983; Coda, P., *Il negativo e la trinità. Ipotesi su Hegel*, Roma, Città Nuova, 1987; Henrici, P., "Hegel und die Theologie" in *Gregoriana* 48 (1967) 706-745; Jüngel, E., *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt*, Tübingen, 1977; Theunissen, M., *Hegels Lehre vom absoluten Geist als theologisch-politischer Traktat*, Berlin 1970; Küng, H., *Menschwerdung Gottes*, Freiburg:Herder, 1970.

42 "Dem Hegelschen Versuch, so etwas wie ein System der Wahrheit zu basteln, der sicherlich des Antichristlichen an sich hat, stellt Balthasar Christus entgegen, der sich als den Weg und die Wahrheit bezeichnete (...) und (...) dabei den hegelschen Satz, alles Vernünftige sei wirklich, alles Wirkliche vernünftig (...) über alles systematisch Konstruierbare hinaus un auf einem völlig verschiedenen Weg erhätet, nämlich (...) indem er (...) in einem einzigen Akt das absolut Göttliche und das absolut Widergöttliche zu einen vermocht hat, nicht im Wahnsinn einer titanisch-übermenschlichen Gebärde, sondern in der Schlichtheit seines Gehorsams." P. Henrici, *Op.cit.* 248.

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