

when the beatific vision of God or the punishment begins, either immediately after death or at the general judgment.

3. Prospect

Balthasar's view, that human life must be considered in a qualitative rather than a discrete momentary perspective can be fit into mainstream systematic theology only with difficulty. Perhaps above all it appears to make more difficult the faith-filled dynamic of Christian life. Seen positively, however, it keeps the pressure of performance (*Leistungsdruck*) out of the realm of religion. An integration, should it be desired, demands a deeper reflection on the ecclesiological and christological context. When Balthasar emphasizes that the question of eternal destiny must be posed within the theological virtues, this means also that faith, hope, and love have to obtain their concrete form from Christ and the Church. This concrete form, in the sense of the theology of Balthasar, will require a deeper reflection on the descent of Christ into hell and the inclusive mission of the Church as the "*communio sanctorum*." From this, however, it in no way follows that one must adopt a superficial optimism regarding salvation or follow the doctrine of the restoration of all things.⁴⁶—Translated by Michael J. Dodds, O.P. □

⁴⁶Balthasar was then able to cite Breuning's formulation as agreeing with him: "The test for the correctness of the theory will always be that nowhere in the theory does one sport with *apokatastasis*."—"Systematische Entfaltung der eschatologischen Aussagen," in *My.Sal.*, V, 860, quoted in *Theodramatik*, IV, 171.

Time in eternity, eternity in time: On the contemplative-active life

David L. Schindler

The deepest meaning of temporality is found in relation to eternity, in the relation of love which is from and for the Father.

Contemplation suggests to our culture a withdrawal from action. The "timefulness" of our active lives seems to stand in stark contrast to the "timelessness" of any contemplative moments in those lives. Indeed, those who would defend the worth or superiority of the contemplative often reinforce the sense of its contrast with the active. This typically occurs in two ways.

On a "Greek" version, action is understood to be related to contemplation only as it were by way of *succession*, as something that occurs either *before* or *after* but in any case never *coincident with* contemplation. And action at the same time is something that becomes devalued: the warrant for its engagement is seen to be a function of, and thereby a necessary concession to, our "immanence" in time.¹

¹For a discussion of some of the difficulties for Christianity in its assimilation of a Greek sense of contemplation, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Aktion und Kontemplation," in *Verbum Caro* (Einsiedeln, 1960), 245-259. [For an English translation, see Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology*, I: *The Word Made Flesh* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1987), 227-240.] Balthasar of course affirms both the priority of contemplation (indeed, he insists that this priority is the basis of any human culture: 247) and a distinction between contemplation and action. His concern is merely to show how, from within the perspec-

On an "Eastern" version, the priority of contemplation is affirmed in a more radical and exclusive sense: engagement in action is likewise understood as a function of our immanence in time, but here time—and the action proper to it—are seen as but illusory shells needing to be shed.

Now nothing seems more foreign to the "activistic" bent of contemporary culture than these "Greek" and "Eastern" views. Nothing seems more evident than the reversal of primacy which our culture grants to action over contemplation. But what often goes unnoticed is how, notwithstanding this reversal of primacy, our modern culture still leaves intact the opposition between contemplation and action characteristic of the Greek and Eastern views. That is, having first assumed (however tacitly) a disjunction between contemplation and action, the former is now marginalized, or indeed eliminated altogether, in favor of the latter.

The purpose of the present article is to indicate how Christianity provides a way beyond this "dualistic" (and, alternatively, reductionistic) conception of the relation between contemplation and action that plagues so much of the current situation. On a Christian reading, the distinction between contemplation and action presupposes at its deepest level an anterior unity. Affirmations of the priority of contemplation and of the intrinsic worth of action are not contradictory but on the contrary mutually imply each other. Our task will be to explore the meaning of this mutual implication: to show how it results simultaneously in a more contemplative sense of action and a more "action"-oriented contemplation.

As we begin, it is helpful to keep in mind two main assumptions that often undergird the "dualism" (and consequent reductionism) noted above. On the one hand, the eternal is assumed to be either indifferent toward or simply opposed to the temporal; on the other hand, action in its primary meaning is taken to signify simply *external* activity and thereby activity restricted to meeting the needs of the present life.² The examination of these two assumptions which is required by Chris-

tive of Christian revelation, a greater integration of contemplation and action is called for than is possible on Greek presuppositions. Cf. also here "Jenseits von Kontemplation und Aktion?" in *Pneuma und Institution* (Einsiedeln, 1974), 288-297.

²Cf. "Aktion," 245.

tianity turns on the meaning of the trinitarian God of love as revealed in Jesus Christ.

Our argument will take the form largely of a meditative reflection on the views of Hans Urs von Balthasar and T. S. Eliot. The reflection falls naturally into three parts: (1) the trinitarian sense of time in eternity; (2) the christological sense of eternity in time; (3) the resulting implications for contemplation and action in our present cultural situation. In parts one and two, our procedure will be to select (of necessity with some arbitrariness) and comment upon texts from Eliot's *Four Quartets*;³ and then to elucidate their meaning further with assistance from the theology of Balthasar.

Trinity: Time in eternity

We begin with an affirmation that casts an illuminating light on everything that is to follow. Balthasar, following Adrienne von Speyr, sees as characteristic of the trinity the relation of "the more" (*Je-mehr*): "The more the persons differentiate themselves in God, the greater is their unity."⁴ Unity and difference within the trinity, in other words, are not inversely but directly related: the one is not exclusive of, but is the condition for and indeed the meaning of, the other. Unity and difference (dynamically) deepen each other, rather than remain either (statically) juxtaposed to or (dynamically) subsuming of each other. Such a relation of unity and difference is therefore best understood in terms of paradox, rather than either mere indifference on the one hand or dialectical opposition on the other. As we shall see, this sense of paradox provides the key at every turn to the poetic vision of Eliot as well as the theological vision of Balthasar.

(1) Let us then take a first look at how, for Eliot, eternity "contains" time. We begin with several passages from "Burnt Norton":

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,

³All quotations from Eliot will be taken from T.S. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (New York, 1963).

⁴Adrienne von Speyr, *Epheser* ("Kinder des Lichtes"), 85, quoted by Balthasar, *Theodramatik* (=TD), IV. *Das Endspiel* (Einsiedeln, 1983), 83.

And time future contained in time past.
 If all time is eternally present
 All time is unredeemable. ("Burnt Norton," I)

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
 Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
 But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
 Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor
 towards,
 Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
 There would be no dance, and there is only the dance. . . .

To be conscious is not to be in time
 But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,
 The moment in the draughty church at smokefall
 Be remembered; involved with past and future.
 Only through time time is conquered. (II)

. . . . Only by the form, the pattern,
 Can words or music reach
 The stillness, as a Chinese jar still
 Moves perpetually in its stillness.
 Not the stillness of the violin, while the note lasts,
 Not that only, but the co-existence,
 Or say that the end precedes the beginning,
 And the end and the beginning were always there
 Before the beginning and after the end. (V)

These texts move us immediately to the heart of the matter. Note the way in which Eliot links—paradoxically, in the sense defined above— notions which we normally set in simple opposition to each other: first and above all, the still point and the dance. "Arrest" is not the mere absence of "movement," nor "movement" the mere opposite of "arrest." On the contrary, in the depths, what appears to be arrest or "not-movement" is rather the intensification of movement.

Were stillness merely stillness, and dance merely dance, existing in mere juxtaposition or opposition to each other, then of course any deepening of stillness would entail a turn *away from* time and movement. But this is not how things are for Eliot. To be sure, an intensification of stillness involves moving "out of" time in some significant sense: "to be conscious is not to be in time." But what is crucial is to notice the way in which this "not to be in time" is for Eliot an affirmation before it is a negation.

On the one hand, then, only in time does one truly have the experience of the "moment in the rose-garden," and

in this sense it is only *through* time that time is conquered. On the other hand, the "conquering" of time is a transcendence by way of gathering up—and precisely not by way simply of leaving behind. That is why the stillness of the violin is not merely the "lasting" of the note, but is also the *co-existence* of the end and the beginning which were *always* there *before* the beginning and *after* the end. That is why the present and the past are contained in the future, and the future in the past, but precisely *not* in the sense that all time is thereby merely "eternally present." For an eternal presence (as understood here by Eliot) would signify a kind of "time-less" state, a state simply *without* time: a state absent of or indifferent to, rather than utterly intensively—always-ready—inclusive of, time. And from within such a time-less state, what has gone on *in* time could hardly be redeemed; it could only be shed or otherwise rejected.

(2) Balthasar's theology provides us with an explicitly trinitarian context for understanding this eternity which is inclusive of time (such that it is able to redeem time), and this still point whose inner meaning is a dance rather than an opposition to dance.

First of all, Balthasar (again following Speyr) insists that the trinitarian life of God contains the "original idea" (*Urdee*) of time. The "present" of the eternal begetting of the Son by the Father is an "always-already having been" (*Immer-schon-gewesen-Sein*) from the Father which is inclusive of an "eternal future" (*ewige Zu-kunft*) for the Father.⁵ The "present" is not a mere "*nunc stans*" which would eliminate all sense of expectation (*Erwartung*) and fulfillment (*Erfüllung*)—and hence all the tension proper to movement—in God. On the contrary, these are infinitely intensified in God.⁶

What Balthasar is affirming here gets amplified in a variety of ways. The divine life, since it is full, is complete stillness or rest (*völlige Ruhe*). But this "*Ruhe*" is to be understood, not as motionless (*starr*), but as eternal motion or "movingness" (*ewige Bewegtheit*).⁷ Rather than saying that there is no becoming (*Werden*) in God, one should speak instead of the "super-becoming of the innerly-divine event" (*Überwerden des*

⁵TD, IV, 81. See also "Endliche Zeit innerhalb Ewiger Zeit," in *Homo Creatus Est* (Einsiedeln, 1986), 38-51: at 42-44.

⁶Ibid.

⁷TD, IV, 67.

innergöttlichen Geschehens).⁸ Again, life within God is not eternally the same, in a sense which would imply a kind of everlasting boredom. Rather, God's trinitarian life is a "liveliness" (*Lebendigkeit*) characterized by the always new (*immer neu*) and by "surprise" (*Überraschung*): in the words of Speyr, trinitarian life is a "communion of surprise" (*Kommunion der Überraschung*) (in the sense of an infinite ever-overflowing fulfillment: "Über-Erfüllung").⁹

And further, in a way which, as we shall see, is important for the problem of contemplation and action, Balthasar shows how the notion of God as *actus purus* can be enriched: that is, by expanding it, from within a trinitarian perspective, to include "passivity." This has a double sense: first, the Father's active *actio*, as it were, includes the passive *actio* of the Son and the Spirit. But then further, given the simultaneity of these two distinct *actiones*, it follows that each necessarily conditions the meaning of the other. That is, the Father's "active action" is conditioned by the "passive action" of the Son and of the Spirit—and vice versa. Activity and passivity in God are thus always-already different *because of their relation to each other*: activity is not "merely" active, nor is passivity "merely" passive. On the contrary, "mere activity" now takes on an inherently generous character, and "mere passivity" an inherently receptive character. The key to all of this of course is the love which is the form of the trinity. As Balthasar puts it:

Receiving (*Empfangen*) and letting be (*Geschehenlassen*) are as essential for the concept of absolute love as giving (*das Geben*), which, without the receptive letting be—and everything else which belongs to love: the grateful owing of oneself (*Selbstverdankung*) and the turning back of oneself (*Rückwendung*) to the giver—would have no capacity to give at all.¹⁰

⁸TD, IV, 70.

⁹TD, IV, 69, n. 54; see also "Endliche Zeit," 42-44.

¹⁰TD, IV, 75. For discussion of activity and passivity in God, see 74-80. The pertinence of this discussion to our theme becomes evident in Speyr's statement that "active accomplishment and passive letting it be accomplished" (*aktiver Vollzug und passives Vollziehen-Lassen*) together form "the original unity of action and contemplation" (quoted by Balthasar, 79).

The importance and indeed radicality of Balthasar's view here becomes clear when he draws explicit attention to its consequences for our understanding of such polarities within the created order as act and potency and the masculine and the feminine, as well as action and contemplation (77, see 77-80). In the present article we are concerned with the latter polarity. But it

In a word, then: on Balthasar's trinitarian view, expectation, fulfillment, newness, surprise—and the movement implied by these—and passivity, all of which characterize time, are not mere negatives that are to be eliminated in eternity. Rather, they are "positives" which receive an infinite *deepening and intensification* in eternity. Balthasar thus sums up: "God placed change (*Wechsel*) and surprise [and becoming and motion and "passivity" and so on] in finite time (*endliche Zeit*) in order that these might thereby provide an image of his infinite time (*unendlichen Zeit*)."¹¹ What exists in God is not the absence of time—and all its concomitant attributes—but the original image (*Urbild*) of time.¹²

is perhaps worth underscoring how Balthasar's insistently trinitarian horizon invites a fresh look at the traditional (e.g., Aristotelian) understanding of act and potency (form and matter in their primary sense), or again of the feminine. The key for Balthasar is that, because act(ivity) and passivity have their first meaning only in *relation*, activity always and everywhere will be generous (passive in its activity: hence bearing "immanence"), and passivity receptive (i.e., active in its passivity, hence turning toward "transcendence"). It goes without saying that this "always and everywhere" must be interpreted in the ever-more dissimilar way proper to analogy as affirmed by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) and followed by Balthasar. But the point at least is this: that "potentiality" is not simply on the side of the creature, and indeed not something purely "negative"; and that the feminine is to be linked not with passivity but with (trinitarian) receptivity.

For development of a Thomistic sense of generosity consistent with that of Balthasar as indicated here, see Kenneth L. Schmitz, *The Gift: Creation* (Aquinas Lecture, Marquette University) (Milwaukee, 1982).

¹¹"Endliche Zeit," 43.

¹²It is important not to read Balthasar's position here as one of "polemics" against the traditional insistence on God's immutability (cf., for example, *Theodramatik*, II-1, 252-255) [for an English translation, see *Theo-Drama II* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1990)]. That his intention is not to reject this notion but to deepen it should be clear from what I have written. Balthasar moves from a more "monopolar" ("substantialist") context for understanding God to a more explicitly trinitarian ("personalist") context—and indeed it is in this way that he is able to speak of the God of drama ("*Theodramatik*"). (See, for example, TD, II-1, 9, where he distinguishes the trinitarian God of drama from the mutable God of "myth" on the one hand, and the immutable God of "philosophy" on the other. Or again, see "Jenseits," 292 [cf. also p. 290], where he distinguishes the active but merely "thought-ful"—"*Sich-denken des Denkens*"—God of Aristotle from the Christian God of love.) But it is crucial to see that Balthasar nonetheless does not mean now merely to juxtapose so-called personalist categories to the more ontological categories of the tradition. On the contrary, he means to transform them: that is, Balthasar's point is that it is precisely the *personal—love*—which reveals the primary

In all these ways, then, we see how Balthasar reinforces Eliot's sense of an eternity that comprehends time. We see how Balthasar likewise fills the still point with dance. But we have yet to look at this issue from the reverse direction: that is, with the emphasis now on how time itself already "contains" eternity; on how the movement of the dance itself finds its meaning in the still point.

Christology: Eternity in time

(1) Again we begin with texts from Eliot:

Men's curiosity searches past and future
And clings to that dimension. But to apprehend
The point of intersection of the timeless
With time, is an occupation for the saint—
No occupation either, but something given
And taken, in a lifetime's death in love,
Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender.
For most of us, there is only the unattended
Moment, the moment in and out of time,
.....
.....These are only hints and guesses,
Hints followed by guesses; and the rest
Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.
The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation.
Here the impossible union
Of spheres of existence is actual,
Here the past and future
Are conquered, and reconciled, . . . ("Dry Salvages," V).

Curious men attend closely to the passing of events all about them. But such men merely drift along on these currents of past and future, remaining on their surfaces. It is the saint who truly penetrates the events of history. And the sense of the saint's doing so is paradoxical: by apprehending time's intersection with the timeless. That is, only through awareness of the eternal dimension *in* time does the moment of time become truly attended. And how is this awareness achieved? Only by "a lifetime's death in love, ardour and selflessness and self-surrender."

meaning of ontology, of being. For an interpretation of Balthasar on the question of immutability, see Gerry O'Hanlon, S.J., "Does God Change?—H.U. von Balthasar on the Immutability of God," *Irish Theological Quarterly*, vol. 53, no. 3 (1987), 161-183.

Thus we find the "impossible union Of spheres of existence": eternity enters into time only by virtue of a suffering passion unto death. This is the meaning of Incarnation; it is the Incarnation, this life-unto-death, that fills time with its meaning, that reconciles past and future.

Aspects of this theme are taken up repeatedly by Eliot, in ever-new ways:

I said to my soul, be still, . . .
Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought:
So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.
Whisper of running streams, and winter lightning.
The wild thyme unseen and the wild strawberry,
The laughter in the garden, echoed ecstasy
Not lost, but requiring, pointing to the agony
Of death and birth ("East Coker," III).

"I said to my soul, be still": only in the stillness proper to passion ("passivity") can one reach the truth of the dance—of the activity or movement—characteristic of time. The darkness of this still point is its light, exactly in the way that the "passivity" of the still point is its activity. Thought is for the wrong thing insofar as it remains bounded by time, has thereby not yet suffered into the silence of eternity.

But, again, the silence of eternity is a silence which has ever broken forth into activity, and indeed has taken on flesh. And thus this silence is ever disposed toward, and ready to open into, the "laughter in the garden" and the "echoed ecstasy." These are never to be neglected and not to be lost; but for us they are nonetheless requiring: their true meaning can be retrieved only paradoxically, through the purification of suffering unto death (through "the agony Of death and birth").

In sum, for Eliot time is truly entered only when, through renunciation, we suffer our way into its (time's) eternal depths.

But let us continue:

Home is where one starts from. As we grow older
The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated
Of dead and living. Not the intense moment
Isolated, with no before and after
But a lifetime burning in every moment
.....
Love is most nearly itself
When here and now cease to matter.

Old men ought to be explorers
 Here and there does not matter
 We must be still and still moving
 Into another intensity
 For a further union, a deeper communion
 Through the dark cold and the empty desolation,
 The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters
 Of the petrel and the porpoise. In my end is my beginning
 ("East Coker," V).

There is no end of it, the voiceless wailing,
 No end to the withering of withered flowers,
 To the movement of pain that is painless and motionless
 To the drift of the sea and the drifting wreckage,
 The bone's prayer to Death its God. Only the hardly, barely
 prayable
 Prayer of the one Annunciation ("Dry Salvages," II).

You are not here to verify,
 Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
 Or carry report. You are here to kneel
 Where prayer has been valid. And prayer is more
 Than an order of words, the conscious occupation
 Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying.
 And what the dead had no speech for, when living,
 They can tell you, being dead: the communication
 Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living.
 Here, the intersection of the timeless moment
 Is England and nowhere. Never and always ("Little Gidding," I).

This is the use of memory:
 For liberation—not less of love but expanding
 Of love beyond desire, and so liberation
 From the future as well as the past. Thus, love of a country
 Begins as an attachment to our own field of action
 And comes to find that action of little importance
 Though never indifferent. History may be servitude,
 History may be freedom. See, now they vanish,
 The faces and places, with the self which, as it could, loved them,
 To become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern ("Little
 Gidding," III).

Who then devised the torment? Love.
 Love is the unfamiliar Name
 Behind the hands that wove
 The intolerable shirt of flame
 Which human power cannot remove.
 We only live, only suspire
 Consumed by either fire or fire ("Little Gidding," IV).

A people without history
 Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern
 Of timeless moments ("Little Gidding," V).

Note how Eliot's paradox is anchored in affirmation. Negation always indicates a kind of "winnowing" process, or more properly a suffering, which enables the affirmation to become ever deeper and more inclusive. "In my end is my beginning": eternity is already there at the beginning but it must nonetheless still be suffered into. There is "a lifetime burning in every moment": or rather, there *should* be a lifetime burning in every moment, but this can happen only through a stillness that is still-moving, through an ever-deepening intensity of communion. The meaning of life is found, not by moving outside of the moment, but by "burning into" the moment. And yet, as one "burns into" the moment, one will find that that moment (of time) becomes ever stranger, that its "here and now" increasingly ceases to matter: but never in the sense that the moment becomes an occasion to which one is now simply indifferent.

"There is no end of it"—"To the movement of pain that is painless and motionless": the endless recurrence of pain flattens out into numbness, is no longer truly experienced. The meaning of pain is taken in only through suffering: through the letting be of the Annunciation (or: through the renunciation of the self in the face of the annunciation of the other).

"You are not here to verify, Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity Or carry report. You are here to kneel": the truth of time emerges not by turning outward to control or master or to satisfy oneself, but by opening from within in obedience and submission. Only through humility and prayer does one perceive the intersection of the timeless moment: perceive, that is, the truth of time which is in England and nowhere, never and always.

"This is the use of memory: For liberation—not less of love but expanding of love beyond desire": liberation from is never indifference toward. It is transfiguration. It is a suffering entry into, on the way to transforming renewal. What is called detachment is on the contrary purified attachment.

"Who then devised the torment? Love." "We only live, only suspire Consumed by either fire or fire." The "shirt of flame" that is ours in temporal existence must—willy-nilly—be "suffered": but only the suffering proper to love is redemptive. Only the dying that is fully entered into opens into

the fire that is (eternal) life. The dying that is refused drives one on the contrary into the fire that is (eternal) death.

"A people without history Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern Of timeless moments." Those who have not entered into history, which is to say, paradoxically, into the pattern of "timeless"—still and still moving—moments which are the deep meaning of history, can never be liberated from history. Such people remain ever slaves to the surfaces, ever on the outside, of history.

(2) When we turn to Balthasar, we see readily how his christology undergirds the vision of Eliot. Following Aquinas, Balthasar affirms that the mission of the Son in his incarnation is a continuation of the Son's eternal procession from the Father.¹³ Thus the Son, in taking on flesh and temporality, does not leave eternity behind.¹⁴ On the contrary, every moment of Jesus, precisely *in* time, reveals eternity.

The point, then, can be made simply. The deepest meaning of temporality is found in relation to eternity, in the relation of love which is from and for the Father: because *that is what Jesus is*. Jesus' life begins in the receptivity that becomes complete in his passion, and all of this is what gives his activity its *form*. Jesus' *fiat* makes possible, and indeed already begins, the passion-unto-death that is the meaning of his action.¹⁵ Receptivity is thereby revealed to be intrinsically ordered to the most intense activity: it leads to a death within which—and within which alone—arises the fullness of life. Jesus' life is a suffering of eternity into time, so that time might transcend itself into eternity, and might thereby be redeemed. In sum, it is in Jesus' passion that we find the stillest point that is the fullest dance, and the darkest point that is the greatest light.

The echoes of Eliot here are thus evident. The temporality of the created order is not empty: it is full. Or rather it becomes full by means of the love whose activity takes its *form* in contemplation: in the receptivity whose end is passion. Above all, it is the marian Annunciation that gives the first and

deepest form to time and action in creation.¹⁶ Again, it is prayer and obedience.¹⁷ Radically, it is martyrdom: the witness—the being from and for God (in, with, and for Jesus)—which is unto death.¹⁸

The paradox of contemplative-active life

We began this article by calling attention to the inadequacy of a contemplative disposition that was not internally ordered to action, and of an action that in turn was not formed from within the contemplative. The sense of that inadequacy should now be clearer, in the light of the trinitarian and christological understanding of eternity and time. What is revealed to us in and by the God of Jesus Christ is how contemplation and action reveal their true meaning to us from the beginning only in relation: in the relation called love. Contemplation finds its true meaning only insofar as its characteristic receptivity unfolds into the *passion* of complete self-giving. And, paradoxically, this same passion of *complete self-giving* is what gives the true meaning to action. In a word, contemplation takes its proper form only by becoming simultaneously generous; and action its proper form only by becoming anteriorly receptive—both of these, finally, in the radical way revealed in and by the love of Jesus Christ.

From all of this, then, the limitations of the respective dualistic conceptions of the contemplation-action relation sketched at the outset should be evident, at least in principle. In no one of the three conceptions noted—"Greek," "Eastern," or "modern"—is there a sufficiently deep sense either of the generosity that must be intrinsic to contemplation or of the receptivity that must be internal to action. But the main concern of the present article is with the contemporary situation,

¹⁶See "Aktion," 255-57; "Jenseits," 294, 296, 297; and *Love Alone* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 101ff.

¹⁷See, for example, *TD*, IV, 83-86, where Balthasar shows how prayer and obedience begin already within the "immanent" trinity.

¹⁸See, for example, *Wer ist ein Christ?* (Einsiedeln, 1983), ch. III [for an English translation, see *Who is a Christian?* (New York: Newman Press, 1968)]; and *Cordula oder der Ernstfall* (Einsiedeln-Trier, 1987) [for an English translation, see *The Moment of Christian Witness*, trans. by Richard Beckley (New York: Newman Press, 1969)].

¹³"Endliche," 44; see *TD*, IV, 53-57.

¹⁴"Endliche," 44. Cf. also here "Jenseits," 292-94.

¹⁵See "Aktion," 254-55; "Jenseits," 293ff.

or with what I have called the modern view. I will therefore limit myself in conclusion to comments on this latter view.

Briefly, as noted at the outset, the contemporary insistence is on the primacy of action, to the neglect of contemplation. This insistence presupposes a dualism, which then gives way to a reductionism. The result is twofold: the action that is now without the inner dimension of (depth-giving) receptivity tends to take the form of extroverted and superficial ("super-facies") doing and making; and the contemplation that is now without ("fruit-bearing") generosity tends to take the form of a barren "theorizing" or "looking at."¹⁹

The meaning of a theorizing that has become barren or empty can perhaps be best indicated again in the vivid images of Eliot:

Here is a place of disaffection
Time before and time after
In a dim light: neither daylight
Investing form with lucid stillness
Turning shadow into transient beauty
With slow rotation suggesting permanence
Nor darkness to purify the soul
Emptying the sensual with deprivation
Cleansing affection from the temporal.
Neither plenitude nor vacancy. Only a flicker
Over the strained time-ridden faces
Distracted from distraction by distraction
Filled with fancies and empty of meaning
Tumid apathy with no concentration
Men and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind
That blows before and after time,
Wind in and out of unwholesome lungs
Time before and time after ("Burnt Norton," III).

Or as, when an underground train, in the tube, stops too long
between stations
And the conversation rises and slowly fades into silence
And you see behind every face the mental emptiness deepen
Leaving only the growing terror of nothing to think about;

¹⁹On the issue of "fruitfulness" as due (also) to contemplation, see Balthasar, "Aktion und Kontemplation," 257-59.

Another way of putting the matter here is that, when action and contemplation are disjoined, or merely extrinsically related, action tends to become "voluntaristic" or "moralistic," and contemplation "intellectualistic." Balthasar's primary concern in the article cited is with the latter problem.

Or when, under ether, the mind is conscious but conscious of nothing—"East Coker," III).

We need not delay at this point with an extended commentary on these passages. Theory or contemplation becomes vacancy or boredom, or again interiority becomes emptiness, for the person whose time has not been filled with eternity: for the one the form of whose life has not been invested "with lucid stillness." And this lucid stillness, once again, can be brought about only through the transformation of love: and thus through the darkness that purifies "the soul Emptying the sensual with deprivation Cleansing affection from the temporal." Otherwise one remains merely scattered, extended, stretched between temporal points without undergoing—because not suffering into—any of them. One is left with only "the terror of nothing to think about," "is conscious but conscious of nothing." (This "no-thing," it might be added, could aptly represent not only the "modern" emptiness of surfaces, as it were, but also the "postmodern" emptiness of depths.)

But what I wish primarily to stress here in conclusion is how this emptiness of contemplation inverts outward into a harshness of action. Balthasar characterizes the soul of our time as an "*anima technica vacua*."²⁰ The phrase is an exact one: it suggests that a soul empty of the contemplative is one whose action will take on the form of a machine. The action of such a soul, that is, precisely by virtue of its lack of a *contemplative sense of the other*, will assume the characteristics of externality and extroversion. The action will be one that is just so far no longer truly receptive of the other, can no longer let the other be, is no longer disposed to suffer the other.

The result may be summed up in the term "instrumentalism": the other (human or non-human)—who is now merely an "outsider"—thereby becomes an instrument for control and manipulation in the interests of the (empty) self. Here, then, is the link among such patterns of action in the West as its consumerism, its pragmatism, and its official toleration of abortion. Here is the link between the pursuit of pleasure (e.g., promiscuity) and violence (e.g., the neglect—unto elimination—of the unborn, the elderly, the dying). That link, once again, is the lack of a genuinely theoretical disposition toward

²⁰*Epilog* (Einsiedeln/Trier, 1987), 8.

the other: of a relation that is first and most basically *from and for the other*.²¹

With this, then, we return to the affirmation with which we started: retrieval of true contemplation and of true action can occur only together. But perhaps now, with the help of Eliot and Balthasar, we can see more clearly what such a retrieval entails for the Western liberal sense of theory and practice. The emptiness of the liberal sense of theory is solidary with the harshness of its practice (in the ways noted). Where this emptiness and harshness meet is precisely on the surface: that is, in their common superficiality. Our purpose has been to show that the true dimensions of this superficiality can be seen only from within the suffering *fiat* whose form is given in the love of Jesus Christ. □

²¹In connection with these final paragraphs, cf. the statement of Balthasar: "But whenever the relationship between nature and grace is severed [that is, here: where nature has not been formed in the christic-marian-ecclesial *fiat*], then the whole of worldly being falls under the dominion of 'knowledge', and the springs and forces of love immanent in the world are overpowered and finally suffocated by science, technology and cybernetics. The result is a world without women, without children, without reverence for love in poverty and humiliation—a world in which power and the profit-margin are the sole criteria, where the disinterested, the useless, the purposeless is despised, persecuted and in the end exterminated—a world in which art itself is forced to wear the mask and features of technique." (*Love Alone*, 114-115).

The anointed imagination: The character of Catholic literature in the twentieth century

Erasmio Leiva-Merikakis

Christ transformed our imagination by making his dwelling in our memory, so that we could create a symbolic world of language, images, and actions that is harmonious with the world of creation and redemption.

"Turn your eyes on Jesus. Will you? Can you with your anointed imagination see? Jesus! Jesus! Holy Jesus! . . . Get ahold of God!"

These are the impassioned words of Brother Shad to his congregation during a Wednesday evening revival service at Rooftree Pentecostal Church in Durance, Texas, and the scene takes place in the novel *Ordinary Time*, by A. G. Mojtabai, published in September, 1989.¹ My theme is the Catholic Imagination, for which a more poetic name might indeed be Brother Shad's the "anointed imagination." Whatever *he* might have meant by it in the context of his ecstatic sermon, certainly we should not lightly dismiss the associations which the phrase

¹A.G. Mojtabai, *Ordinary Time* (New York, Doubleday, 1989), 90-1.