

Death in Cyril O'Regan's *The Anatomy of Misremembering*

ANTHONY C. SCIGLITANO, JR.

*Seton Hall University
South Orange, New Jersey*

CYRIL O'REGAN'S *The Anatomy of Misremembering* is a book about death, mourning, lamentation, and the grounds for hope. It is a book about dissembling, deflecting, and lying—indeed, about the father of lies. It is a book about paternity tests, true and false positives included. It is a book about Hans Urs von Balthasar as genealogist of modern discourse,¹ specifically Hegelian discourse, in its many-faceted ways of claiming Christian paternity while cunningly altering each aspect of Christian narrative grammar so that the resources traditionally granted Christians for dealing with the maw of death and history, for their mourning to find consolation, for lamentation to stand as prophetic protest, and for a hope that energizes in the face of injustice are undermined at every stage. It is a book about gratitude and its grounds, about prayer and its many forms beyond the Enlightenment pastiche of prayer as petition only. It is about Balthasar's

¹ O'Regan makes the point that, while “genealogist” characterizes a deep and broad aspect of Balthasar's work, Balthasar does not see this as his primary theological task, which belongs instead to the “celebration of the Trinitarian God who has saved us through his overwhelming love made present in Christ, a celebration that has practical as well as contemplative dimensions, and expresses itself in a variety of forms of life all of which are in the last instance modes of worship, even those that involve care of bodies and souls of Christians and non-Christians”; see *The Anatomy of Misremembering*, vol. 1, *Hegel* (Chestnut Ridge, NY: Crossroad, 2014), 94. Please note that all numbers given in parentheses without label or identification are page numbers in this work by O'Regan.

genius in helping us to see not only what has been misremembered, but precisely the mechanisms by which such false recall transforms genuine memory and undermines Christian truth, practice, and forms of life.

While not as commercially edifying as themes of love and grace, death will nevertheless be the focus of this article. The focus on a particular theme gains justification in part from the enormous richness of O'Regan's text. To attempt exhaustive encapsulation is to flirt with the absurd. The choice to focus on mortality is, I hope, justified by its presence from the very beginning of *Anatomy*, through O'Regan's discussion of Hegel's reduction of Christian motifs, practices, and forms of life to a ghostly half-life and thus ghastly presence, through a more specific detailing of this reduction in particular Christian doctrines and practices, and in the different thinkers who have resisted and perpetuated this misremembering. On *Anatomy's* account, Balthasar sees and resists the massive form of Hegelian misremembering that forms the context for a theodicy that would justify the forgetfulness of the dead as they are incorporated into a system of divine self-development and self-regard.² The present article will investigate this theme as it plays out in O'Regan's text under three rubrics: (a) Hegel's eclipse of Christian narrative grammar; (b) Cross as the death of difference; and (c) Misremembering as legitimation of forgetting.

Ghostly Death, Ghastly Presence: Hegel's Eclipse of Christian Narrative Grammar

O'Regan observes Balthasar's agreement with Hegel that there is a fundamental forgetfulness at play in modernity with respect to Christian meaning and truth (12–14), not the least of which is a general disregard for the Trinity (24).³ Indeed, this forgetfulness is the reason for

² Walter Lowe's *Theology and Difference: The Wound of Reason* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) gives a helpful diagnosis of this type of theodicy that allows and then squelches difference and rationally legitimates suffering and evil in a comprehensive explanatory system.

³ O'Regan addresses Kant's and Schleiermacher's antipathy to Trinitarian discourse in both *Anatomy* (248–50) and *The Heterodox Hegel* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 365–66. In *Anatomy*, he observes that Gnostic return occurs only or mainly in Trinitarian-rich discourses, and he thinks Kant and Schleiermacher thus help raise the question of whether such a deeply Trinitarian theology as Balthasar's threatens Gnostic return and thus should be foresworn. He then distinguishes between Balthasar's Christologically regulated Trinitarian thought and Hegel's unregulated Trinitarian

Balthasar's primary acts of memory—both hagiographical and theological more broadly—that seek to exhibit in a compelling manner the diverse riches of Christian tradition. Here and in his *Heterodox Hegel*, O'Regan has recourse to Milan Kundera's joining of forgetting to the “unbearable lightness of Being.” For Kundera, forgetting is superior to a kind of false and self-aggrandizing recall enacted, for instance, by totalitarian regimes. In this sense, “unbearability” can function ironically for Kundera.⁴ For Balthasar, it does not. Modern forgetfulness issues in a legitimation of etiolated forms of existence marked by calculative rationality, hedonism, and heroic—not saintly—virtue (12–13).⁵ In this context, Balthasar's monographs on Elizabeth of the Trinity, Thérèse of Lisieux, Bernanos, and Péguy (among many others) serve to remind Christians of other and richer possibilities for a life.

Hegel too proposes his rendition of Christianity as a mnemonic response to Enlightenment amnesia, but also as a philosophical-conceptual legitimation of Christian symbol and content. What Hegel purports to offer is nothing less than life to the dead body of Christian doctrine, its practices and forms of life killed on the altar of deracinated reason. The burden of *Anatomy* is to show that and how Balthasar reads Hegel's promise to yield only a simulacra, a false but attractive alternative that keeps all the names the same, but alters identity at every turn (24). As O'Regan puts it:

Hegel is such a magician that he is able to make what is Christianly dead in his thought appear to be the most alive: he re-presents a living reality and by so doing offers ghosts. Hegel is in effect the arch-necromancer. Maybe more. (253)

O'Regan observes four ways (monistic conflation, divine erotics, necessitarianism, and total *kenosis*) that Balthasar thinks Hegel transforms Christian narrative from a dramatic interaction of divine and human freedom into an epic whose end is already known and prosecuted so that drama has found its resolution. Textually, O'Regan is reading the

thought. It is the latter that threatens (and, in fact, instantiates) Gnostic return. It is also the case that, for O'Regan, avoiding Gnostic return does not mean avoiding Marcionism, which may well find a home in Kant and Schleiermacher and is perhaps more likely apart from Trinitarian reflection.

⁴ In *Heterodox Hegel*, O'Regan uses Kundera's trope to speak of God's inability to bear the lightness of abstract being prior to its foray into finitude and history (186–87).

⁵ See also 530n16, 531n17, and 631n41.

first volume of *Theo-Drama* against Hegelian aesthetics and fundamental theology and reading the remainder of *Theo-Drama* as a massive form of resistance to the entire Hegelian system, to specific Hegelian figurations of theological anthropology, Christology, Trinity, ecclesiology, and eschatology, all of which get run through the epical ringer. In other words, Hegel kills what he purports to invigorate by interpreting Christian narrative grammar as offering a monistic conflation of God and world that replaces the dialogical relation essential to Jewish and Christian monotheism with dialectic⁶ (154–56); a divine erotics that propels God’s movement towards self-realization and fatally compromises the *agapeic* love that springs from fullness and non-ironically, but also non-univocally, gives itself for us⁷ (157–62), with the resolution of divine acts of freedom and non-instrumental self-giving or grace into a system of logically necessary developments with a pre-determined and immanent *telos* (162–64), and with a rendition of *kenosis* or divine self-emptying understood as essential, iterative, and ultimately without remainder, without resurrection of the particular person, Jesus, and without ascension (165–68). *Kenosis* joins with Hegel’s divine erotics, on this reading, to suggest a divine that does not move from fullness to loving self-gift, but rather from emptiness to self-enrichment or fullness (*plerosis*).⁸ *Agape* is outmaneuvered by *eros*.⁹

⁶ See Balthasar’s interesting discussion on “dia-lectic” in an apocalyptic key in *Theo-logic: Theological Logical Theory*, vol. 2, *The Truth of God*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004), 317–19. While Balthasar is clearly aiming his attack at Hegel here, it is not unreasonable to think that this is also a riposte to Barth’s claim that the *analogia entis* is the Anti-Christ. Balthasar would then be turning the tables and arguing that dia-lectic—that is, contra-diction of the speech of the Word that must also be contradiction of the Truth, and thus a lie—is the true Anti-Christ. Since Balthasar links the early Barth with idealist dialectic, there is some evidence for this reading.

⁷ O’Regan interestingly comments on the collapse of the history of salvation and the history of God: “Considered thus, human begins are instruments in the self-referential narrative of the divine in which the divine becomes the same through the hiatus of difference” (*Anatomy*, 211).

⁸ *Anatomy*, 167–68 and 231.

⁹ O’Regan details this nicely; see especially *Anatomy*, 159–61: “For Balthasar, the erotic view has to be opposed by the properly Christian view of the divine as pure love and gift” (159); “Against Hegel it is necessary to insist on *agape* over *eros*” (160). *Eros*, however, should not be expunged from the divine in a form of reaction formation, only strictly regulated by *agape* and a rendition of Trinitarian Being that lacks nothing and loves freely out of superabundance (160–61).

Some explanation here may be helpful. The term *eros* is used by O'Regan and Balthasar in its classical Platonic rendition (from the *Symposium*) as a love that desires from need, want, or lack (*penia*). However, the question might reasonably be asked as to how self-emptying, or *kenosis*, is possible from a position of lack rather than fullness: What stands to get "emptied"? The answer to this question is complex, to say the least. In *Anatomy*, O'Regan shows that, for Balthasar, Hegelian *kenosis* is a kind of procedural term that ultimately designates God's cooptation of nature and human being for divine self-realization (168 and 231). As such, *kenosis* is "iterative" in that many human cultural forms instantiate elements of this logic, or even immanent law, of divine self-development. Read this way, Hegel's God "is a trickster who feigns giving" (168). The metamorphosis of *kenosis* from a fullness that gives itself away to a trope for divine self-actualization from want to fulfillment indicates how *eros* and *kenosis* can operate together even though they would seem to be etymologically opposed. More interesting still is Hegel's movement of *kenosis* and *eros* into the immanent divine milieu, where energy and *telos* send the abstract divine *ad extra* toward the development of personality through nature and history (231). For, on Hegel's account and that of Jacob Boehme before him, apart from this movement, the divine is "thin" or "lacks seriousness."¹⁰ On O'Regan's reading, "Balthasar's entire reflection on the immanent Trinity is set squarely against this non-hypostatic view, its view of personality as result rather than origin, as well as the understanding of *kenosis* as an operation arising from poverty rather than wealth" (231). One of *Anatomy's* many virtues is its careful attention to the ways in which Balthasar appropriates terms from Hegel but then recalls them back

¹⁰ It is more than worthwhile to visit O'Regan's discussion of this movement from *kenosis* to *plerosis* in *Heterodox Hegel* (see 181–85, 190, 200 and 234, but esp. 185–87; see also 185–86 for his discussion of *pleroma* and *plerosis* and how Hegel claims "configurational perfection" for the immanent divine, but in such a way that this perfection is relativized and requires narrative fulfillment; see also 187 for the connection to Boehme's use of "thin" (*dun*) and for the divine seeking or hungering for ontological substance or fulfillment). Hegel's own commentary concerning the need that the divine become "serious" and thus gain ontological density can be found in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: The Lectures of 1827*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 433–35; cf. *Anatomy*, 356, where O'Regan quotes Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, no. 19, for the issue of divine "seriousness [*der Ernst*]."

toward genuine Christian memory. Outside of this careful attention, conflation of Balthasar with Hegel becomes a real danger and, on O'Regan's account, one that has not been entirely resisted.¹¹

The end result of Hegel's epical transformation of Christian memory is that divine transcendence becomes an immanence that constitutes the spiritual community through a process of divine self-development and, finally, self-knowledge. Or, in O'Regan's more felicitous phrase, Hegel's system "beggars transcendence." We can see this partially, at least, if we focus on the "death of difference" in the Hegelian system and, in particular, the central Christian symbol of the Cross.

The Cross and the Death of Difference

O'Regan reads Balthasar as offering a kind of post-modern recall of Christian particularity against the amnesia instantiated and prescribed by the Enlightenment. If post-modernity supplies plenty of relativistic and nihilistic perils and frequently eschews the semantic for the semi-otic, O'Regan's judgment here appears to be that post-modernity offers possibilities to Christian theology precisely in its opposition to modern univocity and a universality that threatens sameness. Conversely, the former's concern for plurality and difference and ambivalent openness to literary, mythological, aesthetic, and religious discourses as sites of ontological disclosure provide reasons to think that opportunities may lie amongst perils. In a modern context of reduction to the same, the Catholic appreciation for different forms of life that signal different aspects of the divine economy, including the eschatological, will be ruled out of court *in toto* or allowed to remain only under the rubrics of the "freakish" or "fanatical." In this case, post-modern engagement may prove salutary.

Balthasar appears to O'Regan as a savvy critic, fooled neither by Enlightenment "religion" and univocity nor by Hegel's claims to include difference (171 and 237–38). Hegel provides not the opening to a post-modern philosophical theology, but rather the very closing off of the possibility (22), insofar as all "unreconciled" elements in his system are taken up and surpassed on the way to an immanent historical end. Both Judaism and Catholicism, for instance, function in Hegel's system as markers of the "not yet" of reconciliation between divine and human self-consciousness that must be—and on

¹¹ See O'Regan's comments on "radical orthodoxy" in this regard (*Anatomy*, 168).

his account have been—overcome (214 and 578n54).¹² Jürgen Moltmann, named a Hegelian “son” in *Anatomy* (335), self-consciously continues Hegel’s progressivist Joachimite rendition of history and accidentally repeats his necessitarianism. As in Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Moltmann’s theology ends up consigning Judaism to an irretrievable, because theologically surpassed, epoch.¹³ Balthasar sees, then, that much gets consigned to the grave in a Hegelian progressivist system on behalf of a third Age of Spirit that, while effectively severed from both Jewish covenant regulation and what O’Regan labels “Christological regulation,” offers little more than the formal recommendation of freedom as autonomy (249). Here again, though, the Hegelian ghosts are present. For O’Regan, Moltmann, like Hegel, brings forward Jewish thinkers not so much as themselves, and certainly not as community-located thinkers committed to Jewish practice, but as thinkers who lend support to his mostly undifferentiated rejection of the Christian tradition’s insistence on divine impassibility and transcendence (222–23, 272, and 359–60).¹⁴

On this point, however, O’Regan rightly believes that Balthasar demurs from total criticism (226) and, in one of the most fascinating engagements in *Anatomy*, gives a highly nuanced discussion of Balthasar’s discussion of impassibility. The Hegelian and Moltmannian challenge to traditional impassibility teaching essentially amounts to the difficulty of applying Platonic or Aristotelian metaphysics to the living, involved, and crucified God of the Bible (222–23).¹⁵ In *Heterodox Hegel*, O’Regan shows the ways in which

¹² “Much in the same way as Judaism, the Catholic church is diagnosed as an anachronism. Within history, it has no historical effect; it is impotent to create and justify secular institutions, which is the real business of the church as this has been revealed in principle in the Reformation and in fact in the elaboration of institutions that generate autonomy and knowledge” (*Anatomy*, 214; cf. 215 and 578n54). See *Heterodox Hegel*, 244–46, on this series of sublations, including Lutheran Protestantism.

¹³ This occurs in several ways, according to O’Regan. Prophetic obedience is replaced by an axiological preference for autonomy, which then threatens any coherence to Christian doxology (343).

¹⁴ On Hegel and Judaism, see O’Regan’s essay “Hegel’s Retrieval of Philo: Constitution of a Christian Heretic,” *The Studia Philonica Annual: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism* 20 (2008): 101–27.

¹⁵ For Balthasar’s figuration of Moltmann as an “epical” thinker and as a reluctant Hegelian, see *Anatomy*, 333–66 (at 333, he refers to Moltmann as “a Hegelian theologian with a Christian bad conscience”). O’Regan would agree with

Hegel takes up a critique of Kantian categories, gives them organic unity, ontological density, and teleological vector, and interprets divine Being as moving from Aristotelian potency (*dynamis*) to actuality (*energeia*).¹⁶ In other words, Hegel applies the development that Aristotle would envision for the natural world to the divine realm. Thinkers as different as Karl Rahner and Thomas Weinandy worry that Balthasar's discussion of impassibility may permit something like this mutability and passibility incursion into Catholic theology such that the divine turns mythological. Interestingly, O'Regan suggests that the Hegel-Moltmann side (systematically) and the Thomists¹⁷ (episodically) slip into a univocal conceptual form of discourse where passibility and impassibility play out a "zero-sum game" (225). Recognizing that Hegel "answers a need" (293), he reads Balthasar as opting for a third way that sees impassibility as a key marker of non-contrastive divine difference (225), but also as specified only in and through Scripture's "ferociously loving and vehemently engaged God" (229). The suggestion here is that "impassibility" serves, like other Balthasarian meta-terms such as super-*kenosis*, super-time, and super-space, to allow Christological and Trinitarian direction to make attempts at addressing the God-world relation while eluding a contest between terms nearly unavoidable in the realm of concepts and categories (228). He is eloquent on the difference that, in contrast to Hegel, supports apophaticism's place within revealed religion:

The appeal to, and use of, meta-symbols and/or conceptual ciphers represent nothing more nor less than relatively adequate attempts to name the triune life of the divine that is not other than the economy which it grounds. The cure for explanatory hubris, however, inheres in their very use. For such meta-symbols unname in the very act of naming, but importantly unname directionally rather than into the agnostic void. (228)

Terms such as impassibility or immutability, then, cannot function without remainder as conceptual opposites of passibility and mutability,

Balthasar that Moltmann's criticism of the tradition as "metaphysical" is too univocal and lacking in argumentation from texts and redolent of Heidegger's similarly univocal reading of pre-Socratic paradise and post-Platonic devolution into metaphysics.

¹⁶ See *Heterodox Hegel*, 95–96.

¹⁷ O'Regan calls attention to neo-Scholastic metaphysical reaction formation that begins to discuss divine attributes in abstraction from divine acts and from a disinterested point of view (*Anatomy*, 158 and 179; cf. 223).

lest they suggest a God less capable of love or less dynamic than his creatures, neither of which finds biblical support. Here, on O'Regan's reading, Balthasar gestures to the inability of conceptual and categorical terms—or, as he puts it, “linear logic” (229)—to capture the ever-greater life of the triune God revealed in the form of Christ.

Balthasar, then, strives to maintain difference beyond equivocity and univocity (and at times beyond analogy, where a term can be thought to overarch both Creator and creature), to symbol (227). It is univocal predication and assumption that Balthasar finds in so much modern thought and in Hegel, where the Cross fails to indicate the exorbitance of divine love, but rather initiates a new phase of divine becoming and self-knowledge that ends divine difference from the community. In other words, what the Cross kills, in Balthasar's reading of Hegel, is difference itself as axiomatic for divine-human relation. Both resurrection and ascension disconnect from the person of Jesus and allegorically interpret the community as constituted by Spirit, that is, full self-consciousness of their own truth of rational freedom and autonomy. Catholicism, linked too thoroughly with the sensuously objectified and sacramental-ecclesiastical Age of the Son, is judged retrograde here. Reconciliation grasped as self-appropriation occurs more nearly in and through a pietistic emphasis in which subjective faith receives priority over external objects or events. Of course both Catholic and Lutheran orthodoxies will find themselves sublated in the Hegelian system, and Lutheran faith finds itself made to serve the needs of modern social and political culture (213–14).¹⁸

The problem for Christian practice with such a progressivist view of revelation becomes evident when O'Regan discusses Balthasar's resistance to what happens to Eucharist in Hegel's system. If Hegel conceives the movement from Son to Spirit as a definitive departure from the former for the latter, then Eucharist as *anamnesis* becomes anachronistic, especially as it is the remembrance of *Christ's* self-offering for us. Yet, the problem runs deeper. Given that the Spirit-permeated community is coincident with the resurrection-made-immanent, O'Regan observes that the referent for *anamnesis* gets “displaced to the users of the signs” (215). Remembrance is the recollection (*Erinnerung*) of the history of Spirit—that is, of the Hegelian system itself—not of God's gracious self-gift in the Son. This is going forward from Son to Spirit. But a similarly irretrievable movement from Father to Son removes any possibility of Christ's dynamic self-offering to the Father. Father and Son are

¹⁸ On these successive sublations, see *Heterodox Hegel*, 244–49, esp. 244–45.

past, or, as O'Regan puts it, the Father is "essentially deleted" (217). The *telos* of a Eucharistic existence cannot be an ec-stasis motivated and moved by the dynamic self-offering of divine love, and it is not the invitation to communion with an Other. Rather, on Balthasar's reading, Eucharist (for Hegel) signifies the coming into existence of a non-contemplative, self-regarding community liberated by self-knowledge. As Irenaeus saw in the second century, so Balthasar sees in the twentieth that Gnosticism and the knowledge that saves "flatten" the transcendent divine.

The loss or misremembering of divine difference, then, along a purely horizontal access of progressive divine self-actualization, offers a radically different direction for Christian existence, a direction that moves intrepidly away from Eucharistic gratitude. Moreover, the consequent self-regarding community is every bit as much the state as the Church (213). In this context, O'Regan seems to indicate, Eucharistic practice and contemplation become prophetic acts against contemporary self-centeredness and nationalism, against the reduction of difference to sameness, and against idolatry.

Hegelian Theodicy and Death of the Person

Anatomy is populated with traditional patterns of belief, practice, and forms of life reduced to ghosts, pale reflections of their former selves. Balthasar, he argues, shows this and shows how Hegel enacts this necromancy. Equally interesting is O'Regan's reminder that, for a post-modern such as Francois Lyotard, it is not metanarrative alone that sanctions violence, but the self-legitimizing and thus closed character of metanarratives.¹⁹ On Balthasar's reading, Hegel's metanarrative offers a massive theodicy based on the drive for and realization of divine self-consciousness, that is, full and transparent knowledge or self-presence. History's "slaughter-bench" receives justification through its "hallowing" by divine self-development as it realizes itself in the Spiritual community (*Gemeinde*). We might say that modern instrumental reasoning here reaches its zenith: Suffering occurs *in order to* ensure the advent of modern society (244).²⁰ Rather than create a chasm of discontinuity between the modern and the pre-modern,

¹⁹ See Cyril O'Regan, *Gnostic Return in Modernity* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), 236.

²⁰ "Within the Hegelian ordinance the suffering of individuals and groups counts only to the extent to which it contributes to the pedagogy of history whereby human beings in the modern period come to maximal realization of freedom and self-awareness" (*Anatomy*, 244; cf. 246).

Hegel subsumes all pre-modernity into a teleological narrative that finds its resolution in his own age. Eschatology, obviously, is of the fully realized type here and allows no space for the prophetic “not yet!” For Balthasar, this massive substitution of knowledge for love offers only a death-dealing blow to the center of Christian truth.

Perhaps more importantly, O'Regan points out that, given the loss of divine-world difference and the legitimization of all history that now *is* the sacrifice for God's own self-realization, Christian prayers of lamentation and cries of protest are squeezed out. For, who is there to receive the lamentation or register the protest? While divine involvement, and certainly an emphasis on God's love focused on the Cross, are crucial elements of Christian witness, it is also the case (in Balthasar's view) that, should all of that be interpreted along a teleological passibility vector, then the exorbitant love of God for the little ones transmogrifies into a justification of their forgottenness. O'Regan is eloquent here: “The secret of Hegelian recollection, or the secret of the secret, is that not only does it remember what it remembers badly, but the mass of the dead are forgotten and the forgetfulness is justified” (245).²¹ In one of the most telling lines of O'Regan's text, he notes that, whereas “eternity” functions for Hegel to abolish the injustice of history, it serves for Balthasar not to abolish that injustice but to limit it and give it to the God who is Absolute Future (144, 236).²²

²¹ See also *Anatomy*, 170, 284 and 396–97 on the secret being available only to a spiritual elite or “cognoscenti”; Staudenmaier is named a crucial “father” for Balthasar in this critique (*ibid.*, 284–85). Cf. *Heterodox Hegel*, 248, where O'Regan de-couples Hegel from Lutheran orthodoxy, arguing that Hegel upsets Luther's egalitarian “priesthood of all believers” by introducing an “asymmetry” within the worshipping community, “granting a qualitatively superior place to those who have mystical vision in the proper sense, i.e., those who have elevated themselves beyond representation into the pure realm of concept.” It is part of O'Regan's project to de-couple Hegel from the main-line theological tradition and to couple him to heterodox forms of mysticism such as that found in Valentinian Gnosticism and Jacob Boehme. This project runs contrary to post-modern authors such as Derrida, Lyotard, and Mark Taylor, who tend to conflate the Hegelian rendition of Christianity with the biblical narrative itself and/or traditional renditions of it and, thus, condemn both as self-legitimizing and, thus, violent metanarratives. See, for instance, *Anatomy*, 252, on Derrida and the Trinity in this respect. O'Regan also shows how Balthasar can uncouple Luther from Hegel and from Moltmann (*Anatomy*, 349–51), finding the completion of his *sub contrario* doctrine in Hamann instead (*ibid.*, 351).

²² Here, O'Regan cites Schelling and Bulgakov as Balthasarian forerunners who

Conclusion

Themes of identity and difference can sound rather abstract. And certainly adding Hegel's name to the discussion does nothing to allay fears. Yet, the elimination of transcendent difference for immanent identity can indeed be a pressing issue. O'Regan has shown, in his brilliant work on Balthasar's resistance to Hegelian identity torque, that a move to radical immanence transforms more than marginal Christian beliefs and practices. Instead, it transforms the very praise for which Augustine thought we were intended, eliminates all grounds for lament, and squelches prophetic recourse. More concretely, I suggested that *Anatomy* addresses death from the very beginning. O'Regan begins *Anatomy* with a requiem poem for his brother; his acknowledgements add a beautiful memoriam to John Jones, friend and late editor at Crossroad Publishing. On O'Regan's reading, Balthasar's reflections on Holy Saturday reveal Jesus not only as Lord, but also as "fellow" to the dead (247). The dead are not forgotten, and forgetting is not justified on the basis of a massive theodicy. The theological enterprise, on this account, would seem to have everything to do with a litany of remembrance that allows the voices of the past to be heard and even encountered *in Christ*, whose unbounded circuit of *agapeic* love encompasses the communion of the living and the dead. And so, a requiem and a memorial refuse, from the outset, the elimination of lament, mourning, praise, gratitude, and celebration on behalf of those who have shared our space and time; they refuse the instrumental and the self-regarding and reveal that it is perhaps the poet who can memorialize against forgetting and against those systems—philosophical and otherwise—that would justify it. N.V

use and develop this notion of "absolute future," which Bulgakov expands on as "super-time."