

Opposing or Ignoring Metaphysics? Reflections on Kevin Hector's *Theology without Metaphysics*

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Let me begin with four questions Hector's book raises:

1. Who is the audience assumed in his "we moderns," who are seeking but failing to overcome metaphysics?
2. Is Heidegger a reliable guide to the history of metaphysics?
3. What does it mean to speak of God such that that speech does something other than expressing human ideas about God?
4. Does Hector's interpretation of Barth's analogy of attribution without metaphysics offer an adequate alternative to the legitimate metaphysical ills he raises?

I will now explain why his book raises these questions and then conclude with my answers to the questions I have raised.

Kevin Hector's *Theology without Metaphysics* begins with the claim "that although we moderns may want to avoid metaphysics, we have a hard time doing so" (Hector 2011, 2).¹ He rightly notes how difficult metaphysics is to overcome. Caputo critiques Marion who critiques Heidegger who critiques Nietzsche who critiques Kant for seeking but failing to overcome metaphysics. But Hector assumes his audience, on the whole, will agree with him that despite the difficulty in doing so, metaphysics should be overcome. Why? Here is my first question. **Who is the audience assumed in this "we moderns," who are seeking but failing to overcome metaphysics?** The audience is primarily the anti or post-metaphysical proponents of a de-Hellenized Christianity who tend to be Reformed, evangelical or liberal Protestant.² Hector does not address at any length theologians and philosophers not part of this "we." In his first footnote he briefly addresses Radical Orthodoxy as defenders of the metaphysics against which he "takes aim." Other than that, however, we are not told who perpetuates the diseased metaphysics for which

¹ Henceforth, *Theology without Metaphysics* will be cited parenthetically with page number only.

² Hector is explicit that this is primarily a Protestant project. He notes that his alternative therapy of "recognition-theoretic pragmatism" is "a trajectory internal to Christian (especially Protestant) thought," and best explained via Schleiermacher (73). It contains two central Reformation "commitments." The first is "judging for oneself whether a particular teaching is correct." The second is the "authority of Scripture as the standard by which to judge such judgments" (74).

we need therapy.³ A different audience, the Anglicans, Catholics and (a few) Wesleyans, who find compelling the re-Hellenization of Christianity and delight in the recognition that the end of metaphysics is always prematurely announced, is not included in the “we.”⁴ I confess I am in the latter “we.”

Because I am not part of the intended audience, I want to listen in and attend charitably to what I find somewhat alien, Hector’s assumption that the history of western metaphysics culminates in deleterious consequences, and for that reason it must be overcome. I find that he identifies (at least) three such consequences. First, metaphysics poses a threat to the self-expressive freedom of the modern, autonomous subject, and the attendant egalitarianism it produces. He affirms throughout his work the beneficial nature of the modern subject, identifying it with Protestant Christianity.⁵ Second, metaphysics does violence to being, especially the being of people on the margins of society, by forcing them into a predetermined conceptual framework that refuses to grant alterity.⁶ Third, metaphysics constrains theology, especially Christology, within a predetermined conceptual structure. Metaphysical concepts function like containers that fit everything, even Christ, into their structural limitations without acknowledging they do so. As a metaphysical defender, I do not want to be guilty of these deleterious consequences. Although I’m unsure what stake Christian theology has in the modern subject, its loss could be politically disastrous. If metaphysics, of necessity oppresses anyone it should be dismantled. I certainly do not want to fit Christ within a predetermined conceptual structure. If metaphysics is guilty of any one of these deleterious consequences, I

³ Although RO is identified as perpetuating the disease, we do not get an extended treatment on how they do so. It is assumed, wrongly as I shall argue, that they have a stake in defending the metaphysics Hector rejects.

⁴ The “re-hellenization” of Christianity is not monolithic. It affirms Christianity’s catholicity, and finds the already Hellenized Judaism of the first century, and in Scripture, as integral to Christian faith. In that sense it opposes the “History of Religion’s School” search for a pure Palestinian Judaism untouched by Greek modes of thought. Hellenism is not a late metaphysical import. Some versions of an emphasis on re-hellenization would also affirm some kind of Constantinianism. I don’t find the latter convincing or find it necessarily follows from the former.

⁵ Hector’s defense of the modern subject is not of the Cartesian subject but the Hegelian pragmatic subject who depends upon the politics of recognition for its viability. It bears a strong resemblance to Pippin’s work, which defines and defends modernity based on the spontaneity of Kant’s autonomous agency completed in Hegel’s social pragmatic politics of recognition. For Pippin, Hegel’s historicism is the true development of Kant’s insistence on autonomy. It answers how we can have the latter, something Kant himself was unable to do. See Pippin (1997). The similarity between Pippin’s defense of the modern subject and Hector is found in Hector’s statements: “This understanding of normativity, in turn, implies that in order to be free with respect to one’s commitments, the communities of which one is a part must be characterized by (a) openness to novel, individual expressions, and (b) mutuality – they must be characterized, that is, by patterns of recognition that are both capacious and reciprocal” (255). “[It] is also necessary that these patterns be the product of mutual recognition – rather than, say, only of an elite hierarchy’s recognitive attitudes – for otherwise, the norms thus instituted would ultimately be legislated by “them” rather than “us” or “me.”” (258).

⁶ His concern is stated thus: “metaphysics does violence to objects by forcing them into predetermined categories” (10). This metaphysics is then related directly to questions of race and feminism that show his commitment to a politics of the subject with its emphasis on alterity. He writes, “metaphysics can render one insensitive to actual experience” (11)

would join Hector's audience. I am willing to concede that metaphysics has been used, or abused, to produce the consequences he rightly warns against. But does it necessarily produce these consequences such that theology should seek to do without it altogether? To answer that question, I must attend to the metaphysics Hector rejects.

Hector is specific about the metaphysics we should overcome. It is not overcoming transcendence or reality claims ("what things are like") or abandoning truth. In fact, Hector adamantly opposes any exclusive immanence, and in that sense he is willing to let others call his work, despite the provocative title, "revisionist metaphysics" (3). His rejection of metaphysics begins with Heidegger's specific historical diagnosis where "metaphysics identifies the being of beings as that in and upon which they are *grounded*, and identifies this ground, in turn, with human *ideas* about them" (3). This historical diagnosis is, of course, Heidegger's accusation of the "ontotheological conception of Metaphysics" (3 n. 4). Descartes is a key figure in this history. Although his "representing subject" is novel, it also represents the "culmination of the history of metaphysics" since Plato (7). For Hector and Heidegger the history of metaphysics is "the identification of the being of beings with human ideas about them" (8). Thus metaphysics is characterized by "essentialism" – "the supposition that that which is fundamentally real about an object is an idea-like 'essence' (which stands at a remove from that which one experiences)" and "correspondentism" – "the claim that human minds or words are in touch with this reality in virtue of their enjoying a kind of privileged access to it" (46). Here I must raise my second question about Hector (and Heidegger's) project. Does it make any sense to lump twenty-one centuries of philosophical arguments about being into one tradition, characterize it by two descriptive terms, and dismiss it as ontotheological? If the metaphysical tradition is guilty of fitting being within conceptual containers and denying alterity, then how does a critique of metaphysics that never examines the breadth and depth of this history, but fits all of it within a single definition – "the identification of the being of beings with human ideas about them" – be anything other than perpetuating the same disease it seeks to remedy? **Another way of putting this question is: Is Heidegger is a reliable historical guide to the history of metaphysics?** Has he properly diagnosed the disease? If "we" are unconvinced of the disease, or if we recognize a disease but unlike Heidegger, we fail to find it to be a western epidemic, why should we accept this therapy?

Hector's project depends, not on any particular theological claim, but on Heidegger's philosophical reliability; pages two through fifteen set the agenda for theology without metaphysics and they take Heidegger as "our" guide. The therapy that then follows, I fear, is over-determined by the diagnosis Heidegger offers. Since the disease is an epidemic – the entirety of western metaphysics is ontotheological – the remedy is drastic. It all must be swept away. This lack of historical nuance, however, makes the argument less convincing than it otherwise could be. For I think Hector is correct that theology should be concerned about some kinds of metaphysics, but to lump them all together and categorically dismiss them is too drastic and misses the surgical precision necessary. In what follows, I want to add some nuance to the story by first setting forth some of the different metaphysics

that informs contemporary theologians and philosophers who are not part of Hector's audience, and then compare them to his accusation. Only then can we evaluate well his therapy.

Metaphysics Informing Theology

The breadth of metaphysical analyses vying to inform Christian theology cannot be covered in the brief space available, so let me name what I think are two important and influential possibilities: "resource Thomism" (known by its critics as "Thomism of the strict observance") and Christianized Platonism.⁷

A. Resource Thomism

Resource Thomism emerges from Cajetan's threefold analysis of analogy, analogy of inequality, attribution and proportionality (Thomas Cardinal Cajetan, 1469-1534). It also draws upon the work of the Dominican Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange (1877-1964), who defended Vatican I's two-fold order for knowledge of God.⁸ The Council stated God could be known by reason and faith. Metaphysics gave knowledge that God exists, but not who God is. The Council made the bold claim "that God the beginning and end of all things, may be known for certain by the natural light of human reason, by means of created things." For Garrigou-Lagrange, the Council taught a specific metaphysical proof for God's existence. Human creatures do not have an immediate intuition of God; knowledge "that God is" comes by way of analogy from sensible, creaturely things. We know God by examining being and abstracting what is unfitting to God. The metaphysics for this knowledge became known as the *analogia entis*. Although there is no agreement among devout Thomists on exactly what the *analogia entis* is, they are agreed against barthians on its foundational necessity.⁹

⁷ If I had more space, I would also examine the metaphysics of the *nouvelle théologie*, which I would call "metaphysical generosity." Thomas Guarino's *Foundations of Systematic Theology* is important here. It argues that we need metaphysics or first philosophy, but there should be a "metaphysical range" allowed rather than the strict Aristotelianism argued for by Resource Thomists. For a fuller discussion of this see Long (2010).

⁸ See Garrigou-Lagrange (1934, 8). This knowledge by the "natural light of reason" does not let us know the mysteries of the faith such as that God is Triune or incarnate in Jesus. It lets us know God as "beginning" and "end" of creatures, and from that we can deduce God's attributes or perfections.

⁹ Disagreements begin with whether or not Thomas taught the *analogia entis*, since he never used that term. If Thomas taught it, then there is disagreement about what kind of analogy it is. Is it a predicamental logic or a transcendental reality? If it is a transcendental reality, is it a *pros hen* analogy, and therefore based upon an analogy of causality with a metaphysics of participation that emphasizes relationality, or is it an analogy of proportionality based on act and potency that must come prior to any relationality? Many resource Thomists also find Przywara's interpretation of it as novel and not fitting the Thomist tradition because it does not fit within Cajetan's categories. For the question about Cajetan, see McInerny (1996). He attributes to Cajetan a faulty understanding of Thomas. Cajetan misled Thomism altogether. "In short, there is no distinction between analogy of attribution and analogy of proportionality in St. Thomas Aquinas" (McInerny 1996, 12). Bruce Marshall follows McInerny's argument and denies the *analogia entis* provides genuine knowledge of God. "The metaphysics of creation deals with beings and their perfections,

One of the staunchest defenders of Resource Thomism is Steven A. Long. In his book, *Analogia Entis*, he writes that there are only two possibilities for the relationship between metaphysics and theology:

... that the being common to finite things (or as Thomas agreeing with Aristotle would say, the being said of substance and the categories) is intelligible in such a way as to render possible a contemplation of God that does not reduce or deny the transcendence of God; or else created being is such that no intelligible speech of God is possible proceeding from finite being (Long 2012, 5).

Notice that for Long, Christian theology either adopts a strict Aristotelian metaphysics of substance and accidents, or it is unintelligible. For this reason, he defends a strict analogy of proportionality. The *analogia entis* cannot be an analogy of attribution, of relationality, a simple analogy of proportion or of causal relation and participation (Long 2012, 2-3). Analogy of proportionality begins with the distinction between act and potency as the foundation for all other analogies. If being is not in potency to act, then we have no rational means for created, human speech about God.¹⁰ The mysteries of the Trinity and incarnation, which are only available to faith, depend upon their foundation in our rational knowledge that God exists. Long states,

while the analogy of names deals with *rationes* and their logical relationships” (Marshall 2010, 299). Lawrence Dewan stands against this position affirming Cajetan’s interpretation and arguing for a metaphysical rather than logical use of *analogia entis* (Dewan 2006, 81-95). Thomas Joseph White, Reinhard Hütter and Steven A. Long agree with the Cajetanian interpretation against McInerney and Marshall (see Hütter (2010, 224-228) and Long (2012, 138 n. 26.)) but disagree among themselves as to what kind of analogy the *analogia entis* is. A previous generation of Thomists likewise sided with the Cajetanian interpretation. See Wippel (1996, 215) and Maritain (1957, 32-44) and, of course, Garrigou-Lagrange. Those who argue for the metaphysical use differ among themselves over what kind of analogy this transcendental analogy is. For Long it can only be an analogy of proper proportionality based on diverse *rationes* of act/potency, which must come prior to any relation. “Analogia entis is not an analogy of attribution, relationality or simple analogy of proportion or causal relation and participation. It is “analogy of proportionality” (Long 2012, 2-3). Hütter, however, argues it is a *pros hen* analogy that entails causal relation and participation. *Pros hen* analogy assumes a primary instance by which the analogy works. Health in bodies, urine and humans is the usual, Aristotelian example, but Aquinas then supplemented it with respect to God via a doctrine of participation. Hütter writes, “Here we can see immediately why participation and transcendental analogy converge: To participate is to have partially what another is without restriction” (Hütter 2010, 230). Hütter follows closely the argument in Bernard Montagnes (Montagnes 2004). The above are only a few of the disagreements among the Thomists. Not mentioned are theologians who found the sharp distinction between philosophy and theology, nature and grace, a misreading of Aquinas such as Etienne Gilson (against whom Wippel’s book is directed) or Henri de Lubac. Balthasar fit much better among them.

¹⁰ “It is being itself that is analogous, being itself that is divided by diverse *rationes* of act and potency. And if we cannot know this with respect to *ens commune*, then there is no real evidentiary foundation for any causal ascent to God: that is to say, analogy of creature to God will become a fideist projection in the absence of any genuine foundation in created being for the causal ascent to God. That foundation is indeed a function of the limitation of created act in relation to *potentia*” (Long 2012, 72).

Someone might ask whether there is not a third possibility. Could there not be speech about God that God Himself authorizes and that so escapes any taint of created categories? To which the response is that even human speech inspired by God remains both human and speech; and that if such speech were to be wholly denuded of any created intelligibility, it would by that fact be wholly unintelligible to the human creature and thereby cease to be speech since speech is more than sound whose signification is either unknowable or nonexistent (Long 2012, 5).

Long obviously has barthians like Hector in mind here. His question to “theology without metaphysics,” which is also my third question, is to ask what does it mean to speak of God such that that speech does something other than expressing human ideas about God?¹¹ His answer is it has no meaning whatsoever and thus theology requires a metaphysical foundation in the *analogia entis* understood as an analogy of proportionality.

Another important voice for Resource Thomism is Thomas Joseph White. Unlike Steven A. Long, he recognizes Heidegger’s ontotheological critique as a genuine problem and acknowledges that Garrigou-Lagrange did not always avoid it. His “insufficiencies” make him susceptible to it. As White puts it, “His portrayal of analogy risks treating God as a subject within the study of being . . .” (White 2009, 20). Acknowledging that metaphysics can lead to this abuse, however, does not lead White to eschew metaphysics altogether. Instead, he states,

My claim is that the natural human capacity to think analogically about God in his unity and existence as the cause of the world – with the help of concepts drawn from creation – is a necessary epistemological presupposition for any scriptural or dogmatic account of the incarnate Word. The *analogia Verbi* presupposes the possibility of an analogical ascription of *esse* to God as the necessary (but not sufficient!) condition, just as grace presuppose nature (White 2009, 267).¹²

If metaphysics (the analogy of being) *conditions* revelation, then Hector’s concern seems warranted. Is the *analogia entis* what allowed first century Jews to recognize God in Christ? (What happened to the revelation given to Moses?) Does metaphysics

¹¹ My question does not deny that such human expression cannot in some sense truly intend, and therefore reach, its object.

¹² White also states, “Here I will argue that the theological analogy of the incarnate Word (the *Logos ensarkos*) is not fully intelligible, even as a specifically Christian and dogmatic notion, without the capacity to ascribe to God analogical notions of being and unity, in comparison with creatures. Furthermore, we are capable of ascribing such analogical notions only if there is a real ontological resemblance between creatures and God that is naturally intelligible to the human intellect without formal recourse to divine revelation. Consequently, the knowledge of Christ’s divinity that we are given by grace implies that we have a natural capacity for knowledge of God” (White 2009, 249).

not force its object into a prearranged straightjacket, doing violence to its object if it *conditions* what revelation can say? Was Christian doctrine deficient until Cajetan?

Any answer depends on what we mean by “conditions.” It could mean nothing more than this: If God is incarnate in Jesus Christ, uniting humanity and divinity in one, then after that fact we know one of the conditions for it is that “humanity” and “divinity” exist, and are at least in part, intelligible. God did not become an unrecognizable entity; God became human. If we cannot recognize to some extent what we mean by “God” and “human” the incarnation becomes unintelligible. If that is what is meant by metaphysics conditioning revelation, then it is true but trivial; no one should disagree with it. If this were all that the Resource Thomists set forth, it should not cause controversy, but they appear to say more. At the least they suggest that the *analogia entis* is the *epistemological* condition rendering our knowledge of the incarnation intelligible. At most they assert the *analogia entis* is the *metaphysical* condition rendering the incarnation possible. It gives us, as Long puts it, “the precondition for the terms of revelation signifying the inner life of God.” If it is the latter, how does it not lack a proper Christian humility in the face of God’s mystery? Are creatures able to tell God the conditions by which God can become incarnate? If I had to choose between this version of Resource Thomism or Hector’s therapy, I would tend toward Hector’s therapy. I am almost ready to join Hector’s audience. However, I find Long’s question compelling as to how some human speech could be construed as God’s own speech, and other human speech construed as merely human ideas about God. Hector’s work trades on this distinction and I don’t think invoking the Holy Spirit provides an adequate answer to differentiate the putatively different forms of speech. Of course our speech about God is human speech. If we inhabit a creation that is unintelligible about the things of God apart from introducing miracles or pneumatology, then we generate two problems. First, creation itself loses its intelligibility. Second we instantiate an epistemological hierarchy that borders on a new form of Gnosticism. There are those whose human speech is God’s own speech because of the Holy Spirit’s actions, and those whose speech merely expresses human ideas about God. Such a move asserts that when some say “God is . . .” they are using God’s own words, but when others say the same thing, they are expressing human ideas. This does not overcome metaphysics, it simply ignores it.

B. Christianized Platonism

The only theology Hector identifies as defending what he “takes aim at” is Radical Orthodoxy, but this is incorrect. Like Hector and White, some proponents of RO acknowledge ontotheology is a diseased metaphysics, and theology must be done without it. They, of course, were not the first to acknowledge this. Etienne Gilson, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Henri de Lubac, David Burrell and many others paved the way for this analysis. But unlike Hector and Heidegger, they reject the very large claim that the entirety of western metaphysics is ontotheological. They would agree with the Resource Thomists against Hector and Barthians on this point: the *analogia entis* is foundational for theology precisely because it is not ontotheological. Barthians nearly always confuse the analogy of being with the

univocity of being and think they reject the former when all they have done is reject the latter. That is, however, about the only thing on which some proponents of RO and resource Thomists would agree.

Adrian Pabst has written the most extensive account of metaphysics from within the RO sensibility. He rejects the sharp distinction between metaphysics and theology found in Resource Thomism. Metaphysics does not condition theology, nor is it distinct from theology. The borders between them are much more porous than in Long and White. Nor is the metaphysics informing theology an Aristotelian analogy of proper proportionality based on act and potency that comes before relationality. He rejects the substance metaphysics of Aristotelianism for the relational participation of Platonism. Pabst writes,

The primacy of relation over substance within Platonism is the most fundamental reason why the Neo-Platonic legacy is a constitutive aspect of Christendom in both East and West. The notion that theology can dispense with metaphysics is just as misguided as the notion that metaphysics is not *also* theological. It is simply erroneous to claim that metaphysics ever ended (each critique or deconstruction of metaphysics is always in the end another metaphysics) or that it cannot be restored to the heart of the arts, humanities and the sciences (Pabst 2012, xxviii).

Pabst poses this challenge to Heidegger, and by implication, Hector's theology without metaphysics. To proclaim the end of metaphysics is itself always metaphysical. The so-called "end of metaphysics" has a particular history emerging from certain late Medieval metaphysical movements that replaced it with "transcendental ontology."¹³ The latter assumes a "common nature of general being that is both in God and in creatures." The ontotheological critique must first identify metaphysics with this particular metaphysics in order to then call it into question. In so doing, it repeats and does not refute metaphysics.

Pabst finds Heidegger's ontotheological critique to be "flawed because it is grounded in the modern (and residually transcendentalist) primacy of possibility over actuality" (Pabst 2012, 195 n. 111). This actually agrees, in part, with Hector's critique of essentialism, but the disease is more localized than Hector identifies, and that produces vastly different therapies. Pabst associates the transcendental primacy of possibility over actuality with Avicenna, who places essence before existence leading to a metaphysic where the possibility of being comes prior to its actuality. The primacy of essence to existence leads to an emphasis on ideas in the mind as that which connects with reality. Once again, Pabst and Hector identify in strikingly similar terms, a common metaphysical illness. Pabst also affirms

¹³ Pabst identifies three philosophical shifts that lead to the replacement of metaphysics by a "transcendental ontology. The first is "Avicennian primacy of essence over existence," which he traces in chapter 4 of *Metaphysics*. The second is "the Scotist destruction of (what would later be validly described as) Thomist *analogia entis* in favor of the univocity of being," which is traced in chapters 5 and 6. And the third is "the Suárezian priority of metaphysics as the science of general being over theology as the science of revelation and the concomitant separation of 'pure nature' from the supernatural, which is traced in chapter 6 (Pabst 2012, 386).

Heidegger's diagnosis in part: "the confusion of the highest being and the most general being that is expressed by the concept of onto-theology is an important hermeneutical key to unlock the key difference between the medieval account of analogous being and the modern theory of univocal being" (Pabst 2012, 195 n. 111). However, because the disease is localized and not an epidemic, Pabst finds a therapy in Aquinas's insistence on being-in-act. ". . . Aquinas effectively argues that to perceive an object is to sense its actuality. In other words, to perceive something is to perceive that *that thing* is in act" (Pabst 2012, 231).

This insistence on being-in-act is something more than the analogy of attribution Hector identifies with Aquinas. It is a relational participation in God's goodness that forms the basis of everyday life and allows us to accomplish exactly what Hector rightly desires, but I shall argue, does not finally affirm. Hector states his legitimate concern that "metaphysics can render one insensitive to actual experience" (11). Avicenna's primacy of essence over existence, along with transcendental ontology, is guilty of this charge (as would be Kant's transcendental philosophy). Here is my fourth question: **Does Hector's interpretation of Barth's analogy of attribution without metaphysics offer an adequate alternative to the legitimate metaphysical ills he raises?** Hector cites Barth's affirmative statement that we speak of God only with our "creaturely-focused words," which might alleviate Steven A. Long's legitimate concern. But he then interprets Barth's "creaturely-focused words" in terms of the Reformed doctrine of justification by faith alone. It is not the creatureliness of these words that matters, but solely God's grace that renders them appropriate (141). Hector then states, "On this account, then, the analogy of attribution is itself analogous to justification by grace received in faith. This is an important departure from most accounts of analogy; another, crucial to the present project, is that analogy is here understood not as bridging a gap between two meanings – one theological, the other ordinary – as if these were separate entities, but as naming the way a normative trajectory changes as a concept is applied in ever new circumstances" (142-3). If I understand this crucial move in his therapy the key term is "normative trajectory changes." We do not need any metaphysical participation of our language in God such that a particular form of speech, like Christian orthodoxy, gets valorized for all time.¹⁴ Because the proper conceptual use of our language only results from God's grace, we can never be certain that what we have at any moment speaks properly of God. What we have is a process of mutual, historical recognition where its truth is always out in front of us because its proper term is not in creaturely reality, but in God. We must always be looking for the novel, and in fact the novel will be a sign of the Spirit's work (38). We can affirm the modern kantian subject whose agency can always be novel and spontaneous because the process of mutual recognition by which the Spirit works leaves us always open to transform what came before. How does this not evacuate everyday reality of its theological significance and make us insensitive to actual experience? For Pabst's metaphysics, drawing upon Aquinas, begins with the immanent being-in-act before us, but that being-in-act also provides a participatory

¹⁴ See Hector's affirmation of Schleiermacher's argument that what was once heterodox then becomes orthodox because of "an earlier orthodoxy becoming obsolete" (85, n. 54).

means through the analogy of being of at least recognizing God as the pure act who calls being into act.¹⁵

Conclusion

Let me now return to my original four questions and provide my answers to them.

1. Who is the audience assumed in this “we moderns,” who are seeking but failing to overcome metaphysics?

The audience for Hector’s work is too limited. It speaks to the Reformed, evangelical and liberal Protestants who seek a de-Hellenized Christianity and thus already agree on too much. It would benefit from a broader engagement with the Christian tradition.

2. Is Heidegger a reliable guide to the history of metaphysics?

No. Although his diagnosis of ontotheology does identify an important moment in western metaphysics about which we should be concerned. The disease, however, is localized. The revisionist metaphysics Hector’s work produces may destroy that disease, but it also may very well destroy much in its wake. After all, this historical diagnosis associates theology with metaphysics. If you destroy one, you will most likely destroy the other. Hector’s therapy deploys a barthian strategy that he finds in Jenson, Webster McCormack, Rahner, LaCugna and Balthasar. It rejects any “ontological or epistemological gap between God and God-with-us.” God is to be “wholeheartedly identified” with God’s acts for us.¹⁶ Barth himself explicitly rejected this identification, and I think it misreads Barth’s intention.¹⁷ Moreover, if this claim is taken literally or seriously then it cannot but evacuate God of God’s transcendence, argue against God’s simplicity and for a real relationship between God and creation. The result will be an affirmation of the theological secular still found among left-wing Hegelians today. The therapy will be worse than the disease.

3. What does it mean to speak of God such that that speech does something other than express human ideas about God? [see above]

¹⁵ Although I find Pabst’s argument compelling, I still have some questions for his defense of metaphysics. If Long and White too thoroughly divide theology and metaphysics, Pabst may too thoroughly unite them, especially when he states: “The one triune God known to pagans is also the God of the Creed” (Pabst 2012, 271). This overstates what Christian Platonists thought the “pagans” knew. They knew the “one God” who is Triune. Aquinas, at least, would never say they knew “the one triune God.”

¹⁶ At this point, he admits the similarity to this reading and Hegel’s, something which at least Balthasar was careful to avoid. Hector writes, “Here we find a useful clue in Hegel.” (35).

¹⁷ I have argued elsewhere that this is a mistaken interpretation of Barth and Balthasar. It reads Balthasar through McCormack’s theological concerns, but it fails to read McCormack’s concerns through Balthasar’s. For my alternative reading see Long (2011).

It means that theology should not capitulate to certain false antinomies that generate an either-or: grace or pure nature, faith or reason, theology or metaphysics. If we allow the cultural and religious despisers of metaphysics to set the agenda for theology, we will inevitably reproduce these inadequate antinomies and force theology and philosophy into separate realms. It could be that barthianism (not Barth) and resource Thomism (not Thomas) are mirror images of these unpalatable either-ors.

4. Does Hector's interpretation of Barth's analogy of attribution without metaphysics offer an adequate alternative to the legitimate metaphysical ills he raises?

No. Not yet. At least, not if the alternative is to garner support beyond the select audience already convinced of a de-Hellenized, Protestant Christianity.

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