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Rahner Scholarship

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**Ontologia ad Theologia: An Intellectual History of Contemporary  
English Language Rahner Scholarship**

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Supervisors: Professor Matthew Ogilvie

Associate Professor Glenn Morrison

A Thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy at the  
University of Notre Dame, Australia

School of Philosophy and Theology, Fremantle

30 November 2018

## **Signed Statement**

This research is the candidate's own work and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution. To the best of my knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

*Maddison Reddie-Clifford*

Maddison Reddie-Clifford

20 November 2018

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## **Abstract**

This thesis develops the methodology of the practice of the History of Ideas for the study of English language Rahnerian literature. Drawing primarily on the Cambridge School and techniques of French analysis, it endeavours to recover the intended consequence of particular writings of Karl Rahner and to examine how this intended consequence conforms with the current English language understanding. It facilitates this with a study of several questions that arise in the current dominant hermeneutics of English language Rahner study. By deploying a rigorous intellectual history of Rahner's theological development, it tests the extent to which the non-foundationalist approach to Rahner's theology is consistent with Rahner's own historical development. It finally concludes with several suggestions on how some of these new questions may be addressed.

## **Acknowledgements**

Like most academic works I owe many people for their activities that made this undertaking possible. There are however several whom I owe particular thanks. First, to my supervisors Associate Professor Glenn Morrison and Professor Matthew Ogilvie. Their patience and temperance have been on fruitful display. I also owe an almost incalculable debt to Assistant Professor Brandon R Peterson of the University of Utah for providing me with his manuscript translation of Karl Rahner's doctoral thesis, *E Latere Christi*. Finally, I owe a significant debt to my friends Tom Gourlay and Michael Bell for the many hours of fruitful debate and discussion.

## Introduction: History as a means of Theological Inquiry

Karl Rahner was one of the most significant theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Rahner's influence is far-reaching. His thought has informed topics as varied as the theologies of liberation, to the philosophy of religion. In the English-speaking-world his work has found significant purchase in North America and the United Kingdom. But like all influential thinkers, there is a lively debate about not just the meaning of his theological texts, but about the inter-textual relationship of his thought. Is it necessary to have read his early monographs to be able to understand his later theological articulations? Is it necessary to understand the scholasticism that formed Rahner at Valkenburg and Freiburg to apprehend his intention?

In the current English language interpretation of Karl Rahner, there is a significant debate about the nature of his texts and the appropriateness of the relationships between these texts. On the one side, there is a traditional orthodoxy that suggests that Rahner moved from an interest in philosophical inquiry, into inquiries of a theological nature over the course of his career.<sup>1</sup> This orthodoxy assumes that the early philosophical career was a fruitful endeavour that Rahner in his later years mined in service of his theological project. On the other side, there is a radical rejection of this hypothesis that uses the same timeline to achieve the “*decoupling*” of theology and philosophy in Rahner's thought.<sup>2</sup> I contend that both sides of this debate suffer from a series of fundamental categorical errors. The underlying error, that of a highly suspect underlying orthodoxy in the dialectical development of Rahner's theological

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Sheehan, *Karl Rahner: The Philosophical Foundations* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Karen Kilby, “Philosophy, Theology and Foundationalism in the Thought of Karl Rahner,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 55 (2002): 127–40.



mentality, is shared by both sides of this debate on how to engage with Rahner's theology, and as consequence, must be critically examined before any assertion can be made that fully apprehends the intended illocutionary force<sup>3</sup> of each piece of Rahner's theological utterances.

To achieve this, I will first demonstrate how and why an aggregate historical methodology is the appropriate means of inquiry to explore the correct hermeneutic by which to explore Rahner's theological writings. Secondly, I will demonstrate how two of the dominant hermeneutics in English language scholarship, the *foundationalist* and *nonfoundationalist*, possess a series of foundational errors, in matters of fact and matters of comprehension. I will then explicate this with a three-fold critique of the *textualist nonfoundationalism* of Karen Kilby. This critique is composed of three independent objections to her hypothesis. First, that she has misinterpreted Rahner's metaphysics and cosmology. Secondly, Rahner's early theology culminates in *Foundations* through an explication of themes. Finally, an exploration of historical reasons why *Foundations* might have used language differently from Rahner's early theological projects. Our last section explores an alternative way to reach an apprehension of Rahner's theological project, as well as what work could facilitate this. The goal of this alternative approach is to provide a response to the problem that Karen Kilby thought the *nonfoundationalist* reading could answer. My intention is to demonstrate two things. First, that there is a viable method of theology that can be both practised and informed by our understanding of intellectual history. Second, that the theology of Karl Rahner is a practical theology, one that is a living, and energetic

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<sup>3</sup> Illocutionary force is a concept first examined by the philosopher J. L. Austin in the late 1940s and early 1950s. It is defined as the effect that any particular utterance was intended to achieve in the activity of its utterance.

response to problems of modern life in the lives of the faithful. To achieve this requires an original approach to theology.

This new approach is adapted from techniques and insights associated with the Cambridge School of the history of ideas. Further, it is demonstrable in the forming that many of the flaws that the Cambridge School revealed in the practice of the history of ideas possess a resemblance to the flaws that exist in the English language literature on interpreting the theology of Karl Rahner, “the most important theologian of the twentieth century.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Andrew Tallon, “Introduction,” in *Hearer of the Word: Laying the Foundation for a Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Continuum, 1994), IX–XXII.

## Section I: The Question: Can Historical Inquiry be Theology?

What can the study of history contribute to theology? What can a study of this history contribute to the study of the theology of Karl Rahner? This section, beginning with chapter one explores these two entwined elements. Accordingly, I will explore the appropriate relationship between historical scholarship and theology; first by detailing the rise in Catholic theology of the distrust of historical inquiry, and secondly by proposing that several innovations from the study of the history of ideas adapted as a methodology for the study of theological development. This method should facilitate the exploration of continuity in Rahner's theology.

The distrust of history as a method for understanding theology has its origins in the Enlightenment. This distrust has been pervasive and not entirely without merit. It has, however also been divisive and readily utilised as a reason to ignore several theologians<sup>5</sup> and philosophers.<sup>6</sup> I will explore the nature of this relationship to elucidate several key insights into some of the problems of this distrust.

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<sup>5</sup> Henri de Lubac's *Surnaturel* was removed from Jesuit libraries because it was suspected that De Lubac's historical recovery of St Thomas Aquinas' understanding of the natural and supernatural order "destroyed" the gratuity of faith. Fergus Kerr, *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians: From Neo-Scholasticism to Nuptial Mystery* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 67–86.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Maréchal extensively rewrote his *Fifth Cahier* in an attempt to avoid being forbidden from writing. The previous had focused on the historicist recovery of the history of philosophy. (the fourth was delayed until the fifth was completed due to suspicions about the "Kantian" nature of his project) This led to questions being asked about his orthodoxy. Joseph Donceel, "Introduction," in *A Maréchal Reader* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), ix–xiii. The historical character of Maréchal's project has been aptly demonstrated by Anthony Matteo, who further commented that Maréchal's work was met with suspicion and concern by some, even if the "phobic" and "virulent" reaction to "modernism" had somewhat subsided by the 1920s and 30s. Anthony M. Matteo, *Quest for the Absolute: The Philosophical Vision of Joseph Maréchal* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1992), vii–xi.

Karl Rahner's theology, on the other hand, is also subject to a historical criticism. It appears that ideas he proposes early in his career take on alternative meanings by the end of it. It is quite clear that to properly explore this discontinuity it is necessary to elucidate a proper methodological framework. This framework needs to pay a proper respect to the historicity of human thought and experience, and as a result is deeply dependent on understanding the relationship between history and theology.

This raises the first question. How much of a theologian's work is dependent upon their historical experience? This question entails answering two predicate questions. What is the proper way to understand the relationship between a theologian's early and later works? And, what is the proper relationship between the praxis of historical research and theological insight?

## Chapter I: History and Theology - A brief survey

According to Joseph Donceel, the early years of the twentieth century were “hard and difficult years for original and creative thinkers in the Catholic Church.”<sup>7</sup> Church authorities strongly discouraged new insights and innovations, particularly in philosophy and theology. A consequence of this discouragement was a breach in the traditional relationship between the Church and the keeping of history. In *Humani Generis*, Pope Pius XII asserted that attempting to understand the historical context of doctrine could only lead to the contempt of doctrine:

It is evident from what we have already said, that such tentatives not only lead to what they call dogmatic relativism, but that they actually contain it. The contempt of doctrine commonly taught and of the terms in which it is expressed strongly favor it.<sup>8</sup>

This encyclical argues that a critical historicist theology would necessarily constitute the embrace of a dogmatic relativism. This presages a contempt for the doctrine that is taught and the language that is utilised in this teaching. However, the tragedy of this argument is that in the act of rejecting critical historicity, one is necessarily deviating from previously held doctrine in of itself.

In *Aeterni Patris* Pope Leo XIII exhorted his bishops to open up the history of philosophy, so as to prove that the relationship between faith and reason was to be found within human reason.<sup>9</sup> For Leo XIII, the history of the Church affirmed the

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<sup>7</sup> Donceel, “Introduction,” x.

<sup>8</sup> Pius XII, “*Humani Generis*,” encyclical letter, August 12, 1950, para. 16. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_enc\\_12081950\\_humani-generis.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_12081950_humani-generis.html). Some describe this encyclical as an explicit condemnation of the historical theology of Henri de Lubac S.J.

<sup>9</sup> Leo XIII, “*Aeterni Patris*,” encyclical letter, August 4, 1879, para. 10, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_04081879\\_aeterni-patris.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_04081879_aeterni-patris.html).

eternal philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas, and as a result, he implored a new generation of scholarship to be undertaken to make known the Angelic Doctor's towering intellect.<sup>10</sup> Central to this endeavour was a call for "the practical reform of philosophy, aimed and aim at restoring the renowned teaching of Thomas Aquinas and winning it back to its ancient beauty."<sup>11</sup> Leo XIII further sought that utmost care should be taken "that the doctrine of Thomas be drawn from his own fountains."<sup>12</sup> Within *Aeterni Patris*, Leo articulates an imperative to return to the historical Thomas in order to mitigate the ills of modern philosophy.

*Aeterni Patris* was not the only letter in which Leo XIII called for historical engagement. In *Providentissimus Deus*, he addressed the use of historical criticism in Scripture studies. While he condemned "higher criticism" as being a method that assessed "the origin, integrity, and authority of each Book from internal indications alone,"<sup>13</sup> he also reminded us that:

The unshrinking defence of the Holy Scripture, however, does not require that we should equally uphold all of the opinions which each of the Fathers or the more recent interpreters have put forth in explaining it; for it may be that, in commenting on passages where physical matters occur, they have sometimes expressed the ideas of their own times, and thus made statements which in these days have been abandoned as incorrect.<sup>14</sup>

For Leo XIII, even on the matter of scripture, the historical inquiry could give fruitful contributions to the understanding of the real occurrences related to us within

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<sup>10</sup> Leo XIII, 17.

<sup>11</sup> Leo XIII, 25.

<sup>12</sup> Leo XIII, 31.

<sup>13</sup> Leo XIII, "*Providentissimus Deus*," encyclical letter, November 18, 1893, 17, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_18111893\\_providentissimus-deus.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_18111893_providentissimus-deus.html).

<sup>14</sup> Leo XIII, 18.

Scripture. However, those who engage in this kind of textual inquiry should do so with good faith and with proper respect. For those who would do so, he offered the following encouragement:

Let them flourish in completeness and in happy success, under the direction of the Church, in accordance with the salutary teaching and example of the Holy Fathers and the laudable traditions of antiquity; and, as time goes on, let them be widened and extended as the interests and glory of truth may require<sup>15</sup>

However, *Providentissimus Deus* also rebuked sharply those who would engage in what he had termed “higher criticism” without a proper tempering of their criticism with piety and reverence for the Sacred Writings:

Finally, We admonish with paternal love all students and ministers of the Church always to approach the Sacred Writings with reverence and piety; for it is impossible to attain to the profitable understanding thereof unless the arrogance of "earthly" science be laid aside, and there be excited in the heart the holy desire for that wisdom "which is from above."<sup>16</sup>

This had consequences. By establishing the arrogance of the “earthly” sciences in the context of reading Scripture in light of history, he precipitated a turn away from critical engagement with history, philosophy and theology, and as a consequence an implicit rejection of the Church’s traditional role as keeper of the history of the west.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Leo XIII, 24.

<sup>16</sup> Leo XIII, 24.

<sup>17</sup> The Church’s role in the keeping of history prior to the Enlightenment is evident with even a cursory glance. The history of the English-speaking world is entirely reliant upon members of the clergy to act as not just eyewitnesses but as those who would collate past material. If the venerable Bede stands as the model of the historian as witness to the past, Richard Hooker could be seen as the model of the historicist historian, arguing from the perspective of context. The Enlightenment, however, split the keeping of the historical record from the role of the local cleric. The secularisation of the Universities in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century completed the process.

After his death, the characterisation of the “earthly” sciences as arrogant became the dominant interpretation of his intent.<sup>18</sup> The historical examination of the biblical and patristic legacies of the Church became an object of suspicion and critique.<sup>19</sup> In 1910 Pope Pius X defined modernism in the encyclical *Pascendi Domini Gregis* cementing the interpretation of the earthly sciences as arrogant. For Pope Pius X, the “Historian” was one of the primary guises of the “modernist”.<sup>20</sup> Pius X describes modernism’s notion of truth to be subjective:

...as for that other purely subjective truth, the fruit of sentiment and action, if it serves its purpose for the jugglery of words, it is of no use to the man who wants to know above all things whether outside himself there is a God into whose hands he is one day to fall.<sup>21</sup>

A modernism that is bound in historicism would find this concept of truth to be troubling, to say the least. Historicism in either the form of dialectical historicism or dialectical materialism is entirely deterministic.  $A + B = C$  will always be true. One cannot believe in truth being subjective if the result is always true. As Fergus Kerr claims, the modernism defined in *Pascendi Domini Gregis* and the Anti-modernist

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<sup>18</sup> This misapprehension of Leo XIII’s intent seems to also misapprehend the position of the First Vatican Council. “But although faith is above reason, there can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason, since the same God who reveals mysteries and infuses faith has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind; and God cannot deny himself, nor can truth ever contradict truth.” What is clear from the first council is that while reason is subordinate to faith, reason remains a means to find the truth of the world, the truth of God. Therefore the sciences of man that rely upon reason would still maintain their ability to find truth, if properly respectful of the place of faith. Pius IX, “Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith - Dei Filius,” *Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical notes. Volume II. The History of Creeds.* - Christian Classics Ethereal Library, April 24, 1870, 285, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds2.v.ii.i.html#v.ii.i-p21.5>.

<sup>19</sup> Gerald A. McCool, *The Neo-Thomists*, Marquette Studies in Philosophy 3 (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1994), 42. Gerald McCool implies that one reason for the significant turn away from Leo XIII’s appreciation for history has to do with the changing of the professors at the Gregorian University. Within Leo’s lifetime the professors of the Gregorian changed from being favourable to encounters with modern philosophy and scholarship to being contemptuous of it.

<sup>20</sup> Pius X, “*Pascendi Dominici Gregis*,” encyclical letter, September 8, 1907, 30, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-x/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-x\\_enc\\_19070908\\_pascendi-dominici-gregis.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-x/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_19070908_pascendi-dominici-gregis.html).

<sup>21</sup> Pius X, 39.



oath is a modernism that is “amazingly” like postmodernism.<sup>22</sup> It questions the possibility of truth, reason, identity and objectivity, as well as the possibility of grand theories. A modernism that denies Truth and believes the only possible God is the unknowable God is clearly different from the modernism that underpins Marx’s dialectical materialism that argues the dialectical forces at play in history determine the progression of history. Even with other definitions of modernism like that given by Cardinal Mercier, of a modernism that is a form of Protestantism, faith understood as ‘private judgement’ possesses an assumed subjectivity that is entirely alien to the obsession with objective reality that consumes modernism as a philosophy.<sup>23</sup>

The language of theological modernism and the occasions of its conflation with philosophical modernism has been unhelpful, as it created within Catholic scholarship a natural suspicion of historically-minded scholarship as being outside the bounds of orthodoxy. Even more so, it is not even entirely accurate. While the practices defined by Pius X are not heretical, “modernism” that is related to the study of history is not what is defined here. Secondly, one can be historicist and not be modernist even in the sense of philosophical modernism. It is important to separate historicism from theological modernism. Modernist historicism is by its nature realist and deterministic. It has two major ideological trajectories, Marxism and Whigism or liberalism. That said, not all historicism fits within these categories. Dialectical historicism within the vein of Hegel does not need to fit within this category. Nor does a moderate realist dialectical historicism born out of the philosophy of Maurice Blondel. In short, it is entirely possible to be historicist without being modernist, and thus consequently the

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<sup>22</sup> Kerr, *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians*, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Kerr, 5.

description of ‘modernism’ as ‘theological historicism’ is not just unhelpful but it is also problematic and erroneous.<sup>24</sup>

This suspicion of all modes of historicism as being modernism is unwise. Rudolf Voderholzer defends the historicism of Henri de Lubac's theology when he claims that:

The theological theories grouped under the heading of "modernism", which has justly been called forms of "theological historicism" were rightly condemned by the Church's Magisterium as inadequate attempts to mediate between dogma and history.<sup>25</sup>

This is indicative of the problem because more than a century and a half later the author still contends that the Magisterium was right to condemn “theological historicism”. But the historicism that is symptomatic to the modernist heresy is only one of a multitude of forms of historicism. Historicism is a philosophy that argues that to understand the development of a society is to understand its history and how society changed and grew because of historical phenomena. Approaching theology in this way is notably different from what in the nineteenth century’s “modernism”. Blessed Cardinal Newman argued that a historical understanding of the development of doctrine is necessary and that it is impossible to achieve an understanding of Catholic doctrine without an understanding of history:

An argument is needed, unless Christianity is to abandon the province of argument; and those who find fault with the explanation

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<sup>24</sup> Some of this error has occurred due to connotations in language. Within theological critiques of biblical studies, it is not uncommon to refer to literalist readings of Scripture as historicist. Further, when these new approaches arose, it was not uncommon for them to be called adopting the modern methods. However, in Philosophy and Historiography, these notions designate ordered schools of thought that possess characteristics that are directly contradicted by the sources I have played with above.

<sup>25</sup> Rudolf Voderholzer, “Dogma and History: Henri de Lubac and the Renewal of Historicity as a Key to Theological Renewal,” *Communio International Catholic Review* 28 (Winter 2001): 648–68.

here offered of its historical phenomena will find it their duty to provide one for themselves.<sup>26</sup>

However, the negative reaction against historicism in the early twentieth century led to the surrendering of the understanding of the “historical phenomena” of revelation to those outside of the Church. Rather than properly developing our understanding of the historical nature of doctrine and revelation, the Church censored and doubted the orthodoxy of those seeking to provide this explanation.

This matter is confused by the reality that what theology would describe as modernism, history would describe as postmodernism. What this means, is that while the methodology argued for here to retrieve the foundations of Karl Rahner SJ’s *mentality*<sup>27</sup> and how this *mentality* and its growth found expression in the development in his theology is historicist, it is neither modernist nor post-modernist.

The question that remains, is whether this is a product of a historicist methodology theology? I would argue that it is. Cardinal Henri-Marie de Lubac SJ (1896-1991), the father of the *Ressourcement*, argued that in the practice of theology, every theologian must be a “theologian of history”. He writes:

To do theology means to attempt to understand the world and man, his being, destiny and history, in the most diverse situations, precisely in light of those truths. To do theology means to endeavour to see all things in the mystery of Christ...

It follows that the enterprise of a ‘theology of history’ must not be looked upon as a merely marginal phenomenon; every theologian

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<sup>26</sup> John Henry Cardinal Newman, *On Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1909), 31.

<sup>27</sup> I take this term from the French movement of the *Historie de mentalities* to denote the intellectual associations and concepts from whence you could expect an individual to construct their comprehension of the world. This movement prioritises the comprehension of people respective to the context of their lives, rather than to fixed propositional truths.

must be more or less a ‘theologian of history’. None of this means, however, that history as such is the medium of revelation or salvation. On the contrary. Whether we are talking about profane or ecclesiastical history: by themselves, historical events bring us no increase in supernatural revelation.<sup>28</sup>

For de Lubac, to reflect on Christ is to engage the revealed truth of Christ in the changing context of the world, that is history. “To do theology” is to attempt to understand the world and man in the light of the singular revealed truth of Jesus Christ. This is by its nature a historical enterprise. That said, as de Lubac clearly illustrates, Christians do not undertake such activities to find new understandings about Christ, but rather, to enable us to find new understandings about ourselves as man living in a world, saved by Christ.

I would further contend that the natural extension of this observation about “a theology of history” is to apply it to the understanding of theologians and their works. To understand and to comprehend a theologian’s work, is to also seek to understand and comprehend that theologian’s history. We are, as Rahner himself argued, creatures fundamentally defined by our history.<sup>29</sup> Further, even Rahner himself has argued that the theological exercise is bound up in the history of theology:

I am absolutely convinced that genuine Catholic theology must always proceed on the basis both of exegesis and of the history of dogmas and theology, even if it must be the free choice of the individual theologian whether, in a study of a particular point, he wishes to work ‘speculatively’ or ‘historically’.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> English Translation in Henri de Lubac, *La revelation divine* (Paris: Cerf, 1983), 100–1. English translation found in R. Voderholzer, ‘Dogma and History: Henri de Lubac and the Renewal of Historicity as a Key to Theological Renewal’, *Communio: International Catholic Review* 28 (Winter 2001), 663.

<sup>29</sup> This is a dominant theme in Karl Rahner, *Hearer of the Word*, ed. Andrew Tallon, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Continuum, 1994).

<sup>30</sup> Karl Rahner, “Introduction,” in *Theological Investigations*, trans. Lionel Swain, vol. 15 (New York: Crossroad, 1982), VIII.

Considering then that there is a considerable body of work of historical theology focused on the Patristic discourse, it seems logical to begin to move towards the refinement of methodology to properly engage with modern theology historically. This is a variation of Hegel's notion that philosophy is simply the history of philosophy. In consideration of de Lubac's point that all theologians are engaged in historical theology, it is arguable that the engagement with a particular theologian's theology as a theological or philosophical exercise is essentially an exercise of historical theology.

Quentin Skinner, one of the founders of the Cambridge School of the History Ideas and scholar of political thought, clarifies and exemplifies this point with his observation of the interconnectivity between the history of literature and the hermeneutics of literature:

The literary historian must I think concede that he can never hope, however much he works with these contextual aids, to arrive simply by this process at the best reading of what a given writer may have meant. It is always for us, bringing our own experience and sensibility to bear, to say finally how we think a work must be taken. This is the strength of the purely critical approach. As we engage, however, in the pursuit of true judgements, we can scarcely afford to neglect any aids which may genuinely help us to refine or reflect on those judgements. This is the strength of the contextual approach, and the fundamental reason why the study of literary history can never be sensibly divorced from the business of interpreting literary texts.<sup>31</sup>

The history of theology and the praxis of theology interweave. Without the appropriate reflection upon the history of a particular theological text, the failures of analysis that inevitably follow from not having appropriately grasped the necessary context to

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<sup>31</sup> Quentin Skinner, "Hermeneutics and the Role of History," *New Literary History* 7, no. 1 (1975): 228.

interpret the text can follow. Similarly, however, if the focus is purely on the context of the text you merely render the text into its constituent parts. Like texts, readers are subjects of their own context, and it is necessary to appreciate the extent to which that context will determine the way in which it is possible to grasp a past context. Hence, only through both the critical rendering of the themes within a hermeneutic, conditioned by context, can a substantial theological insight into work that has come before be achieved. In the study of Karl Rahner's theology, this exercise has been lacking in formal methodology. To remedy this lack, I will propose a method through which Rahner can be engaged with intellectual rigour.

## Chapter II: History of Ideas - Establishing a critique of a thinker and their world

I propose to use some of the innovations in the study of intellectual history over the last fifty years to introduce a historically rigorous methodology to examine the nature of Rahner's theological development. The Cambridge School of the History of Ideas is one such methodology. The Cambridge School of the History of Ideas is a movement in the study of intellectual history. This methodology emerged from dissatisfaction with several of the governing orthodoxies of praxis within the study of the history of ideas that had been utilised until the 1960s. The application of this method is not entirely alien to theological discourse. Alasdair Macintyre's utilisation of Collingwood's theory of the history of ideas<sup>32</sup> bears more than a passing similarity to Quentin Skinner's invocation of the great theorist.<sup>33</sup> Further, Tracey Rowland's attempt to achieve a synthesis of Thomist reasoning with the insights of Collingwood suggests that an engagement with the theory of the history of ideas is not an entirely novel approach to theological inquiry. It is thus possible to engage with some elements of historicism without falling prey to the looming follies of either modernism or postmodernism.<sup>34</sup> I suggest that the Cambridge School of the History of Ideas furnishes a suitable methodology for this engagement.

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<sup>32</sup> Tracey Rowland, *Culture and the Thomist Tradition: After Vatican II* (London: Routledge, 2005), 116, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203712054>.

<sup>33</sup> For Skinner, Collingwood provides several basic insights, firstly that there are no perennial problems of philosophy, merely new occurrences which are answered for their time. See, Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," in *Visions of Politics: Volume 1, Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 88. Skinner further relies upon Collingwood's language to help massage these points, 83, 85.

Skinner further relies upon a simplification of Collingwood's "dictum", "that the understanding of any proposition requires us to identify the question to which the proposition may be viewed as an answer". Quentin Skinner, "Interpretation and the Understanding of Speech Acts," in *Visions of Politics: Volume 1, Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 115.

<sup>34</sup> Rowland, *Culture and the Thomist Tradition*, 118.

This approach to the history of ideas arose from the work of political historian Quentin Skinner. Skinner's original intervention was simply to outline his objections to contemporary praxis within the study of intellectual history. Over time, Skinner's project became an attempt to elucidate the conditions in which political thought and speech were possible. Skinner's colleagues at Cambridge University similarly advanced new methodological approaches to intellectual history. Notably, John Grenville Agard Pocock, building on Continental thought, derived a contextual theory of political language. Skinner's activities were not just confined to developing a theory of praxis for intellectual history. He applied his methodological understandings to the study of notable figures in the history of political philosophy, Thomas Hobbes<sup>35</sup> and Niccolò Machiavelli<sup>36</sup> in particular. Because of both his erudite articulation of these heavyweights of early modern theory and his iconoclastic contributions to historical praxis, few others are as influential in the history of ideas today. However, as John Coffey has noted, it is a "curious fact that this eminent intellectual historian has largely neglected religious ideas."<sup>37</sup> This neglect is striking given Skinner's preoccupation with the English Revolution.<sup>38</sup> Hence this thesis will offer some original contributions to knowledge by applying the insights of Skinner to this hitherto neglected subject.

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<sup>35</sup> Quentin Skinner, *Hobbes and Republican Liberty* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>36</sup> Quentin Skinner, *Machiavelli: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2001), <https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780192854070.001.0001>.

<sup>37</sup> Alister Chapman, John Coffey, and Brad Gregory, *Seeing Things Their Way: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 47.

<sup>38</sup> One of the notable examples of Skinner discussing religion was when he sought to re-imagine Weber's thesis that proto capitalists found proper expression of their moral virtue in Puritanism. Skinner's articulation was rather that the proto-capitalists, witnessing the Puritan claim to virtue re-imagined themselves in Puritanical language to give themselves virtue and legitimacy. Quentin Skinner, "Some Problems in the Analysis of Political Thought and Action," *Political Theory* 2, no. 3 (1974): 277–303.



Unlike Coffey's desire for intellectual history to engage with the history of religion, I desire to apply Skinner's praxis to the understanding of how theology itself evolves. Consequently, this chapter focuses on Skinner's methodology of how to read and comprehend "classic texts"<sup>39</sup> of political philosophy and the adaption of this methodology to read theology. This chapter will demonstrate how one can apply Skinner's textually critical method, that focuses on the recovery of authorial intention, to recover what a theologian was intending to mean and as a result reveal how one should in reading a text of theology, respect how the theologian would have wanted it read.

The 1960s saw a growing dissatisfaction with the orthodoxies which many scholars utilised in their arguments of how the texts of political philosophy should be dealt with.<sup>40</sup> Two of the scholars who were active in the reaction against these orthodoxies were Skinner and Pocock. Both scholars were at the time associated with Cambridge University, and both were in the history faculty. Pocock situated his argument in how the overarching context and history conditioned the action of articulating a political argument. Skinner, in contrast, sought to identify what deficiencies in the dominant hermeneutics of the history of political thought and to establish basic principles that determine the substance of the action of political utterance. Some aspects of Pocock's

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<sup>39</sup> In Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 8, no. 1 (1969): 3–53. Skinner engages with the orthodoxies of 'cannons' of work and 'classic texts' of philosophy. These concepts refer generally to accepted bodies of work on particular subjects written by a single author, and to texts that have gained a particular significance within the study of political philosophy, i.e. *The Prince* or *The Art of War* for instance.

<sup>40</sup> This dissatisfaction was tied into the structuralist methodology of Claude Levi-Strauss and his disciples. An examination of this can be found in Ian Ward, "Helping the Dead Speak: Leo Strauss, Quentin Skinner and the Arts of Interpretation in Political Thought," *Polity* 41 (2009): 235–55, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40213502>.

analysis of political utterances have found their way into theological discourse already, notably his concept of tradition:

The traditionalist attitude consists in accepting (1) the indefinite variety of these possible approaches, (2) that there is no a priori for preferring any of them to the others, (3) that we can never hope to rid ourselves entirely of the simultaneous presence in our thoughts of more than one of the different sets of assumptions and interests on which they are founded.<sup>41</sup>

The third point is the most relevant for any study of a theological treatise. What this insight means is that one cannot rid oneself entirely of one's intellectual foundations. This insight demonstrates the connection between a theologian and the world in which they are living. Pocock further elaborates that:

In this field as in others, the traditionalist acknowledges that the subject-matter of his study forms a tradition in which he is involved, and that his own approach to it is determined by this and other traditions; he settles down to conduct his thinking from within a pattern of inheritance over which he has not perfect control.<sup>42</sup>

This insight is not just one which needs to apply when reading particular subject material as it can be an immensely helpful locus for self-reflection. One cannot act free from their personal intellectual formation. This background will always influence the engagement with source material because it is the substance of the interlocutor's intellectual formation.

The focus of Pocock's work; exploring the factors that precondition our ability to understand material that is new to us, was synchronous with innovations in European,

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<sup>41</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, *Political Thought and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 4.

<sup>42</sup> Pocock, 4.

Continental and American scholarship. Carlo Ginzburg, recognising the extent to which an individual's world preconditions their ideas, wrote a masterful character study of Domenico Scandella, a heretic burned by the Italian Inquisition. In the preface of the Italian edition, Ginzburg details his intentions with the study.

This book relates the story of a miller of Friuli, Domenico Scandella, called Menochio, who was burned at the stake by the order of the Holy Office after a life passed in almost complete obscurity. The records of his two trials, held fifteen years apart, offer a rich picture of his thoughts and feelings, of his imaginings and aspirations.<sup>43</sup>

Ginzburg's study of Menochio, while intended to be an elucidate the worldview of "the culture of the lower classes", also illustrates the importance of understanding the human person who was the individual so as understand their circumstances and their notions. One could argue, that in contemporary Rahnerian theology, too often the appreciation of the man has been lost, in favour of the particular appreciation of the text which he is associated with.<sup>44</sup> Robert Darnton's *The Great Cat Massacre*<sup>45</sup> is a more ambitious project than *The Cheese and the Worms*. Darnton begins his text:

THIS BOOK investigates ways of thinking eighteenth-century France. It attempts to show not merely what people thought but how they thought – how they constructed the world, invested it with meaning, and infused it with emotion.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), xiii.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Masson, has argued that reading Rahner's theological texts in a new or contemporary context is essential for maintaining their use today. R. Masson, "Interpreting Rahner's Metaphoric Logic," *Theological Studies* 71 (June 2010): 380–409. The term "vulgar Rahnerianism" has been coined by Aidan Nichols to refer to how Rahner's theological works are stripped of nuance and qualification to justify particular positions. Gerard O'Shea has critiqued this practice with respect to Catholic Catechesis in Gerard O'Shea, "Vulgarised Rahnerianism and Post-Critical Recontextualisation: Solvents of Catholic Identity in Contemporary Catechesis," *Studia Elckie* 16, no. 3 (2014): 341–73.

<sup>45</sup> Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985).

<sup>46</sup> Darnton, 1.

Darnton associates his work with the Annales School and the attempt to create a “total history”. Consequently, Darnton relies upon the techniques of French analysis called *l’histoire des mentalities*. This approach seeks to grasp the fullness of a lived world. How did folk tales work in that society? How were the populace educated in their myths, legends and stories? And why would particular actions, such as Darnton’s eponymous story of the “great cat massacre” be anything more than a capricious act done out of a lack of concern for animals.<sup>47</sup>

The approaches of both Darnton and Ginsburg demonstrates that the fascination with how individuals constructed their world-view occurred not just in the study of the intellectual history, with its focus on the relationships between philosophers, but also in the realm of social history. Thus, this preoccupation with how people constructed their mentalities is a feature of Marxist and French scholarship that seeks to recover both the pedigree of tradition and the lived world experience of the subjects of historical inquiry.

Skinner’s work culminates in the study of the possible utterance. Skinner’s particular orientation was to examine the significant texts as being part of a dialogue, and as a consequence examine the ancillary texts that surround and inform this dialogue. Rather than just looking at Hobbes’ *Leviathan*, one must also consider the works to which *Leviathan* could be responding and finally examine to the work that responds to *Leviathan* itself. This approach has the consequence of revealing a range of possible interpretations that an author could possess for his work while still intending to be contributing to the dialogue.

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<sup>47</sup> As it turns out, the apprentices were treated worse than cats.

The concern of Skinner and his colleagues was the traditional matter of inquiry of intellectual history, the study of texts. This study, by its nature, prioritises the knowledge of the written form and therefore will naturally prefer particular individuals and particular discourses as the subjects of study. I propose that a synthesis between the grasping the lived world, as emphasised in the history of mentalities, and the apprehension of the dialogue of intellectual development, as the Cambridge School elucidates, will reveal the driving forces of Rahner's theological innovation.

In distinction to the other methods discussed above, Skinner's method does not attempt to place oneself within the mind of the author. Instead, it limits the interpretation of utterance to those interpretations that the author could reliably expect their audience to understand. This enables one to identify the tradition from whence an individual is operating, and consequently what the author intends as the consequence of the particular utterance. The key element of Skinner's contributions is the concept of *conventionality*. *Conventions* are the assumptions that one implicitly relies upon for one's communicative actions to be understood. According to Skinner, *conventions* are entirely inescapable in all speech acts:

For if it can be said, for example, that an apparent enquiry may in appropriate circumstances and by social convention be correctly taken as an order, it might equally be said that it must be in virtue of some convention that an intended act of warning (as in the case of the skater) can be understood as the communication of a warning, and not as some other (perhaps oblique) illocutionary act.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Quentin Skinner, "Conventions and the Understanding of Speech Acts," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 20, no. 79 (1970): 131, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2218084>.

Skinner relates that the inclusion of a *convention* is inescapable. For Skinner, the inclusion of a *convention* determines the possibility itself for communication. Even in the case where an utterance is given in an unconventional way, such as by analogy or by inference, there is still:

The suggestion that at least this element of social convention is omnipresent in illocutionary acts, and so a further necessary condition for their understanding.<sup>49</sup>

This means one cannot communicate without utilising some measure of a *convention* that will determine the appropriateness of whether one heeds a communicative act or indeed whether one deems it to be valid. *Conventions* for Skinner become the very substance into which one can undertake a communicative action. This theory of communicative action is relevant to the interpretation of texts because it makes us aware of the need to apprehend the conditions within which each writer of a particular text can be understood to have been acting. These conditions would constitute the *tradition* as it were, to reference the thought of Pocock. For Skinner, this understanding of the *conventionality* of utterance gives rise to three precepts that are important for a scholar seeking to understand past beliefs. He writes:

We need to assume what David Lewis has called a convention of truthfulness among the peoples whose beliefs we are seeking to explain. Our first task is obviously to identify what they believe. But our only evidence of their beliefs will normally be contained in whatever texts and other utterances they may happen to have left behind. It is of course likely that some of these may be pervasively marked by hidden codes such as irony. But we have no option but to assume that, in general, they can be treated as relatively straightforward expressions of belief. Unless we can assume some such convention of truthfulness, we cannot hope to make any headway with the project of explaining what they believed.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Skinner, 132.

<sup>50</sup> Quentin Skinner, "Interpretation, Rationality and Truth," in *Visions of Politics: Volume 1, Regarding Method*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 27–56.

By assuming some notion of truthfulness, the natural suspicion of the incorrectness of the subject's opinion is countered. While consequent to an investigation it is possible to believe that there is a code of either a particular language or a pervasive irony, it must not be assumed as the basic premise for analysis. Similarly, there is a need to accept at face value what they outright claim to believe is indeed what they believe.

Skinner explains:

If the people we are studying assert that there are witches in league with the devil, we must begin by assuming that this is exactly what they believe. This will not only serve to keep before us the precise character of our explanatory task; it will also enable us to steer clear of a familiar but condescending form of interpretative charity. It will prevent us from purportedly rescuing the rationality of the people we are studying by way of suggesting that, whenever they say something that strikes us as grossly absurd, it will be best to assume that the speech act they were performing must have been something other than that of stating or affirming a belief.<sup>51</sup>

This is one of the great dangers of *contextualist* scholarship. Consider the extent to which one may attempt to make an encountered position harmonious with one's own. In the popular culture of our current West, the phenomena of the ancient alien theorist is a readily visible example of this occurrence. In seeking to make the opinions of the past rational to the present, they discard the intrinsic context and twist the experiential phenomena to fit an explanation they desire. In the context of the humanities, one can observe this kind of twisting with respect to topics such as the study of the Salem Witchcraft Trials and the "Witch Craze" in general.<sup>52</sup> An extension to this precept is

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<sup>51</sup> Skinner, 41.

<sup>52</sup> There are copious amounts of literature that seeks to explain the Witch Craze as being caused by any number of things. From a population being impaired by toxic insect lava (Ergot), to a reaction to a proto-feminist awakening. The explanations existentially deny the rationality of the lived experience, and intrinsically deride people who are honest and sincere in their belief that there were witches and that they had made pacts with the devil.

the need to surround and engage with an intellectual context that would lend adequate support to it. Accordingly, Skinner points out:

We must seek to surround the particular statement of belief in which we are interested with an intellectual context that serves to lend adequate support to it. As we have seen, this commits us to something more than trying to establish that the people we are studying may have had good practical reasons for saying what they said. It commits us to trying to establish that their utterances were not merely the outcome of a rational policy, but were also consistent with their sense of epistemic rationality.<sup>53</sup>

The need to maintain the fidelity of a text with the author's sense of epistemic rationality is the true insight into Skinner's method. Primarily, it provides a reason for the focus on context. By having to make clear how an author's ideas are entirely rational and coherent in their time, it can be ensured that there is a proper engagement not just with an author's work but with why they believe their work to be necessary and true. This process of clarification and engagement culminates in an undertaking that establishes a totality of not just context but hermeneutics. As Skinner fully elucidates:

The primary task must therefore be that of trying to recover a very precise context of presuppositions and other beliefs, a context that serves to exhibit the utterance in which we are interested as one that it was rational for that particular agent, in those particular circumstances, to have held to be true.<sup>54</sup>

Consequently, in studying theologians, the challenge is to move from a mere survey of their work, towards providing a fruitful, honest, and rigorous contribution to the subject of their theology. The historical inquiry into their ideas is not just an

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<sup>53</sup> Skinner, "Interpretation, Rationality and Truth," 42.

<sup>54</sup> Skinner, 42.



exploration of what they said but becomes an honest collaboration in making their ideas, their *mentality* cognisant to the world of the now. One effectively engages in the proper act of translation across time, reflecting the old truism that “the past is another a country.”

To conclude, the method that underpins this thesis rests upon the synthesis of the Anglo-American techniques of the Cambridge School and the praxis of the adherents of the *histories des mentalities*. By combining the study and appreciation for the world in which a thinker is living, with a firm appreciation of the limits that their formation places on their ability to make utterance in the particular circumstances of a particular text, an interpretive locus that weds context to content is acquired. With the orientation of the *histories des mentalities*, the capability to interrogate what a thinker’s language would mean for them in their time in the activity of its use is gained. By combining this with Skinner’s work on the *conventionality* of utterance, the reduction of the possible range of consequences of an utterance, until it can say with some measure of certainty, what any particular individual was intending to achieve by any particular utterance is achieved.

As I have endeavoured to explain there is a substantial need for a proper historical engagement with Rahner’s theology. By utilising the techniques of the Cambridge School of the History of Ideas I can ensure that this historical engagement is not just a sincere and honest engagement with Rahner’s theology but that it possesses a theological value. The following chapters will explore how to apply Skinner’s critique of the orthodoxies of intellectual history to the current English language readings of Rahner. This exploration will demonstrate that not only is there a need for a historical

re-engagement with Rahner, but that this historical re-engagement also necessitates a proper theological re-engagement.

## Section II: The Problem - The proper way to read Rahner?

In the last two decades, Karl Rahner's theology has experienced both a significant appreciation among English speaking theologians and the development of competing ideas of how best to understand and engage with his work. In the last decade, two primary schools have arisen, a *foundationalist* and *nonfoundationalist* school. While these are not the only approaches to engaging with Rahner's thought, they do broadly encapsulate the *contextualist* and *textualist* tendencies among the English language scholarship.

This section explores these two orthodoxies and looks at some of the questionable understandings shared by both. It explores the historical chronology shared by both the *foundationalist* and *nonfoundationalist* approaches that have often been expressed as Rahner began his career with work in philosophy and moved into theology later in his career, and how this chronology is relied upon by both of these schools of thought.

This section will undertake two analyses. The first explores types of foundationalism to analyse how *foundationalism* corresponds with the *contextualist* method that Skinner critiques in the history of ideas and how *nonfoundationalism* corresponds with *textualism*.

The second analysis is a three-chapter critique of the *nonfoundationalist* position as articulated by Karen Kilby. Kilby's intention was to make Karl Rahner's work more accessible to theologians who lack a grounding in scholasticism.<sup>55</sup> The methodology

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<sup>55</sup> See the introduction of Karen Kilby, *Karl Rahner: Theology and Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

she has chosen however misrepresents both the development and content of Rahner's theology. By explicating Rahner's theology from its ontological and cosmological tradition Kilby's analysis is vulnerable to significant errors of comprehension.

### Chapter III: Foundationalism, the accepted Orthodoxy?

The importance of Rahner to Catholic theology has brought about several schools of Rahnerian scholarship. While Rahner himself would have abhorred such a development, it is a reality that in the English language scholarship a set of competing orthodoxies has developed.<sup>56</sup> The most recent dispute between these orthodoxies is over the matter of *foundationalism*. According to *Foundationalism*, all ideas are predicated on earlier ideas, and that to fully apprehend the significance of a specific work it is necessary to understand the foundations upon which it was built. This is a term that is recent in Rahner scholarship, and very few scholars would apply the label to themselves.<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless, it is a sufficient label to describe a set of practices and short-hand understandings utilised in English language Rahner Scholarship. Based on this theoretical framework the historical chronology of Rahner's life is described by Karen Kilby as constituting the basis of *Foundationalist* narrative:

That Rahner's thought begins in philosophy and later transitions into theology, forming a coherent and consistent body of work.<sup>58</sup>

Because this definition comes from a critic who has applied this label to Rahner scholars it needs merits some suspicion. This analysis though does hold true for a cursory analysis of much of the Rahnerian literature. Andrew Tallon, for example,

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<sup>56</sup> It is clear from his students that Rahner had no desire to be the master of a great number of students, or a new school of theology. Andreas R. Batlogg, Melvin Michalski, and Barbara Turner, eds., *Encounters with Karl Rahner: Remembrances of Rahner by Those Who Knew Him*, Marquette Studies in Theology, No. 63 (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009). He further stated this expressly in 1982 when talking about a sad reality that he had been compared to St Thomas Aquinas. Karl Rahner, "The Importance of Thomas Aquinas: Interview with Jan van Der Eijnden, Innsbruck (May 1982)," in *Faith in a Wintry Season: Conversations and Interviews with Karl Rahner in the Last Years of His Life.*, ed. Paul Imhof and Hubert Biallowons, trans. Harvey D. Egan and Roland J. Teske (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 45–56.

<sup>57</sup> Masson, "Interpreting Rahner's Metaphoric Logic," 381.

<sup>58</sup> Kilby, "Philosophy, Theology and Foundationalism," 128.

argues that the understanding of Rahner's early philosophical works (*Spirit in the World and Hearer of the Word*) provides a transformative elucidation to understanding his later theology.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, Thomas Sheehan argues that to understand Rahner's theology requires the comprehension of his philosophical formation; in particular, a proper appreciation of his relationship with Heidegger.<sup>60</sup> Other forms of *foundationalism* within the definition laid out by Kilby include David Coffey's attempt to explore whether Rahner's concept of the supernatural existential changed over time.<sup>61</sup>

We must differentiate these approaches from the German language scholarship's focus on Rahner's early works.<sup>62</sup> These German projects explore Rahner's early productive period, focusing extensively on his spiritual meditations and his early Patristic work. This approach appears to have had limited take up in the English scholarship. Two notable exceptions are Phillip Endean S.J. and Brandon Peterson. Edean argues that the early spiritual writings of Rahner are the key to understanding both his philosophy and theology.<sup>63</sup> Peterson tentatively argues for a reappraisal of Rahner's engagement with the historical theology of *Ressourcement* and the recovery of the Patristic thought.<sup>64</sup> Both Endean and Peterson's projects could be called *foundationalist* in that they propose a foundation for Rahner's thought, but as this foundation is

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<sup>59</sup> "Hearer of the Word is the "sine qua non of Rahner Studies." Tallon, "Hearer of the Word," xix.

<sup>60</sup> Sheehan, *Karl Rahner*, 3.

<sup>61</sup> David Coffey, "The Whole Rahner on the Supernatural Existential," *Journal of Theological Studies* 65, no. 1 (2004): 116–17. Coffey concluded that the term's alternative meanings are reflective of the specific contexts of the use of the utterance.

<sup>62</sup> Barbara Turner and Andreas R. Batlogg, eds., "Theology for the Mind and Heart: In Conversation with Herbert Vorgrimler, SJ," in *Encounters with Karl Rahner: Remembrances of Rahner by Those Who Knew Him.*, trans. Andreas R. Batlogg and Melvin Michalski (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009), 174.

<sup>63</sup> Philip Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality* (Oxford University Press, 2001), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198270287.001.0001>.

<sup>64</sup> Brandon R. Peterson, "Karl Rahner on Patristic Theology and Spirituality," *Philosophy & Theology* 27, no. 2 (2015): 499, <https://doi.org/10.5840/philtheol201511441>.

fundamentally theological in nature, it is not the foundationalism that Kilby is seeking to critique.

So, what gives rise to the *foundationalist* position? It would seem to be a consequence of a misunderstanding of Rahner's career. A shallow glance at Rahner's career will demonstrate that after ordination, his provincial determined that Rahner would teach history of philosophy. To facilitate this, he took up a PhD in philosophy at the University of Freiburg. At Freiburg, Rahner's affection for Martin Heidegger led to his thesis supervisor rejecting his doctoral dissertation, and his recollections of this caused a small scandal when Herbert Vorgrimler reported them in his first biography of Rahner.<sup>65</sup> These events and the circumstances of Rahner's call to the Chair in dogmatic theology at Innsbruck in 1938 gave rise to a particular legend. This legend details how Rahner, in proving too radical for a philosophy faculty, took the insights of his radical philosophical break with Neo-Scholasticism and applied these insights to the praxis of a philosophically liberated theology.<sup>66</sup> I shall show that this chronology is erroneous and that it has had a deleterious effect on the English language scholarship's understanding of Rahner.

To elucidate how dissatisfaction with chronological accounts can be influential it is beneficial to recall the previous chapter's discussion of the Cambridge School of the History of Ideas. General dissatisfaction with approaches to the understanding of the history of political philosophy gave rise to the Cambridge School of the History of

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<sup>65</sup> The biography in question was Herbert Vorgrimler, *Karl Rahner; His Life, Thought and Works*. (New Jersey: Deus Books, Paulist Press, 1966). In an interview in the 1990s, Vorgrimler speaks of how a German Cardinal told Rahner that Vorgrimler's remarks about Honecker (Rahner's Philosophy PhD supervisor) had set back Vorgrimler's career by five years. Turner and Batlogg, "Theology for the Mind and Heart," 171.

<sup>66</sup> Kilby describes this narrative in Kilby, "Philosophy, Theology and Foundationalism."

Ideas. Quentin Skinner's *Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas* published in 1969 laid out the manifesto for change in disciplinary practices. By exploring the previous seventy years of methodological practice, Skinner demonstrates how limited the orthodox approaches to Intellectual History had become. Skinner critiqued the two major orthodoxies for understanding the history of ideas which I would suggest are analogous to the foundationalist/non-foundationalist perspectives in contemporary English language Rahner scholarship.

The first (which is perhaps being increasingly adopted by historians of ideas) insists that it is the context "of religious, political and economic factors" which determines the meaning of any given text.<sup>67</sup>

This orthodoxy bears some resemblance to the methodology which several notable Rahner scholars have utilised in their study of Rahner's theology. The *foundationalist* approach to Rahnerian theology presents an orthodoxy of context that resembles this pattern.

There are frequent claims that Rahner's philosophy founds his theology, grounds it, provides the basis for it, or that it is the starting point of his thought. A common vision of the relationship between philosophy and theology in Rahner's opus has been something like this: Rahner first, in *Spirit of the World* and *Hearer of the Word*, worked out and defended his philosophical position, and then throughout his career built his theology upon this foundation.<sup>68</sup>

When Kilby is presenting this 'vision' she is admittedly presenting it for criticism, however, it does indeed resemble some of the traditional descriptions of Rahner's

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<sup>67</sup> Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding," 3–4.

<sup>68</sup> Kilby, "Philosophy, Theology and Foundationalism," 128.



theological project by external commentators.<sup>69</sup> But how does this internal context resemble the problematic contextualism that Skinner is critiquing? Because this traditional hermeneutic, by its isolation of the dialectic explaining Rahner's intellectual development, is liable to the same consequence of the contextualism that Skinner is critiquing.

The problem with the way in which these facts are handled in the methodology of the contextual study is that they get fitted into an inappropriate framework. The "context" mistakenly treated as the determinate of what is said. It rather needs to be treated as an ultimate framework for helping to decide what conventionally recognisable meanings, in a society of *that* kind, it might in principle have been possible for someone to have intended to communicate.<sup>70</sup>

Kilby is correct in recognising that the *foundationalist* position is an inappropriate framework for understanding the Rahnerian project. By forcing the significant context of the early work to be utilised as the determinate of the meaning of Rahner's theological project, you render the true internal dynamism that is at the heart of both his theology and philosophy inaccessible. This can lead to altogether unsatisfactory positions such as Patrick Burke who ostensibly claims that Rahner's foundations are fundamentally flawed and that he only avoids his error by his personal fidelity to the magisterium.<sup>71</sup> Arguments of the nature of Burke's treat the absolute context of Rahner's theology as the determiner of the meaning of his theology, rather than as the key to understanding the particular intended theological effect of the particular utterance in its particular historical context.

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<sup>69</sup> The introduction by Baptist-Metz presents Spirit in the World and Hearer of the Word as rendering an understanding of the philosophy of knowledge derived from Maréchal and Heidegger as a basis for the philosophy of religion and fundamental-theology. It further asserts that this epistemology is deployed by Rahner in his theology to explore the limits of knowledge itself in language as it relates to the development of the understanding of Dogma. see Johannes B. Metz, "Foreword," in *Spirit in the World*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Continuum, 1994), xiii–xix.

<sup>70</sup> Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding," 49.

<sup>71</sup> Masson, "Interpreting Rahner's Metaphoric Logic," 381.

While Kilby is correct in suggesting that a *foundationalist* reading provides an inappropriate framework to act as a hermeneutic key, Kilby's alternative is not without issues. She admits from the onset to seeking to simplify and 'decouple' Karl Rahner's philosophy and theology.

On a second level, I shall be setting out an argument for the possibility of a particular kind of interpretation of Rahner - a non foundationalist interpretation. This involves a claim about the relationship between different parts of Rahner's work, but also, and more importantly, a claim about the kind of enterprise that Rahner's mature theology can be taken to be. Insofar as such a reading in a certain way decouples Rahner's theology from his philosophy, it should make his theology more approachable to those who are frightened by his philosophy (*Spirit in the World* is, after all, a ferociously difficult book), and more usable to those who have grappled with but remained unpersuaded by the philosophy.<sup>72</sup>

I contend that this is a flawed reading. Firstly, by accepting the chronological narrative of the *foundationalist* interpretation it takes on the flaws of this narrative, most notably, an incorrect normative trajectory for Rahner's interests in theology and philosophy. In particular, the foundationalist reading of Rahner's project following the trajectory that Kilby outlined, assumes a commonality between *Spirit in the World* and *Hearer of the Word* that does not withstand critical analysis. *Hearer of the Word* began as a set of lectures taught at Innsbruck by Rahner who was then employed as a dogmatic theologian. *Hearer of the Word* was written in 1938, just as Rahner was relishing his liberation from a career as a professor of the history of philosophy.<sup>73</sup> Why would he

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<sup>72</sup> Kilby, *Karl Rahner*, 2.

<sup>73</sup> Brandon Peterson's work on Rahner's early theological career before World War II reveals a deeply committed historical theologian, who felt rather un-inspired by his superiors' decision on his 'destiny'. See Peterson, "Karl Rahner on Patristic Theology and Spirituality."

instead work towards the career that he had narrowly avoided having foisted upon him?<sup>74</sup>

Secondly, the collapse of the historical narrative that the foundationalist position advocates exposes another problem with respect to Kilby's project of decoupling Rahner's philosophy and theology. With the timeline of his literary works now in doubt, a cursory study of the timeline of their construction reveals a notable series of overlaps. According to the editors of *Samlichte Werke*, the doctoral thesis that Rahner submitted at Innsbruck in 1936, *E Latere Christi* must have begun its composition sometime in 1931-32 while he was still doing theology at Valkenburg prior to ordination.<sup>75</sup> This can be inferred because of the existence of an undated handwritten manuscript of *E Latere Christi* that is bereft of any use of Heideggerian terminology and as a result likely dates to before Rahner went to Freiburg in 1934.<sup>76</sup> This is again quite important, as the traditional *context* of Rahner presents him as being fundamentally influenced by Heidegger.<sup>77</sup>

If, however, Rahner was already engaged with a project that calls for the creation of a general ontology of human historicity (a description carrying more than a passing resemblance to *Hearer of the Word*), then once more the historical narrative that both Kilby and those whom she labels *foundationalists* rely upon breaks down. If the

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<sup>74</sup> This comes from an unpublished manuscript of the third volume of Complete Works of Karl Rahner by Brandon Peterson Andreas R. Batlogg, "Edition Report," in *E Latere Christi*, trans. Brandon R. Peterson, vol. 3, *Samliche Werke: Spiritualit Und Theologie Der Kirchenvater*, n.d., XXIX.

<sup>75</sup> Of note, is that Rahner was noted during this time to have been doing exceptionally good work in philosophy and fundamental theology, more than a year in advance of any encounter with Heidegger. The interaction between theology and fundamental theology was the subject of *Hearer of the Word*. Batlogg, XXXI.

<sup>76</sup> Batlogg, XXXII.

<sup>77</sup> Otto Muck, *The transcendental method* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 181.

hypothesis that the orientation of Rahner's early career was towards philosophy rather than theology is pressured by the reality of a co-equal gestation between *Spirit in the World* and *E Latere Christi*, it is mortally wounded when one considers that in the late thirties Rahner was working on two major works of theology alongside *Hearer of the Word*. One of these works was described by Hans Urs von Balthasar as a necessary source for work in historical theology focused on the Patristics, *Ascese and Mystik in der Vaterzeit*.<sup>78</sup> This work is a translation and expansion of an earlier work by a French theologian and was published in 1939.<sup>79</sup> These coincidences of history reveal a historical reality that strikes directly and definitively at the entire notion of 'decoupling' Rahner's theology from his philosophy. Not only does the historical reality demonstrate that the neat narrative of a division between Rahner's philosophical and theological projects is farcical, but it also leaves almost certain the reality of conceptual cross-pollination of texts.

While Rahner was preparing *Spirit in the World* he would also have been revising and working on *E Latere Christi*. Further, by the analysis of the source material one can also be certain that as he was developing his understanding of the Thomistic concept of the phantasm, he was also working on his understanding of symbol and sign in relation to biblical exegesis. One can see this cross-pollination throughout Rahner's entire career. Even the text that is argued to be the most systematic example of his theological thought, is constructed at least in part, from lectures that Rahner gave at the University of Munich on the topic of the "idea of Christianity" in the faculty of philosophy from 1966.<sup>80</sup> Another significant part of *Foundations* were lectures that

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<sup>78</sup> *Ascetism and Mysticism in the Fathers*. This work is not available English.

<sup>79</sup> Peterson, "Karl Rahner on Patristic Theology and Spirituality," 1.

<sup>80</sup> William V. Dych, *Karl Rahner* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992), 14.

Rahner had given at the University of Münster in 1968 on Christology aimed at the synthesis of political theology and the transcendental method. What this suggests is that the nature of not just the text, but the purpose for which it was developed, and the nature of its construction, has now been rendered fit and proper subject matters to examine.

In distinction to the *foundationalists*' reliance upon a problematic historical narrative, Kilby's thesis is built upon a division of theology and philosophy in Rahner's thought that only remains valid so long as the particular context of the foundationalist scholarship remains capable of standing on its own weight. Without that, her work falls into a particular kind of textualist purism that fits with the secondary orthodoxy that Skinner outlines.

The other orthodoxy, however, (still perhaps the most generally accepted) insists on the autonomy of the text itself as the sole necessary key to its own meaning, and so dismisses any attempt to reconstitute the "total context" as "gratuitous, and worse"<sup>81</sup>

Because of the manner that Kilby utilises to establish the 'decoupling' of theology from philosophy within Rahner's work, her thought falls prey to this kind of textual autonomist reading. For Kilby, the project of recovering the total context that gave rise to Rahner's thought is an impediment to the study of Rahner's thought. For Kilby, the meaning of Rahner's later theology is capable of providing it's own hermaneutic key, and consequently the earlier philosophical writings can be dispensed with. With *Foundations* being capable of determining its own meaning, it is now possible to ignore the elements of Rahner's opus that are either difficult to understand, or

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<sup>81</sup> Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding," 3–4.

inconvenient to a particular hermeneutic. Considering her early admission that it is the difficulty of *Spirit in the World* in of itself, is a sufficient justification for not engaging with the philosophical themes in Rahner's writings, or the further suggestion that it is possible to derive a working theology from Karl Rahner divorced of the philosophical influences,<sup>82</sup> it would appear that Kilby is committed to the development of an approach to Rahner's thought that isolates each text from each other text and the construction of each text from the circumstances of Karl Rahner himself.

Kilby openly admits that her non-foundationalist thesis directly applies a lens to Rahner's work that he himself would never have recognised.<sup>83</sup> Rahner categorically saw philosophy and theology as having a relationship that mirrored the relationship between nature and grace, that is being a matter of distinction.<sup>84</sup> Her justification is that because the scholarly debate around Rahner's work is dominated by foundationalist or semi-foundationalist interpretations, an alternative hypothesis will maintain some utility.<sup>85</sup> Kilby has further argued that Rahner's own thought contains a substantive discontinuity between his theological and philosophical writings.<sup>86</sup> This

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<sup>82</sup> Kilby, *Karl Rahner*, 13.

<sup>83</sup> Kilby, 11.

<sup>84</sup> The extent of this relationship can be seen in the following conversations that Rahner had on German Radio. Karl Rahner, "Interdisciplinary Dialogue and the Language of Theology: Interview with Joachim Schickel of North-German Radio (NDR), Hamburg (November 22, 1981)," in *Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews. 1965-1982*, ed. Paul Imhof and Hubert Biallowons, trans. Harvey D. Egan and William Hoye (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 307–15; Karl Rahner, "The Language of Science and the Language of Theology: Interview with Joachim Schickel of North-German Radio (NDR), Hamburg (November 22, 1981)," in *Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews. 1965-1982*, ed. Paul Imhof and Hubert Biallowons, trans. Harvey D. Egan and William Hoye (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 302–8.

<sup>85</sup> Masson, "Interpreting Rahner's Metaphoric Logic," 381.

<sup>86</sup> Kilby tries to overemphasise the fact that in early and later writings Rahner uses the concept of *Vorgriff auf esse* in different ways. In her estimate this demonstrates that his theology and his philosophy are substantially different in their intended meaning. This understanding however relies on a treatment of texts which ignores the fact that Rahner routinely used the same term decades apart in different contexts, such as *supernatural existential* and could instead demonstrate theological development. Kilby, "Philosophy, Theology and Foundationalism," 1.

A good discussion on the different deployment of *supernatural existential* can be found in. Coffey, "The Whole Rahner."

discontinuity, according to Kilby can be exemplified by an examination of the relationship between *Hearer of the Word* and the theology of the *supernatural existential*.<sup>87</sup> In her arguments, Kilby demonstrates a reliance on the autonomy of a textual composition to establish her thesis.

I shall be laying emphasis on points of discontinuity and incompatibility between *Hearer of the Word* and the supernatural existential, then, precisely because to do so is to fly in the face of the usual way of presenting Rahner. Points of discontinuity and incompatibility need to be noticed in order to restore the balance; that they really are such points needs to be argued thoroughly, since this will go against the instincts of many.<sup>88</sup>

In this formulation, Kilby suggests that texts written prior to the formulation of a notion should conform with the notion and that somehow if a previous line of thought is contrary to a later line of thought it is somehow irrelevant. The problem with this formulation is more than simply philosophical. As has been aptly demonstrated by David Coffey, even the *supernatural existential* can be read as being possessed of “discrepancies” when considered across the time of Rahner’s deployment of the notion.<sup>89</sup> Further, a deeper look at the substance of Kilby’s issues with *Hearer of the Word*, reveals the old chronology at play again, that *Hearer of the Word* is built upon the foundation that is *Spirit in the World*.<sup>90</sup> Because Kilby sees the genesis of *Hearer of the Word* in the philosophy of *Spirit in the World*, and because she has accepted a false chronology of Rahner’s work, she is left in a position where her criticisms of *Hearer of The Word* have been left adrift of key foundations.

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<sup>87</sup> Kilby, *Karl Rahner*, 50.

<sup>88</sup> Kilby, 50.

<sup>89</sup> Coffey, “The Whole Rahner,” 37.

<sup>90</sup> Kilby, *Karl Rahner*, 49–50.

Ultimately, both the *foundationalist* approach, (by attempting to make the entire context of Rahner's opus contingent on a context consisting of Rahner's early work and a mistaken assumption about Heidegger) and the *nonfoundationalist* approach, (by attempting to separate individual texts away from the broader context of Rahner's opus) are both flawed. Both are in a situation analogous to the two orthodoxies that Skinner outlined in the history of ideas.

Both methodologies, it can be shown, commit philosophical mistakes in assumptions they make about the conditions necessary for the understanding of utterances. It follows that the result of accepting either orthodoxy has been to fill the current literature in the history of ideas with a series of conceptual muddles and mistaken empirical claims.<sup>91</sup>

In Rahnerian scholarship, the flaws are fundamentally about what Rahner's theological notions can be used to justify and demonstrate. The mistaken chronology has led to the observation of a categorical delineation between "*progressive*" and "*conservative*" theologies, with Rahner's opus as the cornerstone of the progressive movement, and the historical theology of Henri de Lubac as the basis for the "traditionalism".<sup>92</sup> This false division is only possible with the ignorance of Rahner's early historical theology. If, however, both a *foundationalist* reading of Rahner with its false context and the *nonfoundationalist* reading with its textual fixation are unsuitable for engaging with the substance of Rahner was trying to achieve in his theology, what would be an appropriate response?

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<sup>91</sup> Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding," 3–4.

<sup>92</sup> John Milbank makes this mistake in *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, 2nd ed. (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2006), 206–56.



Skinner, in his critique of these two orthodoxies, believed that he had isolated a proper approach to the practice of the history of ideas:

...the understanding of texts, I have sought to insist, presupposes the grasp both of what they were intended to mean, and how this meaning was intended to be taken. It follows from this that to understand a text must be to understand both the intention to be understood and the intention that this intention should be understood, which the text itself as an intended act of communication must at least have embodied. The essential question we, therefore, confront, in studying any text, is what its author in writing at the time he did write for the audience he intended to address, could in practice have been intending to communicate by the utterance of this given utterance.<sup>93</sup>

For Skinner, the key towards interpreting a text is to see and understand the text not as a single imposition of an idea, but rather as a part of a continuing dialogue. The author does not just write their text in a vacuum, but they see themselves as seeking to interpose a concept in relation and in response to another. This is not an entirely radical idea in theology, Maurice Blondel suggested implicitly in *L'Action* that the limits of human freedom are to react or to not to act.<sup>94</sup> Blondel's dialecticism situates the human experience as being one of affirmation or negation. One either chooses to act in affirmation of the action that is occurring to one or to act in the negation of the action acting upon one. Skinner elucidates that this acting in affirmation or acting in reaction provides a girding to the possible communications that the author intended to communicate. If personal action is always in response to the external action, then the number of intended reactions to this external action is a finite number of responses to this external influence. By being aware of this one can:

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<sup>93</sup> Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding," 48.

<sup>94</sup> "More than a necessity, action often appears to me as an obligation; it has to be produced by me, even when it requires of me a painful choice, a sacrifice, a death." Maurice Blondel and Oliva Blanchette, *Action (1893): Essay on a Critique of Life and a Science of Practice* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 2004), 4.

...first of all, to delineate the whole range of communications which could have been conventionally performed on the given occasion by the utterance of the given utterance, and, next, to trace the relations between the given utterance and this wider linguistic context as a means of decoding the actual intention of a given writer.<sup>95</sup>

The engagement with the external context and with the broader forces to which an author was acting in response to means that it is now possible for us to elucidate several things. First that the intended consequence must be one of a finite number of intentions. This means that there is a real meaning to a text that can be possibly recovered. And that by being aware of the broader literary context it is possible to recover which of these finite meanings a particular author intended in the particular utterance. Skinner further elaborated that this critique had an additional consequence, the rebutting of the thesis of “perennial problems” and “universal truths”.<sup>96</sup>

Any statement, as I have sought to show, is inescapably the embodiment of a particular intention, on a particular occasion, addressed to the solution of a particular problem, and thus specific to its situation in a way that it can only be naive to try to transcend. The vital implication here is not merely that the classic texts cannot be concerned without questions and answers, but only with their own. There is also the further implication... there are simply no perennial problems in philosophy: there are only individual answers to individual questions, with as many different answers as there are questions, and as many different questions as there are questioners.<sup>97</sup>

This particular insight is applicable to the understanding of Karl Rahner’s theology. When one treats each text as being constructed in response to the particular problem of the particular moment that it was constructed to contend with, the unsystematic nature of Rahner’s thought becomes readily comprehensible, and the true coherency

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<sup>95</sup> Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding,” 48–49.

<sup>96</sup> By this Skinner appears to refer to the idea of a truth in a particular form or expression as being valid for all time, rather than a rejection of universals themselves.

<sup>97</sup> Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding,” 50.

of his broader theology is left plain to see. This insight into how to approach a text means that more than anything else one does not attempt to read a particular narrative of conceptual growth into Rahner's broader theological work, but rather, one is able to appreciate that in his repeated engagement with problems differing only minutely, his responses bare a more than passing resemblance to each other. This is the demonstrable indication of the broader coherency of his theology.

Since this publication, Skinner has published several articles elaborating not just the problems within the practice of but elucidating a new philosophy of practice built upon the insights of ordinary language philosophy, particularly the contributions of J. L. Austin and Ludwig von Wittgenstein.

In *Conventions and the Understanding of Speech Acts*, Skinner develops one of the particular points he had made in *Meaning and Understanding* in relation to the understanding of texts, that of the conventions that govern linguistic action.<sup>98</sup> Pocock, Skinner's contemporary within the Cambridge school developed the notion of a tradition, which is ostensibly the extension of the conventions of communication to a lingering progression within a community that in essence generates a new language of meaning paradigms.<sup>99</sup> For Skinner, the element of conventions that is so crucially important is that of communicability. Skinner's conventions are based on a single pragmatic rationale that no author in writing is seeking to be incomprehensible, that is, when a thinker proposes an idea, he is always proposing that idea for the purposes

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<sup>98</sup> Skinner, "Conventions and the Understanding of Speech Acts."

<sup>99</sup> See Pocock, *Political Thought and History*.

to be understood as proposing that idea. Thus, it can always be assumed that there was an intended illocutionary consequence of the utterance.

This is something that many Rahner scholars have not apprehended. Kilby with her non-foundationalist argument rejects this idea. Kilby, in making Rahner's later theology compatible with alternative philosophical systems, strips the context of Rahner's utterance from the substance of his theological argument. For instance, Rahner intended *Foundations* to be a defence of the concept of Christianity.<sup>100</sup> By trying to read the text as a systematic theology that explains *Vorgriff* [the process of the pre-apprehension of being], Kilby has explicitly stripped what Rahner intended his work to mean from the hermeneutic and inserted her own intentionality. This is a practice that Kilby concedes that Rahner would never have agreed with.<sup>101</sup>

Ultimately, the discontinuity in Rahner's theology is a consequence of the mistaken historical narrative of Rahner's career Rahnerian scholarship. The failure of Rahner's interpreters to properly engage with a dynamic concept of action as a universal force as Maurice Blondel or Joseph Maréchal suggest, ensures that the treatment of Rahner's individual works in the particular is understood by a false dialectical hermeneutic.<sup>102</sup> Further, the absence of a proper appreciation for the historical

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<sup>100</sup> Kerr, *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians*, 103.

<sup>101</sup> "Notions of foundationalism and nonfoundationalism are not ones that Rahner would have thought to apply to his own work, and perhaps for this reason the issue has not been taken up directly in much of the Rahner scholarship." Kilby, *Karl Rahner*, 22.

<sup>102</sup> For the major work of Blondel see, Maurice Blondel, *L'Action, Essai d'une Critique de La Vie et d'une Science de La Pratique*, 1893. Joseph Maréchal's Cahiers have never been translated into English aside from a limited reader, translated by Joseph Donceel. Marechal's work can be found Joseph Maréchal S. J., *De l'Antique La Din Du Moeyn Age : La Critique Ancienne de La Connaissance*, 2nd ed., Le Point de Depart de La Metaphysique 1, 1927; Joseph Maréchal S. J., *Le Conflit Du Rationalisme et de l'Empirisme Dans La Philosophie Moderne, Avant Kant.*, Le Point de Depart de La Metaphysique 2, 1923; Joseph Maréchal S. J., *La Critique de Kant*, Le Point de Depart de La Metaphysique 3, 1923; Joseph Maréchal S. J., *Le Systeme Idealiste Chez Kant et Les Postkantians*, Le Point de Depart de La Metaphysique 4, 1947; Joseph Maréchal S. J., *Le Thomisme Devant La*

development of Rahner's career outside of the written context ensures a failure to apprehend the influence his alternating roles as Professor of Dogmatic Theology and Professor of Philosophy had on the composition of his written material. This failure ensures that these publications have become categorically confused in their intended illocutionary force. A contributing factor is Rahner's own practice of dismissing the significance of his own writings, which has only contributed to the problem of the false dialectic. In an interview in 1972, when asked if he had a preferred text from among his own writings, he responded extensively with reference to his spiritual and mystical writings, but when talking about his more systemic academic projects Rahner opined:

You could say, the earliest books are the best, you know. Or you could say, no, that's not true, a late work like *Foundations of Christian Faith* is the most important. But then, I don't know that either.<sup>103</sup>

This rejection of a systematic project does not need to stem from Heidegger, but rather, is perhaps a manifestation of the Maréchal dynamic Thomism. This transcendental Thomism that Rahner had utilised in *Spirit in the World*, rests upon an understanding of the dynamic action of being, that every action of thought presupposes. This dynamic action of thought that predicates being, would suggest that in every text, is a thought that must be understood as the consequence of the dynamic action of being in reaction to the external action that invoked it. This leads inevitably to a final comparison to the methodology of Quentin Skinner for the practice of the history of ideas.

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*Philosophie Critique*, Le Point de Depart de La Metaphysique 5, 1926. The reader presented and translated by Donceel is Joseph Maréchal, *A Maréchal Reader*, ed. Joseph Donceel (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970).

<sup>103</sup> "Living into Mystery: Karl Rahner's Reflections on His 75th Birthday," *America Magazine*, January 2, 2018, <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2018/01/02/living-mystery-karl-rahners-reflections-his-75th-birthday>.

Skinner's argument is the realisation of the particularity of the publication of text, within the context of the influences that formed the thesis, the stimulus that compelled the generation of the thesis and the environment which compelled its writing. Because each publication will inherently carry the intended consequence of being understood by its intended audience. And because the nature of the intellectual conversation is that of propositions. It is possible to assert that it is reasonable to expect that some measure of coherency between distinct publications can reflect the advancement and deployment of refined ideas. Further, by understanding that texts are the sum of the influences upon their author, the author's history and the occurrence that occasioned their construction, it is probable that no two texts will present the same thesis in precisely the same manner. This does not demonstrate a discontinuity, as Kilby would suggest, but rather, reflects that the particularity of the action does not mean the total particularity of the text. By utilising Skinner's approach to reading texts, it can be appreciated that the conventions of the language that expresses the particular concept develop dialectically as a consequence of the dialogue of the discourse. Consequently, this affects the conventions of utterance that the author will deploy on any subsequent occasions. This means that even two arguments on the same topic with the same hypothesis if separated by any measure of time will have demonstrable differences in the language of their expression.

## Section III: Non-Foundationalism

### Chapter IV: Non-Foundational Interpretation - Three Critiques

This section provides a critique of a “*textualist*” approach to Rahnerian scholarship used by Karen Kilby.<sup>104</sup> There are several challenges to the *textualist* approach that render it difficult for the approach to achieve its desired objective. I will focus upon three of these challenges:

- (i) Understanding the philosophical conventions or tradition from whence Rahner was writing.
- (ii) Grasping the theological intention of Rahner’s writings.
- (iii) Understanding the broader nature of how Rahner constructed his theological writings.

This section will demonstrate how Kilby’s methodology requires the rejection of several key elements within the Rahnerian project, and then reflect upon what is necessary to properly re-orientate Rahner’s theology to a proper practical end.

The first critique is from the perspective of Rahner’s philosophical foundations. This critique rests upon elucidating the context or *tradition* which formed Rahner and how this philosophical cosmology influences core aspects of Rahner’s theological trajectory. Apprehending this *mentality* is a key element to understanding what Rahner was intending to communicate in his theology. Kilby’s failure to grasp the significance

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<sup>104</sup> For clarity I am using the definition of textualism as Skinner defined in *Meaning and Understanding*. Notwithstanding the philological and biblical studies notion of textualism, Skinner’s concept in which the text is examined entirely free of a context as per the notions of deconstruction and post-structuralism.

of the *tradition* or conventions in which Rahner was structuring his thought centres on her disregarding of the scholastic nature of Rahner's cosmology. An over-emphasis on the influence of the Neo-Kantians and the Cartesian assumptions of Kant's metaphysics leads to a miscategorisation of Rahner's philosophical project. To demonstrate the consequence of this, I will rely upon a recovery of the work of Joseph Maréchal, Rahner's own admitted mediator for the works of St Thomas Aquinas.<sup>105</sup>

The second critique explores the implications of Rahner's early theology for his later conclusions. This critique takes advantage of a study of Rahner's PhD thesis in theology as the project statement of *Hearer of the Word*. Because Kilby follows an erroneous chronology of Rahner's intellectual development she has misunderstood the significance of *Hearer of the Word* for Rahner's broader theological project. Because she has not engaged with the content of Rahner's theological work that was undertaken between 1936 and 1938 at Innsbruck Kilby has not been able to fully grasp the theological genesis of *Hearer of the Word*. By exploring his use of typology in his New Testament exegesis in his doctoral dissertation, it is apparent, that rather than simply being an extension of the theory of knowledge in *Spirit in the World*, *Hearer of the Word* represents a projected synthesis between a Thomistic theory of knowledge and the historical praxis of theology and the development of dogma. This synthesis would inform his views on the united nature of philosophy and theology throughout his life.

Finally, considering the extraordinary significance that Kilby places upon *Foundations of Christian Faith* as the systematic exposition of his later theology, it is a valid project

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<sup>105</sup> Rahner, "The Importance of Thomas Aquinas," 43.



to explore the nature of contribution and motivations of all parties that took part in the construction of that text. Consider, this was a process that took more than eight years and had three primary phases of work. It is the intention of this study to reveal some of the uncertainties that the historical record might leave in the certainty of the theological argument.

## Chapter V: Critique from Ontology and Epistemology

The primary basis for Kilby's repudiation of *Hearer of the Word* is based on her misunderstanding of the text's nature. She presumes that the connection between *Spirit in the World* and *Hearer of the Word* means that if *Spirit in the World* is built on a false set of philosophical premises then *Hearer of the Word* will similarly collapse as a consequence. But she does not make a convincing case for explaining why the epistemology of *Spirit in the World* is wrong, especially in either a Rahnerian or even Catholic context. Kilby relies upon several Anglo-American Analytic and Frankfurt School philosophers to demonstrate that Rahner's Thomism is wrong. But this engagement with "truth" fails to account for the influence of Maréchal's transcendental Thomism in any real terms. This failure of encounter means that Kilby's critique asserts that Rahner's epistemic theory is simply wrong. Kilby expends significant effort to assert the incompatibilities between *Hearer of the Word* and Rahner's later theological discussion of the immanence of religious pluralism.

### Ontological Continuity from Spirit in the World to Foundations of Christian Faith

According to Kilby:

In *Foundations of Christian Faith*, for instance, Rahner argues that what we learn from what is traditionally called revelation – from Christianity as a historical religion, from the OT and the NT – is in fact a thematization of that which is already experienced in our innermost depths, namely God's giving of himself, the divine self-communication to human beings on the level of their transcendental experience. Revelation is fundamentally, in other words, the supernatural existential.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Kilby, "Philosophy, Theology and Foundationalism," 132.

This analysis of the *supernatural existential* is not controversial at least with respect to a shorthand analysis. Indeed, in the Maréchalian epistemology that underpins *Spirit in the World*, there is a fundamental argument that the capability for encounter presupposes the pre-encounter. Essentially, to be able to think about God first requires us to have encountered God at a basic epistemic level. In Maréchal's words, critical reflection:

...judges the truth that is in us. Its immediate term is therefore not the very object of direct apprehension (object in itself, or "intelligible in power"), but the present objective content, as "intelligible in action", in the subject; let us say more briefly: the "immanent object".<sup>107</sup>

A consequence of this basic property of intellection is that all critical thought becomes ostensibly a "thematization" of the original pre-encounter that is necessary for critical thought to occur. In this way, Rahner's extension of Maréchal's intellection towards thematisation could be a natural development between his work *Spirit in the World* and *Foundations of Christian Faith*. If as Kilby suggests *Foundations* argues that Christianity is a thematization of existing experience in the depths of human ontology, this would (keeping Maréchal's intellection in mind), be the experience of the immanent object rather than the object in itself. Surely the epistemology developed in *Spirit in the World* is deployed in *Foundations* to explain the historical and human experience and encounter with God that gave rise to Christianity?

Kilby, however, disagrees, expressing a nuanced position on *Spirit in the World* as follows:

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<sup>107</sup> Joseph Maréchal S. J., *Le Thomisme Devant La Philosophie Critique*, 48.

Although I will be suggesting that Rahner's writings are not best read as one entirely coherent whole, and arguing that the later theology need not be taken to depend logically on the earlier philosophical arguments, it does not follow that there are no connections whatsoever between *Spirit in the World* and Rahner's later theology. Some of the crucial ideas he uses later do indeed make their first appearance, or one of their first appearances, here. If it is as I believe a mistake to think of the theology as resting on *Spirit in the World* (and perhaps *Hearer of the Word*) as on a foundation, it is equally a mistake to suppose that the former has nothing to do with the latter.<sup>108</sup>

This nuanced position that Kilby charts is vulnerable. Without properly situating Rahner's theology within the context of his life experience, one can read Rahner's theology as a post-modernist theology. Rahner's metaphysics assumes that a pre-apprehension is a requirement for all human knowledge. Read absent this notion, the pre-apprehension in *Foundations* is not the place of a possible revelation, but rather evidence that Rahner has removed the necessity for Christianity from Christianity.<sup>109</sup>

### The Problem with Reading Rahner outside of his Ontological Context

Without the necessity of pre-encounter with the subject of critical reflection, it is entirely likely that reading *Foundations of Christian Faith* is liable to occur within a postmodern paradigm, thus leaving a major piece of the puzzle missing and increasing the chance of reading Rahner's theology as suggesting the capability of a total break with the history of the faith on the grounds of a personal encounter. This would contrast with the apparent intention of Rahner as suggesting that historical unfolding merely

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<sup>108</sup> Kilby, *Karl Rahner*, 13.

<sup>109</sup> According to Declan Marmion, this is von Balthasar's critique of Rahner, that it is reduced to a general humanism, a Christianity not worth its salt. Declan Marmion, "Rahner and His Critics: Revisiting the Dialogue," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 68 (2016): 197, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002114000306800301>.

confirms connaturally what we already encounter ontologically in the fundamental self of man's historicity.<sup>110</sup>

*Spirit in the World* is where Rahner introduces us to the concept of the *Vorgriff auf esse*. *Vorgriff auf esse*, which in English would translate to the pre-apprehension of being and for Rahner, it is the extension of Maréchal's point that critical reflection occurs into the subject in the consciousness rather than into the external thing in itself. Rahner explores with *Vorgriff auf esse* how the contents of consciousness which are reflected into are created. For Kilby, *Vorgriff auf esse* is thoroughly unpersuasive at least as a philosophical argument, though she posits it that it may stand as a valid theological argument if it is made purely from the theological position.<sup>111</sup>

*Spirit in the World* is an attempt to engage the notions of St Thomas Aquinas with the questions of contemporary philosophy. The extent to which Rahner's project has been criticised as failing in this endeavour is hard to reconcile with the available evidence.

As Kilby points out:

One thing is absolutely clear, which is that Rahner presents *Spirit in the World* as a reading of St Thomas – but almost everyone who has ever examined it from this angle, beginning with Rahner's own thesis director, has found it wanting.<sup>112</sup>

Notwithstanding this critique, Rahner's undertaking does rest upon at least a Thomistic inspiration. *Spirit in the World* is an examination of question STI Q. 84, A. 7:

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<sup>110</sup> If you take for instance the idea that the cosmology of Rahner's theology rests upon the Maréchal Thomism.

<sup>111</sup> "To argue, as I will, then, that the case—the philosophical case—Rahner makes for the *Vorgriff* is thoroughly unpersuasive" Kilby, *Karl Rahner*, 17.

<sup>112</sup> Kilby, 14.

Whether the intellect can actually understand through the intelligible species of which it is possessed, without turning to the phantasms?<sup>113</sup>

This concept Rahner calls the *conversio ad phatasmata* (*conversion to the phantasm.*)

The *vorgiff* was Rahner's attempt to answer a logical question, from whence do we as intelligent beings derive the phantasm against which we use the product of our intellectual senses to derive knowledge?

Kilby has expressed the notion of the *conversio ad phatasmata* as the following:

If, crudely, one approximates "intelligible species" here as concepts, and "phantasms" as images, then the issue of the article is whether we can employ concepts without the aid of images, and Thomas' answer is "no"<sup>114</sup>.

This crude approximation, however, is distinctly problematic and stands as a good indicator of what Kilby has misunderstood about both the Thomistic philosophy on which Rahner is relying, and what Rahner is trying to achieve in his project. Key to this misunderstanding is her failure to grasp the nature of phantasm not as an external or concrete image, but rather the indistinct and ephemeral concept that is engaged with. As Bernard Lonergan pointed out, for Aquinas, Phantasm is to intellect what sensible objects are to the senses. The Phantasm is an object of the intellect, and it is always necessary for all human activity, no matter how perfect the intelligible species are that are utilised in the process of intellection.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> STI Q. 84, A. 7 from "STI-II - Thomas Aquinas," accessed January 6, 2018, <https://aquinas.cc/64/66/1>.

<sup>114</sup> Kilby, *Karl Rahner*, 15.

<sup>115</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 2* (University of Toronto Press, 1997), 41.

## The Conversion to Illusionary Thing

The *conversio ad phantasmata* is the turn to the illusory thing to enable the understanding of the real thing. As Lonergan explains: “In a word, one cannot understand without understanding something; and the something understood, the something whose intelligibility is actuated, is in the phantasm.”<sup>116</sup> Thus the phantasm rather than being some concrete exact external thing is actually an internal ephemeral thing, against which external sense objects are engaged to better apprehend the qualities and the contents. Abstraction occurs against the phantasm, with the phantasm being the infinite not-real thing. STI Q. 84, A. 7 explores how the act of the operation of the intelligence renders sense experience into knowledge. According to Kilby, we rely on concrete sense data to be able to use intellectual concepts. However, the phantasm that is being discussed in this article is not direct sense data, but rather a personal encounter with an Aristotelian form. Rahner expressly stated this several times in his life, first in *Spirit in the World*:

Hence conversion to the phantasm does not mean intellectual knowledge “accompanied by phantasms” (which after all are not things, but a content of the one human consciousness to which thought also belongs), but is the term designating the fact that sense intuition and intellectual thought are united in the one human knowledge.<sup>117</sup>

This formulation shows that from the beginning Rahner did not consider the phantasm to be a mere image, but rather an object of consciousness (shared in all human beings) which was a required component to the act of intellect. Sense intuition and the intellectual object acting together give rise to human knowledge. Rahner constantly refines this idea in his thought, with the turn to the phantasm becoming part of a turn

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<sup>116</sup> Lonergan, 43.

<sup>117</sup> Karl Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, ed. Johannes B. Metz, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Continuum, 1994), 239.

to human historicity, a turn to human ontology. Four decades after *Spirit in the World* in an interview Rahner expressed this idea as:

I suppose you can say that transcendental Maréchal Thomism received a certain correction from *Spirit in the World* – and precisely insofar as “spirit” is emphasized in this work as transcendence that can only become aware of itself by the “*conversio ad phantasmata*.” And that should not be translated as “conversion to the sense image” but as “conversion to history, to the actuality of freedom, to one’s fellow human beings.”<sup>118</sup>

According to Maréchal Thomism, the phantasm is not an image, but a content of consciousness that is indistinct or illusory in its totality, it is not a concrete thing but rather a totality of a thing. Thus, this concept is far more akin to the Aristotelian form than it is to Kilby’s proposed concrete images.

Further, as Aquinas makes clear in STI Q. 84, A. 3, it is impossible for the soul to know corporeal things through the innate species,<sup>119</sup> the intelligible species cannot merely be the mental concepts, but rather corresponds to the unity of the experience of the body and the soul. STI Q. 84, A. 4 further demonstrates this point:

Because if it is natural for the soul to understand through species derived from the active intelligence, it follows that at times the soul of an individual wanting in one of the senses can turn to the active intelligence, either from the inclination of its very nature, or through being roused by another sense, to the effect of receiving the intelligible species of which the corresponding sensible species are wanting. And thus a man born blind could have knowledge of colours; which is clearly untrue. We must therefore conclude that the intelligible species, by which our soul understands, are not derived from separate forms.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Rahner, “The Importance of Thomas Aquinas,” 50.

<sup>119</sup> Et ideo dicendum est quod anima non cognoscit corporalia per species naturaliter inditas. STI, Q. 84, A.3 Answer.

<sup>120</sup> STI Q. 84, A.4 Answer.



This means that it is not by virtue of mind that the intelligible species are obtained, but by virtue of the senses, both physical and spiritual that operate in a conjoined manner. These intelligible species are then utilised to acquire the objects of knowledge from the phantasm through the engagement of the intelligible species.

Kilby relationship between concept and image back to front.

As Rahner understands this, it is not just that knowledge begins with the senses- so that we might at some point turn them behind and go on to something higher and purer: human knowledge, Rahner maintains, always remains dependent on sense intuition. Thus at least one reason for the selection of this particular article is its insistence that we can never employ concepts (i.e. use our minds at all) except in conjunction with concrete images.<sup>121</sup>

Kilby, therefore, misapprehends the dynamism of Rahner's epistemology of knowledge. For Rahner, the spiritual *esse* is not and should not be read within the idealistic concept of the immaterial but rather in reflection to the reality of the nature of its being. The spiritual *esse* is the *esse* that reflects upon itself in the act of its own knowledge,<sup>122</sup> while the natural *esse* is the one which does not reflect upon its own being as its first action. Rahner, in choosing STI Q. 84, A. 7 as the starting point of his position, is arguing that the mind does not only work in conjunction with concrete images, but rather that the mind works first by asserting its own *being*, and that this affirmation of *being* is done by all beings with spiritual *esse*. The faculties of *sensibility* encounter this assertion as *sensibility* is a passive operation that engages with the sensible *being* of all *beings*. Rather than reading Rahner as arguing that images are necessary to engage the mental process. Rahner argues that it is not the image, but the

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<sup>121</sup> Kilby, *Karl Rahner*, 15.

<sup>122</sup> Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, 89–90.

encounter with the *being* itself that is required for the engagement of the objects of consciousness with the idea of the *being* itself. To be able to think about God, would require first that God can assert his own *being* that we can receive through *sensibility* before we can even engage with the idea thereof. To put it more concisely, for Rahner, the *phantasm* is the ephemeral concept, populated into the consciousness of *being*, through the pre-apprehension of *being*. Through the senses, experience is acquired that is then reflected upon the *phantasm*, and from this process, knowledge is acquired. Knowledge is, as a result, the encounter between the ephemeral and the phenomenological.

### On the Literalism of Non-Foundationalism

Kilby's reading of Rahner's interpretation of STI Q. 84, A. 7. is strictly literal. However, when the position of Joseph Maréchal (Rahner's chosen mediator for St Thomas Aquinas<sup>123</sup>) is considered, Rahner's interpretation can be read in a vastly different light. Maréchal opines that that difference between the Thomistic and Cartesian critiques is that the Cartesian critique proves the existence of self and the Thomistic critique proves the existence of things. It is this insight that provides the proper key by which to read Rahner's use of STI Q. 84, A. 7. The intelligible species are not merely the artefacts of human thought that we assume in the philosophy of mind to be mere concepts, they are instead the substances of our experiential encounter with the world and the recollections of the past encounters with the world. They are the objects of experience and they are the objects of memory, not merely concepts. They are the mental consequences of phenomena which we arrange and understand in

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<sup>123</sup> Rahner, "The Importance of Thomas Aquinas."

relation to the imperfect illusion of things that exist within the intellect, the phantasm. These phantasms are not mere visual images that we have seen, but rather, are the mental image that we create from our pre-apprehension of the possibility of the being. We reach into this phantasm through a recursive inquiry driven by the details of the intelligible species, the more perfect the species, the more we extract from the turn to the phantasm, but this turn to the phantasm is always an imperfect process. Never is the totality of the phantasm fully apprehended.

To summarise, Kilby's understanding of STI Q. 84, A. 7. inverts the relationships between the real and the subject in *Spirit in the World*. It shows a reliance upon a particularly analytical approach to philosophy and carries the hallmarks of seeking to alter the substance of her subject to meet the characteristics of her analysis:

Thus, for instance Rahner begins the central part of the work with an analysis of the metaphysical question- something which owes more to Heidegger than to Aquinas, and which Rahner presents as an indubitable Cartesian starting point for metaphysics-and then sets out to derive Thomas' basic presuppositions from this starting point.<sup>124</sup>

It is curious that in this instance that Kilby is asserting that Rahner is relying upon Descartes as the starting point of his metaphysics. This entirely ignores the most crucial aspect of Maréchal's *Cahier V*, which is to unfold Kant's collapse of Thomistic metaphysics into Cartesian. As Maréchal expressly remarked:

The purpose of St Thomas is not, as with Descartes, to reach as soon as possible among all other "truths" a privileged one, which is indubitable, well defined and capable of serving as a constructive starting point. His intention is not so particularized, the scope of his

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<sup>124</sup> Kilby, *Karl Rahner*, 16.

doubt is wider and, paradoxical though it may sound, it is more thoroughly “modern”.<sup>125</sup>

Maréchal goes on to explain that Thomas was not concerned with a single foundational truth, but rather to explore the possibility of truth itself:

For he aims at nothing less than setting up a general critique of truth as such. That is why the first results of the methodological doubt will not be the same in Thomism and Cartesian metaphysics. The latter reaches the intuitive evidence of the ontological Ego (Will it not be imprisoned by it?). The former concludes to the objective necessity of Being in general.<sup>126</sup>

Further, by seeking to assert that Rahner’s starting point for metaphysics is Cartesian rather than Maréchalian, Kilby is making Kant the determinant of Rahner's position. By confusing the starting point of metaphysics, “the point of departure” to use the phrase of Maréchal, as being Cartesian and not Thomist, Kilby, like Kant, makes the critical mistake of making all metaphysics Cartesian and thus susceptible to the Kantian Critique. As Otto Muck SJ has implored, it is crucial to remember that:

Karl Rahner studied the transcendental analysis of Maréchal intensively. The term “Transcendental Method” or “analysis” first appeared in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but Maréchal took transcendental analysis to a new stage. Karl Rahner built on Maréchal and further developed his thought with the existential terminology of Martin Heidegger. Experience is understood not just in an empirical sense. Thus, the transcendental philosophical starting point of Maréchal, upon which Rahner intensively reflected during the course of his studies, he wedded to an existential-phenomenological element.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Maréchal, *A Maréchal Reader*, 89.

<sup>126</sup> Maréchal, 89.

<sup>127</sup> Barbara Turner and Andreas R. Batlogg, eds., “Not Only for Opportunistic Reasons: In Conversation with Otto Muck, SJ,” in *Encounters with Karl Rahner: Remembrances of Rahner by Those Who Knew Him.*, trans. Andreas R. Batlogg and Melvin Michalski (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009), 66.

Kilby's assertion however of a Cartesian starting point to Rahner's metaphysics shows that she has missed the significance of this background. Kilby appears to prioritise the encounter with Kant in Rahner's thought, rather than his foundation in Maréchal.

Muck, in contrast, would suggest:

If one wanted to summarize what was going on in a single sentence, one might say that in *Spirit in the World* Rahner is developing, under the general influence of Maréchal and with a few particular borrowings from Heidegger, a reading of Aquinas through the lens of Kant and the post-Kantians.<sup>128</sup>

However, further exposition is required to avoid making a similar mistake as Kilby. While *Spirit in the World* is certainly an encounter of St Thomas with the post-Kantians, particularly Fichte and Hegel, it is not a rendering of St Thomas into the Kantian critique of Cartesian Metaphysics. As Maréchal took pains to state explicitly, the project of Transcendental Thomism is to render Kantian transcendentalism as a tool of Thomism, to enable a Thomistic Kantianism, not a Kantian Thomism as Kilby's hypothesis would suggest.

### The Significance of Maréchal in Understanding Rahner's Ontology

Kilby's attempt to read Rahner's project as being Kantian, has made the mistake that Maréchal sees Kant himself as having made, seeing all metaphysics as Cartesian.

Yet the Cartesian criterion for evidence is quite different from the one proposed by the majority of scholastics. The evidence of the Cartesians falls apart under Kant's critique; the evidence of the scholastics can-we will show- withstand the test.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Turner and Batlogg, 66.

<sup>129</sup> Maréchal, *A Maréchal Reader*, 4.

Considering that both the Cartesian and the scholastic evidence rests on doubt at the existential level, it is an easy mistake to assume that both are somehow the same. Kilby neglects the nuance of Maréchal's work; the starting point from whence the encounter with Kant's critique of reason can occur, making the same mistake as Maréchal identifies Kant as having made in his dismissal of scholasticism:

The realism of the ancients rested on a rational basis, which they became aware of very early- from the time of Parmenides. In Aristotelian philosophy this basis has already been thoroughly mapped out. We do not claim that Kant was wrong and that we would be wrong if, with him, we brand as "dogmatic" the metaphysical systems of his time – the only ones which he knew well- that is, in fact, Leibnizian-Wolffian metaphysics. But Kant was wrong when he assimilated every metaphysics of "transcendent being" to the Cartesian type of metaphysics:<sup>130</sup>

Kilby makes the same mistake by misapprehending the intention of the entire project of *Spirit in the World*. It was not Rahner who sought to encounter Kant, but Maréchal, and the encounter was based on a careful study of the development of western philosophy from Plato to Fichte. Rahner's major contribution in *Spirit in the World* is to encounter Hegel more fully and completely, an encounter that Maréchal simply did not have the time to complete.

Maréchal's history of philosophy details extensively how scepticism gave rise to the position of Aristotle, that in which the operation of intellect reflected but did not mirror the substance of the real. Maréchal referred to this position as moderate-realism. According to Maréchal, St Thomas Aquinas and his immediate successors took up this point. However, in the response to William of Ockham, the nuanced position of Aquinas, that transcended the antimony of the one and the many, the successors to the

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<sup>130</sup> Maréchal, 17.

Scholastics managed to split the unity between the real and the ideal. In Maréchal's account, there is a tendency in the history of Western Philosophy for a collapse of human reason whenever there is a deviation from Aristotle's fundamental position. As

Anthony Matteo contends:

A central tenant of Maréchal's reading of the history of Western Thought is that the breakdown of the Aristotelian-Thomistic synthesis in the late Middle Ages, under the impact of Nominalism, bequeathed to Renaissance and early modern philosophy a flawed legacy, whose deleterious effects bedevil us to this day.<sup>131</sup>

Within Maréchal's broader project is the explanation of how the reaction to Nominalism led to Descartes' attempt to find a single indubitable truth. The response to radical doubt of the Cartesian *cogito* was to split the understanding of the real and the ideal, into empiricism and transcendentalism. This split historically speaking continues to this day, with the analytic and continental traditions broadly speaking being the inheritors of this division. Kilby attempts to express this scholastic legacy entirely within the narrow dictates of the analytic realism. This Thomistic inheritance that defined Rahner's project and which had formed him as a scholastic. In light of this, it is clear that Kilby's misunderstanding is not simply of St Thomas and the history of Catholic philosophy but of Rahner himself. By attempting to define scholasticism according to the narrow dictates of modern analytical rationalism and by attempting to equate Thomistic epistemology with the analytic philosophy of mind, Kilby has misunderstood Rahner's hypothesis as argued in *Spirit in the World* in a way that Otto Muck SJ, had predicted to be inevitable:

First of all to really understand Karl Rahner, one must clearly understand scholasticism and scholastic concepts as well as their neo-Scholastic expressions. Fr. Rahner was formed by this tradition.

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<sup>131</sup> Matteo, *Quest for the Absolute*, 18.

Secondly, it's also very important to recognize that Fr. Rahner reinterpreted this scholastic and Aristotelian legacy following in the footsteps of Joseph Maréchal. Most students today are not aware of the basic ideas of Scholastic Philosophy, or how they were used in theology with its background of an antiquated cosmological view of the world. They have studied scholasticism only superficially and thus tend to denigrate and dismiss it.<sup>132</sup>

Kilby, from the onset of her project, takes this denigrating view not just on scholasticism but upon the very notion of a Catholic philosophy itself. This can be seen by her immediate preference for the analytic tradition. She attempts to make Rahner's attempt to work out a metaphysics of knowledge a project within the analytic philosophy of mind.

The meaning of metaphysics of knowledge is best grasped by contrasting it with epistemology as a philosophical tradition since both are concerned with knowing. Epistemology is centred on issues of justification- how do we know that we know?, what kind of grounds do we need?, and what makes belief legitimate? Metaphysics of knowledge, on the other hand, is concerned with what is actually going on when we know, and of how knowing works. Anthony Kenny makes a similar distinction between epistemology and the philosophy of mind- the former is normative, the latter descriptive. This in turn raises the question of how the metaphysics of knowledge differs from the philosophy of mind. In the categories of the contemporary analytic tradition the aspect of Aquinas' thought which Rahner is interpreting would indeed be described as philosophy of mind.<sup>133</sup>

The problem is that to reduce the *conversio ad phantasmata* to a question within the philosophy of mind fails to grasp the fullness of what Thomistic philosophy undertakes. To accentuate this question within the analytic tradition is to surrender to a rationalist-empiricist model and minimize the debate between the real and ideal. More problematic still is that within the Scholastic tradition which formed Rahner, the

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<sup>132</sup> Turner and Batlogg, "Not Only for Opportunistic Reasons," 66.

<sup>133</sup> Kilby, *Karl Rahner*, 15.



relationship between the real and ideal is not just a question between material and mental, but the longstanding theological question of the relationship between Nature and Grace. By categorising Rahner's project as a project of the philosophy of mind, Kilby categorises the entire project as one bereft of the dualism of Grace and Nature. Kilby categorises Rahner's project as one of realism, rather than moderate-realism. Moderate-realism is a position inherent to the Neo-Thomist project, a project that was not only Maréchal's but was also the foundation of Rahner's understanding of St Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle. The whole Aristotelian critique of knowledge may be summarised as follows:

(1) Every content of consciousness, by the very fact that it is ruled by the first principle, is referred to the absolute order of being: mere relativity of the contents of consciousness would contradict the first principle.<sup>134</sup> As for the first principle itself, it cannot be demonstrated objectively in itself, but its necessity can be solidly demonstrated for every knowing subject... "About such matters there is no proof in the full sense, though there is proof *ad hominem*" we might translate this remark of Aristotle into the language of modern philosophy: "In its absolute sense the first principle cannot be demonstrated analytically, but it can be demonstrated transcendently." For it is really an attempt at a transcendental proof of the absolute affirmation which the Philosopher delineates in the passage that we have quoted.<sup>135</sup>

What Maréchal is stressing is that in the Aristotelian critique of knowledge the existence of *being* is a necessary predicate for human thought. Even if we cannot demonstrate by means of analysis that *being* exists, we can demonstrate that because we are *beings*, and because we are thinking about *beings*, both we and they must exist for us to be able to be both the inquirer and the subject of inquiry. These truths are known transcendently, as consequences of the phenomena of human thought.

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<sup>134</sup> The first principle of Aristotelian metaphysics is that things exist.

<sup>135</sup> Maréchal, *A Maréchal Reader*, 10.

## From Transcendental Knowledge to Transcendental Theology

Even if we share Kilby's understanding of Rahner's later theology, the relationship between experience and necessity can still demonstrate a necessary truth. As I elucidated at the beginning of this chapter, Kilby argues that *Foundations* presents Christianity as a thematization of the encounter with God that occurs in our innermost *being*. If as Maréchal has demonstrated, that within the Aristotelian notion of knowledge the "first principle" of metaphysics can be known transcendently if it cannot be demonstrated analytically, then by analogy. Then *Foundations* demonstrates that even without direct and total knowledge of God, He can be known transcendently as a necessity for Christian history, a history that can be known through analysis.

For Rahner, even if we cannot know the truth entirely by the sensible faculties, then the encounter in our senses of the external world, can make demonstrable the necessity of the existence of the particular being.

(2) if every content of consciousness is, absolutely, to the extent it is identified with itself, that is, to the exact extent of its essence with all the relations implied by it, the science of existence and the science of essence are identical; in other words, the logical or ideal order expresses the ontological order: hence "it belongs to the same kind of thinking to show what is and that it is".<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Maréchal, 10.

The objects of consciousness to the extent they reflect the thing-in-itself, are also reflecting the ontological order. What this means is that if within the human consciousness, there are specific objects that possess specific relations to other objects, this ideal order, reflects an apprehension of the ontological order. It need not be a perfect rendering, but it is demonstrable, that if one can possess an object of consciousness that relates to a particular cup being on a particular table, then it follows that ontologically, what one is calling the particular a cup, is on what one is calling a table. The broader point this demonstrates is that to be able to first engage with the question with of something is, it must first be apprehended that it is, otherwise, the abstraction of the qualities through the intelligible species achieves and testifies to nothing.

(3) the essences (that is, the objective contents of thought), all of which we refer to the absolute order of being, and which we designate by the common name beings (*entia*, *onta*) are multiple and varied, not only in their representative notes, but also in their relation to concrete existence; each one of them existing only according to the respective conditions belonging to it: although every one of them is by itself and according to its representative notes, a “subsistence,” an “ousia.” Their degree of proximity to existence in itself, to “subsistence,” may be gathered from the peculiar mode of their essence itself as it stands before out thought: thus one object of our thought assumes the reality of a substance, another of an accident, a third of potency, still another as an act, or a relation or of a becoming.<sup>137</sup>

This modality of being is the grasping of the one being. This leads to the realisation of multiple substances within the experience of the object within our thought. These modalities are contingent upon their relationship to the absolute existence. While each is an individual subsistence, the character of their relationship with the objective real determines the nature of their relationship with each other. This modality of being is

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<sup>137</sup> Maréchal, 10.

the motive power behind the human faculty of abstraction and the key to our ability to know.

In these objects the power of our abstraction allows us to distinguish different aspects, each of which will really share being to the very extent to which it shares the totality from which we have abstracted it. This aspect will have the reality of an objective abstraction, of an “absolute nature,” that one of the purely relative reality which belongs to the “intentional mode,” another one the reality which goes with a subjective activity and so on. In general, the task of determining this relation of the essence to the absolute order of being might be said to belong to logic; in the Aristotelian conception it belongs primarily and strictly speaking to metaphysics, to the “First Philosophy,” as it organizes the various modes being under the norm of the first principle.<sup>138</sup>

Categorically, the relationship between the subjective operation of abstraction, subjective in the sense that it occurs internally, uniquely and personally; and the objective real and existent, is an indivisible link, binding the real and the substance of the imagination. This Aristotelian conception means that any object that can exist within the consciousness must really exist in some mode. This would mean that a hard realist model such as in analytic philosophy, in which all objects are assessed according to an analytic function will naturally exclude the extension of the possible beyond that which can be assessed in an objective analytic manner. Analytic philosophy because of its reliance upon the physical objects of analysis naturally seeks to exclude those things which can only be known transcendently. Kilby, by trying to define Rahner’s *Spirit in the World* within the boundaries of analytic philosophy has moved the text outside of its scholastic cosmology. Absent its intended cosmology, it seems reasonable to assume that the text will argue a nonsensical point. One should expect this when one changes both the point of foundation and the point of destination.

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<sup>138</sup> Maréchal, 10.

The internal unity of philosophy and theology that is found in the Scholastic ontology and cosmology was always critical for Rahner's project. By trying to render his philosophical contributions of *Spirit in the Word* into a philosophical system other than scholasticism one is dangerously close to disestablishing his entire theological project. Rahner argued for the importance of understanding theology and philosophy as conjoined in their function and purpose. In the introduction to *Foundations of Christian Faith*, he relied extensively upon the document of priestly formation from the Second Vatican Council.<sup>139</sup> In his interviews with German media, he commented extensively on the recent philosophical turn towards language and its effect upon theology.<sup>140</sup> More tellingly, his inaugural lecture at the University of Münster was done as a seminar series, *Bild – Wort – Symbol*.<sup>141</sup> What can be seen is that for Rahner the linguistic turn in philosophy also was reflected by a linguistic turn in theology. The congruence and agreement for Rahner of the shared nature of shifts and changes in theology and philosophy only seem to further reinforce the necessity of understanding the significance of Scholastic philosophical framework for understanding Rahner's theology. This innate connection was present in Rahner's thought from the earliest moments of his career, it was not simply a notion that he defended after the Council, but it was one he asserted in the first chapter of *Spirit in the World*.

The Article which is to form the foundation of this work is part of a theological Summa, and so it stands in the place assigned to it by a theological systematic. If in a philosophical systematic man is the

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<sup>139</sup> Karl Rahner and William V. Dych, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1978), 3.

<sup>140</sup> See Rahner, "The Language of Science and the Language of Theology." And Rahner, "Interdisciplinary Dialogue and the Language of Theology."

<sup>141</sup> Barbara Turner and Andreas R. Batlogg, eds., "Intellectual Passion and Spiritual Courage: In Conversation with Johann Baptist Metz," in *Encounters with Karl Rahner: Remembrances of Rahner by Those Who Knew Him.*, trans. Andreas R. Batlogg and Melvin Michalski (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009), 144. *Bild – Wort – Symbol* translates to Picture – Word – Symbol

first word, while God as the Absolute is the last word (even if the first was spoken with a view to the last), in a theological Summa, the absolute God in His unrelatedness to the world is the first word, and man is the last.<sup>142</sup>

Rahner asserts from the very beginning of *Spirit in the World*, the teleological differentiation between Nature and Grace, between reason and faith, and between philosophy and theology. An analytical philosophy of mind, because of its acceptance of the modernist realist position would have a vastly different definition of what philosophy is. Philosophy being a product of pure nature, of the pure real, becomes impossible to remain true to either the scholastic vision of two realms, one natural and another one supernatural, or of the Maréchal and Thomistic view of one world, both natural and supernatural. Kilby's attempt to decouple the *Spirit in the World* from *Foundations of Christian Faith* represents a failure to understand not the internal coherency of the Rahnerian opus, but rather the significance of the Scholastic framework in which Rahner was operating. Without a proper apprehension of this framework, it is impossible to properly transpose the cosmological, ontological and epistemological assumptions that from whence Rahner wrote his theology. This would make the attempt to transpose Rahner's theology into any other philosophical system fraught with the danger of rendering Rahner irrelevant to Rahnerian theology.

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<sup>142</sup> Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, 15.

## Chapter VI: Critique from Theology

This chapter aims to explore how the hypothesis that *Foundations of Christian Faith* and *Hearer of the Word* are incompatible does not hold up to critical analysis. It first establishes that the themes of historicity and semiotics that Rahner was interested in both had a common origin in *E Latere Christi*. Secondly, how in *Hearer of the Word* he developed these themes, particularly in relation to Salvation History. Before, finally, exploring how these themes that originated in his doctoral thesis and refined in *Hearer of the Word*, found their full maturation in the transcendental nature of the theological creed in the appendices of *Foundations of Christian Faith*.

### Origins of Rahner's thought

To do this it is necessary to move from the philosophical critique of Kilby's assumptions of Rahner's theology to an exploration of how Rahner's theology developed chronologically to explore Kilby's claim that *Hearer of the Word* was built off the philosophy of *Spirit in the World*. Rahner began publishing early in the 1930s. Most of these works were short essays on matters of spirituality and the theology of the patristics. One of his major projects until 1938 was his PhD dissertation. However, what became *Spirit in the World* was not the only project that Rahner was working on between 1932 and 1938. While he was at Valkenburg he was working with Patristic theology. Kilby acknowledges this but fails to grasp the significance for what some of this Patristic work means for the understanding of *Hearer of the Word*. As Brandon Peterson has shown, Rahner's early theology can be seen clearly as the anchor point for much of his later theology. Peterson argues that it is necessary to do some serious study into the extent to which the classic narrative of the movement into theology, a

point that echoes in German scholarship among the students of Fr Raymund Schwager S.J.<sup>143</sup> Brandon Peterson, who works extensively with Rahner’s pre-war spiritual writings, argues that:

First, the initial decade of Rahner’s theological training and writing was focused intensely on the theology of the Fathers, and it is worth studying Rahner’s writings from this formative time since important pieces of his own more “systematic” theology are already nascent in this period.<sup>144</sup>

We must always be mindful that many who studied under Rahner” Karl Lehmann, Otto Muck and Johannes Baptist-Metz for example, have always insisted that the work Rahner did in his earliest years was the work which shaped the outline of his entire theological project.<sup>145</sup>

It is also wise to recall what Peterson reminds us, that, “... at the height of his influence, Rahner stringently insisted that his theology was informed by the historical tradition.”<sup>146</sup> While Peterson is right that the early period of Rahner’s theological activity includes the essential production of key theological themes his later work would exploit, there is a broader significance to *E Latere Christi*. This early work, whose history predates *Spirit in the World* and *Hearer of the Word* also reveals the aspects of theological thinking that Rahner was predisposed to, namely typology. *E*

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<sup>143</sup> Barbara Turner and Andreas R. Batlogg, eds., “A Towering Figure of Theology in the 20th Century: In Conversation with Raymund Schwager, SJ,” in *Encounters with Karl Rahner: Remembrances of Rahner by Those Who Knew Him.*, trans. Andreas R. Batlogg and Melvin Michalski (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009), 81–89.

<sup>144</sup> Peterson, “Karl Rahner on Patristic Theology and Spirituality,” 508.

<sup>145</sup> Barbara Turner and Andreas R. Batlogg, eds., “He Was Simply Unique: In Conversation with Karl Cardinal Lehmann,” in *Encounters with Karl Rahner: Remembrances of Rahner by Those Who Knew Him.*, trans. Andreas R. Batlogg and Melvin Michalski (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009), 111–35; Turner and Batlogg, “Not Only for Opportunistic Reasons”; Turner and Batlogg, “Intellectual Passion and Spiritual Courage.”

<sup>146</sup> Peterson, “Karl Rahner on Patristic Theology and Spirituality,” 508.



*Latere Christi* is a text that posits that dogma can be deposited in a nascent form, unarticulated, and growing to maturity only with the unfolding of human history.

This notion of an unfolding revelation that comes to its full maturation as a solemn doctrine of the Church more than a millennium later is vitally important for Rahner's understanding of Dogma. It demonstrates that the linguistic formulation of the religious truth and the truth itself are not necessarily bound together inseparably. I have already explored how a proper understanding of transcendental knowing harmonises *Foundations of Christian Faith* with *Spirit in the World*. But similarly, it is visible in this idea of the unfolding revelation, a historical dimension that Rahner is seeking to include into his transcendental knowing. As shall be explored further in this chapter, this dimension of historicity is at the heart of the project of *Hearer of the Word*.

One might, therefore, consider that a viable reading that *Hearer of the Word* is not that it builds upon *Spirit in the World*, but, rather, that it attempts to answer questions laid out in his doctoral thesis. Rahner's historical understanding of St Thomas' philosophy of knowledge as mediated by Maréchal, and the classes that he was teaching in Dogmatic Theology at Innsbruck then inform how he answers those questions. *Hearer of the Word* is consequently an exploration of the general ontology of human historicity, catered to answer questions in Dogmatic theology, on how doctrine has developed with respect to exegesis from the Patristics and from Scripture. Utilising Maréchal's Thomism, it presents this exploration as a pre-theology, or a philosophy of religion, that can explain the metaphysics of religious knowledge by reference to the human person.

## *E Latere Christi*, A Theology of Types for Christian Living

To demonstrate how I can posit this explanation, it is necessary to turn to the conclusion of *E Latere Christi*, Rahner's successful doctoral thesis. *E Latere Christi: The Origin of the Church as Second Eve from the Side of Christ the Second Adam*, is a very slim text, described by Rahner as "...small, miserable, but my former standards sufficient".<sup>147</sup> Submitted within two weeks of his arriving at Innsbruck in 1936, it was text that obviously was constructed in the years prior.<sup>148</sup> This text aims to explore the origin of the idea of the Church. Particularly, the type/antitype relationship between Christ as the new Adam and the Church as the new Eve. *E Latere Christi*, or, *The Church from the Heart of Christ*<sup>149</sup>, is a study of the Typological meaning of John 19:34, that opens with the reminder:

A wonderful image stands before the mind of the Christians of the early Church when they thought of the Church. The Church is to them both maiden and mother, the queen in golden robes and shoes, the bride of Christ, the mother of all the living, the second Eve, the *Domina*, the perfect and untouched virgin... From the pierced of the Crucified flows the living stream of the Spirit, which creates humanity anew, the Church can be born again.<sup>150</sup>

Clearly, Rahner's project began with the love of the Church, and that this Church was a Church which could change, one that could be "born again".

In the conclusion of *E Latere Christi*, this idea of the Church being "born again" is expressed quite radically. Rahner is imploring us to look for the dogmatic force of the

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<sup>147</sup> Batlogg, "Edition Report," xvii.

<sup>148</sup> Batlogg, xxx.

<sup>149</sup> Hugo Rahner remarked that he and Karl wrote their doctoral theses on the same topic. His was *Fons Vitae*, and Karl's was *The Church from the Heart of Christ*. Batlogg, xviii.

<sup>150</sup> Karl Rahner, "E Latere Christi," in *Samtliche Werke: Spiritualit Und Theologie Der Kirchenvater*, trans. Brandon R. Peterson, vol. 3, n.d., 9.

revelation in the Scriptures; not in the precise formulations of the Church, but rather to look beyond the words, and instead look at the intended force of the utterance.

We have reached the end of the short, mere registry of a survey about the survival of the idea, the biblical basis on which was the theme of this work. That it was indeed entered into a solemn doctrinal decision of the Church is probably one more reason the attempt to show its biblical foundation, from the outset was not too bold to regard.<sup>151</sup>

This demonstrates a stark reality. Rahner is outlining how the organic *praxis* of the Church's early *Typological* reliance upon the pierced side is a reason to look to Scripture for a pre-figuration of the later theology. Key to this, however, is the implicit admission

It is probably not necessary and appropriate to intricately assess the degree of certainty, with which the discussed idea can be addressed as "biblical." The pre-dogmatic exegesis as such yielded, probably, a good likelihood, which the consensus of the fathers gives the outcome of this exegesis (of course not the procedure for proof as such) a theological certainty.<sup>152</sup>

There is for Rahner no necessity to determine the extent to which the type of the Church being born from the pierced side can be called strictly biblical. What Rahner was attempting to demonstrate was that it was likely that early theologians were reading John 19:34 in this way, not that John in writing the passage had intended it this way. What Rahner demonstrates more broadly is that the Typological interpretation of the New Testament had been as common to the Fathers as had the Typological interpretation of the Old Testament. Broadly speaking, this provides an argument to suggest that typological interpretations of New Testament scripture would

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<sup>151</sup> This is an unpublished translated manuscript. I am most indebted to Brandon Peterson for his willingness to provide me with access to this text. Rahner, "E Latere Christi."

<sup>152</sup> Rahner, 82.

be licit in contemporary theological praxis, one is not bound as it were to the strict meaning of scripture, just as the International Theological Commission in 1972 reminded us that one is not bound to literal philosophical formulations of theology.<sup>153</sup>

Rahner is further reminding us:

If the concept of the origin of the Church as a second Eve from Christ's wounded side is a common teaching of the Fathers, the theologians and thus approximately the Church itself, then we have demonstrated a real "type", which is not mentioned explicitly in scripture and yet is a type in the theological sense, so that according to God's intention the formation of Eve in fact declared the formation of the Church from Christ beforehand. The history of this idea is thus a contribution to the typological doctrine.<sup>154</sup>

By connecting the history of the idea of the pierced side to the doctrine of typology, Rahner is again remarking on the theological importance of the interpretation of Scripture. Essentially, if it can be shown that in the life of the Church a type has been derived from the New Testament, then the books of the New Testament carry a significance greater than just being an account of the times of Revelation, they can, in effect, be a source for new revelation. This insight is key to understanding some of the underlying philosophy in *Hearer of the Word*. If Rahner has successfully demonstrated that without an express reference within Scripture, it is possible to generate a new theological type in the living life of the Church, it demonstrates that revelation can operate outside of the time of revelation. Unless one is willing to dispense with the idea that revelation has ended with the death of the last Apostle, there is no other choice but to accept that there must be a means by which revelation can occur, based within

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<sup>153</sup> "Unity of the Faith and Theological Pluralism (1972)," accessed August 24, 2018, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_cti\\_1972\\_fede-pluralismo\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_1972_fede-pluralismo_en.html).

<sup>154</sup> Rahner, "E Latere Christi," 82.

the substance of revelation, but in development from it. Considering that “types” are held to have significance in salvation history because they demonstrate the way in which God has communicated the imminence of the incarnation. If “types” can be found within the New Testament after the end of revelation, then there must be some mode of revelation that is consequential to the act, but dialectical in its substance.

*E Latere Christi* shows by the means of a single example, that the types quoted in Scripture are not the only ones.

It has been well demonstrated in this work that the doctrine of types is not as irrelevant as it is often portrayed for the determination of revealed truths, because many precious fruits of patristic thought where often passed along in this symbolic formation.<sup>155</sup>

Further, with revealed truths now being able to read in a typological manner, it possesses an ability to appreciate the natural development of the life of the Church.<sup>156</sup>

Rahner surmises:

...in traditional religious language, there appear over and over formulations such as: in this or that occasion of life, the Lord has merited for us this or that grace. One prays, may Jesus, in the individual specific mysteries of his life, live again in us. One speaks of a mysterious presence of the individual events of the Lord’s life. The Fathers said that by being baptised Jesus has made holy the waters of baptism, that he sanctified marriage in Cana. All of these formulae, however different in their meaning, seem to commonly attest that the life of Jesus stands, in the life of the Christian, as soteriological not just entirely through the grace merited on the cross and as moral through the individual mysteries in their exemplarity, but rather that also the individual mysteries as individual (even if, of course, thereby they are part of the salvific life of Christ) work their

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<sup>155</sup> Rahner, 83.

<sup>156</sup> Something worth considering is the extent to which Rahner can be known to have had an encounter with the works of Cardinal Henry Newman in the 1930s. While the German translation of *On the Development of Doctrine* was available by 1922, the extent to which the text was taught in the German seminaries is open for debate. Kerr observes that Newman was only significantly encountered in German in 1948 see Kerr, *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians*.

way into the life of the Christian as a saving power beyond their moral exemplarity.<sup>157</sup>

For Rahner, the “formulae” defined by the Fathers, rather than just the substance of their meaning, attest to a common reality. They attest that the life of Christ stands as an example for the life of the Christian. That our lives must share in the experience of Christ’s life. It is in this sharing of the lived life of Christ, that the saving power of Christ is present in its most intrinsic sense as being more than simple moral exemplarity.

It is clear that in 1936, Rahner had already begun to sketch out what would be the consuming interest of his theology, the extent to which Christ mirrors man, and consequently the extent to which man mirrors Christ. For Rahner, the possibility of a new “type”, expressly described not in scripture, but in the life of the early Church, with its significance for the relationship between the events of salvation history and the phenomenological life of the Church, would guide the way for a new understanding of significance of Jesus for the basic anthropology of the Human Person. Again, Rahner reflects:

To what extent, and in what sense can this be said? If this question is really originally tackled, it must be traced in two directs: it would first work out a general ontology of the presence of a human historical process to a “later” time (a question which occupies today’s philosophy of history), and second, it would apply such an ontology to the consideration of the necessary theological moments of the presence of the events of the life of Jesus in the life of the Christian. In this second question would then the typological character of the events of Jesus’ life have a role to play. Since this typological character indicates, indeed precisely, that these events not merely retrospectively considered by the contemporary observer as symbol of the timeless work of the redeeming Logos in the life of

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<sup>157</sup> Rahner, “E Latere Christi,” 83.

the Christian, but rather that they through their setting in historical, spiritual person are such “*Symbole*” from the outset.<sup>158</sup>

In this, it is visible that the inquiry and insights that underpin much of *Hearer of the Word* have their prefiguration in the conclusion of *E Latere Christi*. The concern with the ontology of the human historical process, and the need to work out the theological movement utilising this ontology would facilitate the entwining of the Christian with the life of Jesus. Essentially, if *Hearer of the Word* is the attempt to work out the general ontology of human historicity and how that translates to a later time, then *Foundations* at least in part is the attempt to apply this ontology to the life of the Christian through a Christological anthropology.

Rahner’s conclusion further illustrates the extent to which Rahner’s Patristic exegesis influences his philosophy of religion.

It should thus only be vaguely indicated the theological doctrine of types contains a starting point for an application of the philosophy of human history and the abiding presence past to the life of Jesus.<sup>159</sup>

For Rahner, the extension of typology to the New Testament and Patristic teachings is how theology itself becomes unshackled from mere formulations. This is the first stage towards the historicity of the transcendental revelation, which will find itself unpacked in the process of the life of the Church, enabling a new and radical encounter with Christ in the lived life of the Christian. By moving this unpacking of revelation into reflecting a kind of intention of God rather than some kind of human activity, Rahner

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<sup>158</sup> Rahner, 83.

<sup>159</sup> Rahner, 84.

further predicates this away from a *traditional* means of looking at the world, in which mysticism was an exception rather than the norm.

A New-Testament typological doctrine could now offer “applications” which from the onset really belong to the meaning of the narrated event itself, are God’s thoughts, not merely a “pious meditation”.<sup>160</sup>

And here for the first time is the claim to a second order of revelation. It is within the insight of how the Church developed the doctrine of the pierced side that Rahner derived the notion of the categorical and the transcendental revelation. By marking the insight that such doctrine developed in accordance with the “God’s thoughts” rather than “pious meditation” it is visible that what a Protestant position would argue to be an allegory, can instead become the substance of God’s communication to mankind. While it lacks the precision of the philosophical language utilised in *Hearer of the Word*, this demonstrates that rather than a philosophical theory articulated by Kilby, *Hearer* instead is an example of working backwards, explaining the metaphysics of phenomena already demonstrated in the historical development of theological doctrine. As Rahner concludes:

Through a developed (and typologically aided) general ontology of the presence of the life of Jesus in the life of the Christian, the following question could (more fundamentally and more originally than has happened thus far) be answered: namely, why the Christian has to conform their life not simply according to the general norms of dogma and morality (taken as general laws), but rather according to the concrete particulars of Jesus’ life, which is for this conformation, not merely an illustrative, particular case of previously and generally known norms of Christian existence [Dasein], but rather as the individual norm itself.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Rahner, 84.

<sup>161</sup> Rahner, 84.



The general ontology of the presence of Jesus in the life of the Christian reminds us of the totality of Christ's immanence. By the means of the shared ontology of human historicity, Christ, as the man, Jesus, has a fully shared nature with all men. This shared ontological historicity enables a general ontology for the imminence of Jesus in the life of the Christian. This immanent Jesus reminds us of the perpetuity of Christ on the Cross at Cavalry, and why Christians are not a people of laws, but a people of the risen Christ. Through the medium of shared human historicity, the objective is to make our lives mirror Jesus' and through this share in His Cross and resurrection. The conforming of our lives to the example of Christ is not out of a moral obligation to follow his example but is reflective of our fundamental action of sharing in Christ.

Broadly speaking, one can say that *E Latere Christi* is the first work to move us towards an entirely transcendental Christology. Within the context of extending the praxis of the Patristic theological development, Rahner appears to be attempting to extend the principles that guided the early church to be tools of the modern church. This action carries the significance of pre-shadowing several of the characteristics that would feature prominently in Rahner's last significant work of theology, *Foundations of Christian Faith*. Like *Foundations*, *E Latere Christi* is seeking to fundamentally brace the significance of the historical incarnation in the anthropology of man. While it lacks the sophistication of the language of Rahner's later work, it does seem to contain many of the key elements upon which Rahner's later theology can be said to rely.

*Hearer of the Word: A General Ontology of Man's Historicity*

In *Hearer of the Word*, Rahner rapidly turns to the discussion of the historicity of man's being. This historicity is key to man's ontological qualities, part of their fundamental being.

A human being is a historical being. This is for us no longer a mere observation of disparate facts, which are then afterwards put together. It is an essential insight whose elements we understand as they derived from their original starting point in their necessary inner connection.<sup>162</sup>

Rahner asserts that the historical experience of human life is of ontological relevance. This is a claim that is made in the conclusion of *E Latere Christi*. Rahner seeks to explicate how the formulations of theological assertions in the works of the Patristics and the scriptural authors prefigures the historical development of doctrine. As it relates to the development of the doctrine of types, Rahner stresses the necessity for the development of a general ontology of human historicity. For Rahner, this requirement derives from the Thomistic theory of knowledge, notably, the receptivity of human knowledge.

We started from the fact that human knowledge is receptive. This is a basic view of Thomist metaphysics of knowledge which it shares with Aristotle. *Anima tabula rasa*. All our ideas derive from a contact with the world of sense.<sup>163</sup>

Consequently, all human ideas derive from the historicity of human ontology. We receive our ideas by our contact with an external world of sense that exists external from us, that in fact existed prior to us. What this means is that all human experience is at its core a historical experience. All phenomena are historical in their nature, that

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<sup>162</sup> Rahner, *Hearer of the Word*, 113.

<sup>163</sup> Rahner, 123.

is, they occur at one point in time, but the experience of that one phenomenon is historical in that it can be shared beyond that one point in time. This truth is what Rahner is seeking to establish for the needs of a philosophy of religion.

We have undertaken this analysis of human historicity with a view to a philosophy of religion. We wished to know where for humanity is the place of a possible revelation of the free God, since we had discovered that we are beings who, on account of our transcendence, stand in free love before the free God of a possible revelation.<sup>164</sup>

For Rahner, this encounter with God's free action is only possible within an entirely receptive mode of knowing. It is not our actions that make the encounter with God possible but by part of the totality of our ontology. Mankind is categorically historical because of our ontology and with the self-communication of God occurring within that history the encounter with God is cannot be merely the adding of Grace, but categorically must be a consequence of the totality of our ontology. This historical nature of revelation means that the prospect of it being just one part of our ontology is avoided, as Rahner puts it:

It could not be done by making one specific aspect of our basic makeup the privileged place of the process of revelation.<sup>165</sup>

For Rahner, there is an intrinsic link between the historicity of man and the historical reality of the incarnation. To understand the possibility of revelation requires the understanding of the intrinsic ontological qualities of man. This intrinsic ontology cannot be a specific or super-added reality, but instead must be part of the totality of human ontology.

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<sup>164</sup> Rahner, 117.

<sup>165</sup> Rahner, 117.

...what is the concrete place where the free possible revelation of God can encounter us who know in freedom? If we are the beings who must always look out for God's Free action, through which God will eventually be manifest, where must we look in our existence so that we may encounter it if it should take place or has already taken place?<sup>166</sup>

The communication of God to man by his own intrinsically free action thus must take place through a mechanism that can be shared not just with the individual man, but with all of mankind, something which we share in no matter our occurrence within the totality of time and space. How then can we experience this self-communication if we are not a party to the particular act?

The manifestation of something unknown may occur in two ways: either it is presented in its own self, or some knowledge of it is mediated in word, where "word" is taken at first in the sense of a vicarious sign of what is not given in itself.<sup>167</sup>

The word that is spoken of here is something that contains the referential engagement with a particular that will occur outside of history by the free activity of God. This free activity fixes our historicity, but it does not fix the historicity of God. The limitless nature of God can be shown in the fact that His free action though possessed of a particular historicity is not bound to the finite nature of the created world.

General ontology has already shown us that a possible revelation must have a certain historicity. When we know God as the pure, absolutely luminous being, God also stands before us as one who acts freely, who has not yet exhausted the possibilities of divine freedom with respect to us by the free creation of this finite being.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Rahner, 89.

<sup>167</sup> Rahner, 93.

<sup>168</sup> Rahner, 94.

But God who is limitless, His action, His communication becomes limited by our limited sense. In the free action, God has made our limited history twist upon the particular point. The sheer freedom of His action intrudes upon the particular reality of human historicity, binding us before the radical intervention in history that was the particular event of the incarnation. The free action of God becomes a historical event for man. As Rahner explains:

But free activity is essentially historical activity. In a first, general, and metaphysical sense, there is history wherever there is free activity, because in such an activity, things happen which cannot be deduced or computed from some general, previous ground.<sup>169</sup>

A free action that occurs within human experience is necessarily historical. History is a consequence of any action that cannot be deduced from the previous ground. He means, that a free event that is not part of the static prior existence, is by its intrinsic nature a historical event, because of the new necessity of change. By interposing into human history, God makes a new history, with the consequence of this free action being a new set of historical consequences. This historical event is not found in our general or particular history, but in the shared history that is part of our general ontology. This action radiates in space and time. It must carefully be understood that this event is not a contextualised event will be found within by our intrinsic qualities, but rather in the sharedness of a historical ontology. As Rahner explores with the typological significance of Adam and Eve in *E Latere Christi*, in *Hearer of the Word* the fixation is in the reality of revelation for mankind generally. The pre-figuration of events in the Old Testament shows us the historical inevitability of the reality of the incarnation. Likewise, the historical reality of the revelation is prefigured and

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<sup>169</sup> Rahner, 94.

experienced in the past by virtue of shared historicity, just as it will be experienced in the present and the now through our historicity and awareness of the past.

Thus when we say: revelation is a historical event, because the place of a possible revelation for us is in our history, we do not mean this in the general metaphysical sense of history as such, but in the sense of human history.<sup>170</sup>

It is in the sharedness of history in human ontology that becomes the destined fundamental point of encounter. The destiny of this moment becomes the radiating point of pre-apprehension. The act of the incarnation, as a free action by God himself, shifts and changes the very substance of human history. The incarnation becomes the absolute place of revelation within human history. This human history, being the dialectical dynamism that moves human beings' forwards within, shared in the general ontology of humanity. In this way, the properties of human transcendence, of spirit into being,<sup>171</sup> becomes the possible place of human ontology in which the encounter with God's self.

We are asking about the place of a possible revelation of God in humanity. Hitherto we have answered: In human transcendence, which, as such, is historicity. Or, from the objective point of view, in the appearance in the world, which manifests being as such.<sup>172</sup>

For Rahner, the "human transcendence" where our spirit reaches outward is the essence of our historicity. This concept is how our reaching outward into the phantasm for the operation of *ratio* is not merely reaching into a concrete image but reaching into human historicity, much like he affirms in the 1980s. This historicity, this shared

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<sup>170</sup> Rahner, 95.

<sup>171</sup> This appears to be a concept taken from Hegel by Rahner. See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Arnold V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

<sup>172</sup> Rahner, *Hearer of the Word*, 127.

human transcendence is not just a quiddity of the totality of human ontology, but also the means of our salvation. The shared aspect of our nature is the moment of our encounter with God's saving grace. By our encounter with the *word* that is God, we have encountered not merely the sign, but the actuality.

If we take all this together we reach the conclusion that an extramundane being can be given to the finite spirit through the word. Hence word is no longer here, as it were at an earlier stage of our investigation, meant merely as some kind of vicarious sign, but as a conceptual sign of the spirit, immediately intended for the latter.<sup>173</sup>

The finite being thus can approach the infinite being through the "vicarious sign" that in the encounter transforms from the vicarious sign to the concept that communicates the infinite being. Hence the encounter with the finite being Jesus enables the encounter with the infinite being God.<sup>174</sup> For Rahner, the possibility of this encounter makes manifest our duty to look for this encounter in our historicity. Because the human word can contain the capability to transform from vicarious representative to conceptual totality, we must await the possible encounter.

Since we have now shown that everything, including extramundane beings, may be made known by the human word, as it combines negated appearance and negating transcendence, we have also said that we are at least the ones who must listen to a revelation of this free God in a human word.<sup>175</sup>

This encounter, though, is not without a time component. As Rahner observes, there are limits to a possible revelation, or at least there are limits to the fulfilment of a

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<sup>173</sup> Rahner, 132.

<sup>174</sup> The immediate nature of the encounter with the finite becoming the encounter with the infinite. While Christ is absolutely man, he is absolutely God, and to find one necessarily would be to find the other.

<sup>175</sup> Rahner, *Hearer of the Word*, 132.

possible revelation with respect to our engagement with it. As he observes, “God can only reveal what we can hear.”<sup>176</sup> This limit is not a limit on God but is reflective of the limits of man in man’s shared historicity. The fullness of a revelation consequently needs a medium by which it can reach the full flowering of God’s intended thought and consequence. Enter, the theory of the transcendental revelation.

In *Hearer of the Word*, Rahner first introduces us to his categories of Revelation, the Categorical or Unique revelation<sup>177</sup> and the transcendental revelation.<sup>178</sup> The categorical revelation is a fundamentally historical event. In the context of the earlier example from *E Latere Christi*, the categorical revelation is the formulation that finds itself in the Gospel of John. *E Latere Christi* explicates the historical substance and context of this revelation and provides us with a reliable mechanism to examine the unique substance of the historical time of revelation. But we encounter this and experience this categorical revelation transcendently to that revelation. Transcendental revelation travels in history in human language, that is, without the medium of language, without the attempt to communicate it, the transcendental revelation would never occur. The ontological revelation in question is the historical event, but the encounter with the recollection of the event is itself a separate action, a separate encounter with revelation, this is the transcendental revelation. This encounter quixotically can be the only mode in which the encounter with revelation can occur, and as history moves and changes, as languages live and die, the object of the encounter may change, even if the essence or *ousia* of the encounter does not.

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<sup>176</sup> Rahner, 93.

<sup>177</sup> This might best be read in the Scholastic sense of Categorical, that is special, unique or singular, rather than any other possible sense.

<sup>178</sup> This needs to be read contextually to the categorical. Transcendental revelation occurs in relation to the encounter of the categorical, and thus is transcendent not in its origin, but in its relation to the historical fact of revelation.



## Foundations of Christian Faith: The Expression of Categorical Truth within the Subjective Experiential

*Foundations of Christian Faith* is the final maturation of Rahner's thinking on signs and the word. In the early work of *E Latere Christi*, Rahner articulates the prospect of revelation that was uncommunicated in the time of revelation. In *Hearer of the Word*, he explores the nature of *word* as the communicative medium by which human historicity facilitated God's self-communication as a pre-theological philosophy of religion. Finally, in the theological creed, Rahner shows how you can reduce this *word* to timeless principles that expresses its bound historicity and absolute nature.

The incomprehensible term of human transcendence, which takes place in man's existential and original being and not only in theoretical or merely conceptual reflection, is called God, and he communicates himself in forgiving love to man both existentially and historically as man's own fulfilment. The eschatological climax of God's historical self-communication, in which this self-communication becomes manifest as irreversible and victorious is called Jesus Christ.<sup>179</sup>

This creed can be read as the culmination of the theological implications of Rahner's early thoughts on the nature of the communicative action of revelation. The eschatological climax of God's communication is the incarnation, the moment in which the particular historicity of God's communicative event becomes irreversible. All typological events that occur prior to the incarnation are prefigured towards this moment. Past events all radiate in their fundamental form towards the moment in which God has revealed himself totally. Further, God can now be placed at the end or purpose of all human life; as God is the absolute being, to whom all human life in its

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<sup>179</sup> Rahner and Dych, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 454.

internal dynamism is orientated towards, with man's historicity being the motion or movement into or towards that absolute. This formulation by virtue of its reliance upon the movement into, the basic historicity, with respect to the transient communicative nature of the *word* becomes the simplified expression of the totality of Rahner's philosophy of religion. The Truth of faith becomes not the strict and solemn formulation, but the communicative acts of faith. Those acts which we experience in the historicity of man's transcendence towards God, and the free act of God we call Jesus Christ that irreversibly inserts itself into man's total ontology by its historical reality.

Keeping in mind the exploration of this chapter, it should be clear that Kilby's argument, that there is a discontinuity between *Hearer of the Word* and *Foundations of Christian Faith* is incorrect. *Hearer of the Word*, by establishing the nature of man's transcendence as being in the substance of his shared historicity, merely explains the metaphysical realities that are required for a thematic experience of truth. Even accepting Kilby's description of *Foundations* as demonstrating that the historical Christianity is the thematization of the encounter with God that occurs within our innermost being, there is no necessary incompatibility. The encounter with God in our innermost being is a shared experience for all of humanity, and it is an encounter that does happen to occur. Without converting that encounter to occur outside of human life and memory, and thus being a super-added quality, there can be no encounter with God in our being that is not, at least in the sense that it happens at some point in our time, historical.

Only by a strict textualism and a treatment of Rahner's formulations as scholastic formulae is there a discontinuity, and this discontinuity is limited to words rather than to themes or types. In Rahner's theological expression the signifier does not carry the totality of the signified, but rather the act of the communication, being in response to particular phenomena expresses the significance of the unfolding revelation in human historicity. Each theological utterance of Rahner is not a specific formula that must be consistent. Instead they are communicative acts, in which the words reflect a truth that is communicated in the act, rather than the word.

This split between the object and the *ousia* is the very thing that is at issue in the epilogue of *Foundations*. The alternative creedal statements at the least can be read as an attempt to demonstrate the nature of the relationship between the categorical and the transcendental revelation. Considering this was a subject matter that Rahner's assistant at this point has been begging him to work to extricate from some of the controversies over the foundations of his theology, it might even be the most probable reading of the intentionality of the epilogue. This is no great post-modernism attack on the truth of the Church, but rather an example of the relationship of truth to experience. Rahner's metaphysics, which stress a world in which truth and experience are objectively different, but subjectively contingent are once more fully on display. Rahner's transcendental revelation is the locutionary expression that is the alternative creed, in contrast, the truth, the illocution, is the fruit and the fullness of Christian witness. Only by understanding and engaging with the scholastic world of Rahner's theology and philosophy is it possible to grasp his full intent. This scholastic world is a world in which philosophy is theology, and theology is philosophy, their shared

substance of inquiry, only differentiated in the point of departure of their differing modes.

## Chapter VII: Critique from History

This final critique aims at the core of Kilby's project. It looks to interrogate the construction of Foundations and whether the place that Kilby would put it in Rahner's theology is a valid place. It uses a philological focus on the historical materials around the text to critique Kilby's position that the text should be read in preference to early work. In the previous critiques, I explored some of the underlying concerns with the substance of Kilby's *non-foundationalist* analysis of Rahner's theology. These underlying issues are not the only reason to be cautious about taking up Kilby's notions relating to the relationship between *Spirit in the World, Hearer of the Word* and *Foundations of Christian Faith*. Kilby asserts that there is a fundamental discontinuity in Rahner's concept of the *Vorgriff auff esse*, between *Spirit in the World* and *Foundations*. For Kilby this demonstrates Rahner's changing conceptualisation, from pre-apprehension to the encounter with the *supernatural existential*. There are several reasons of historical fact why there may be a difference in these concepts. So even if I have demonstrated that Kilby thoroughly exists within a category of scholars who take up Rahner's theology and thought, entirely for the opportune and personal reasons to justify their own position, a category that Otto Muck has described in the following way:

I have the impression that some people quote Rahner for opportunistic reasons in order to support their own theory, or in order to prove him wrong. What results are different groups being set up as either for or against Rahner based not on what he actually said or meant, but on what they think.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Turner and Batlogg, "Not Only for Opportunistic Reasons," 66.

It is important that to at least explore the substance of Kilby's argument, that is that Rahner's concepts of *Vorgriff auf esse* he expresses in *Spirit in the World* and the *supernatural existential* found in *Foundations of Christian Faith* are fundamentally incompatible. This idea Kilby expresses as a fundamental discontinuity within his thought. Let's also ignore the problematic confession that this lens is one that Rahner himself would never have seen in his own work.<sup>181</sup> And also ignore Kilby's admission that those who most immerse themselves in Rahner's writing would disagree with this position.

Scholars most immersed in Rahner's work, to be fair, generally avoid using language which suggests that Rahner built his theology upon his philosophy, since Rahner himself held that the relationship between theology and philosophy followed from the relationship of grace to nature, and he explicitly rejected the picture of grace laid on top of nature.<sup>182</sup>

While Kilby admits that scholars deeply immersed in Rahner's work do not frequently use the language of foundationalism, she still argues that they have created an atmosphere that makes a *foundationalist* or *quasi-foundationalist* conclusion within the broader community inevitable;

Many Rahner specialists, however, do either emphasize the continuity and unity of all his work, or insist that any real change is only a matter of shifting emphasis. Arguably in the wider scholarly community, the foundationalist or quasi-foundationalist understanding is the received view, and through the work of specialist scholarship does not directly support this, with its frequent emphasis on the systematic coherence of Rahner's work it may do little to directly undermine it.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Kilby makes particular reference to both Gadamer and Kuhn, but then expressly seeks to try and read Rahner divorced from his own tradition of interpretation and entirely compatible with a contemporary Anglo-American philosophical orientation. See Kilby, "Philosophy, Theology and Foundationalism."

<sup>182</sup> From the third footnote. See Kilby, 128.

<sup>183</sup> Kilby, 128.

As Kilby makes clear, she sees her project as being an inherent refutation of the governing consensus about the relationship of the works within the Rahner opus. Even the specialist scholars whom she seeks to try and not critique carry some portion of the blame. They according to Kilby done little to attempt to refute the erroneous *foundationalist* position that is the de-facto position.

### Maréchal's Influence on the Later Rahner

Even taken at face-value that Kilby's intention is to encourage those without immersion in Rahnerian theology a means by which the theology can possess a kind of utility, several matters of fact must still be addressed. As previous chapters have sought to demonstrate some of the issues with the premise of her project from philosophical and theological perspectives, this chapter assesses pure historical facts that raise issues and concerns with Kilby's hypothesis at least in so much as it relates to the interpretation of Rahner's later productive period. There are three crucial elements that need examination, Rahner's historical circumstances between the years 1966 and 1976, Rahner's changing work-flow after the Second Vatican Council and his increasing reliance upon the editorial process. These three elements are all heavily inter-related, but they can be assessed individually by clear reference to the historical record. To verify Kilby's hypothesis that Rahner's moves away from the transcendental method, it is necessary to ascertain when Rahner stopped utilising the general ontology and cosmology of the transcendental method. In 1964, in volume 10 of *Quaestiones Disputae: Visions and Prophecies*, Rahner cites Joseph Maréchal's reading of St Thomas as part of his arguments on the possibility of private direct

revelation. In the forward of Otto Muck's 1968 publication *The Transcendental Method*, Rahner makes the following remarks:

The transcendental method finds its deepest meaning in theology. We cannot avoid thinking, viz., doing philosophy, in theology. A theology, as *intellectus fidei*, must view its object through all the methods and within every horizon which it encounters in the intellectual activity of its time. The transcendental method can play an important role in such an approach to theology. This is especially true in "fundamental theology," which, to be contemporary, must not merely demonstrate the "objective" authenticity of the event of divine revelation, but must come to understand man, much more precisely and reflectively than before, as the hearer of a possible revelation.<sup>184</sup>

Even as late as 1968 (the year in which the project of *Foundations* was suspended due to Lehmann's elevation to a chair of Dogmatic Theology) Rahner was articulating a powerful defence of the Transcendental Method for theology. Furthermore, he was clearly relying upon the methods of transcendental theology to establish the teleological connection between the revelation and the hearer of the revelation. He further continued his argument by stressing the inter-connectivity between theology and philosophy, and how the success of the method of transcendental Thomism within philosophy, was now replicating into the practice of a transcendental theology.

These are merely glimpses, but I am convinced that because of the reception of the transcendental method in Catholic philosophy a similar turn is taking place in theology, so much so that it can no longer be called neo-scholastic in the historical sense.<sup>185</sup>

It is clear that Rahner maintains an affection and affinity for not just the transcendental method in theology, but the continuing interconnectivity and substance of theology

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<sup>184</sup> Karl Rahner, "Foreword," in *The Transcendental Method*, trans. William Seidensticker (New York: Herder And Herder, 1968), 10.

<sup>185</sup> Rahner, 10.



and philosophy. In an interview with German radio in 1981, when asked of whether a theologian and philosopher were engaged in the same subject matter, he opined.

For a Christian theology- at least according to a Catholic understanding- the philosopher can and even ought to speak of God; but then God is an object in this philosophical theology in a way different from that in theological theology when it speaks of God. Theological theology- if I may express it like that- speaks of God as of him whose word it has heard, whereas the philosophical theologian, an Aristotle if you will, speaks of God insofar as he is the ultimate primary ground of being in general, which the philosopher studies. Naturally the matter is somewhat more complicated in view of the fact that a really radical separation between pure theology and pure philosophy is presumably not at all possible.<sup>186</sup>

This is a position of the so-called later Rahner whom Kilby has argued is divorced in thought from philosophy so radically that his earlier work and thought of a philosophical nature is irrelevant to the later theological conclusions. I posit that if one wants to take seriously the assumptions of Kilby about Rahner's later theological work, one should first try and understand the history of the text itself. This is best done by a close study of *Foundations of Christian Faith* a text that Kilby has used as the exemplar of Rahner's "Later Theology" and the historical context of Rahner's life at the time of the text's composition.

### The substance of the Project: An Introduction to the Concept of Christianity

Albert Raffelt undertook his PhD with Karl Cardinal Lehmann and Karl Rahner and worked as one of Rahner's editors at Herder Publishing. He was integrally involved with the publication of *Foundations of Christian Faith*. In the 2000's he was

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<sup>186</sup> Rahner, "The Language of Science and the Language of Theology," 304.

interviewed about his recollections on the project that became *Foundations of Christian Faith*. When looking at the project in its entirety, he described it as follows:

To put it bluntly, the final Foundations of Christian Faith manuscript is a compilation of the Münster lectures because that was the last stage of the project. The Munich lectures contained more material and he continued to expand on those. Fr. Rahner had taught Christology in Münster. Those lectures were expanded upon and transcribed together with some missing parts from Rahner's other essays, as accurately as possible. Rahner practically dictated the small section on the Sacred Scriptures.<sup>187</sup>

Raffalet's account outlines the importance of unpacking Rahner's work between 1966 and 1972. The extensive generation period of the text and the changing topics upon which Rahner was lecturing makes it of crucial importance if one wants to explore whether Rahner's thought was substantively different in *Foundations of Christian Faith* than it was in *Hearer of the Word*. This is especially important if one is also aware of several facts in the historical record. In 1963, his publication *Nature and Grace: Dilemmas in the Modern Church* included a lengthy defence of the Maréchal's philosophical approach.<sup>188</sup> In 1968 he wrote the introduction to Otto Muck's *The Transcendental Method* in which he proclaimed that the transcendental turn had now been replicated from philosophy into theology.<sup>189</sup> This begs the question of when an intellectual turn in Rahner's thought away from the transcendental method could have been possible so as to create a younger and later Rahner? Further, it is necessary to consider the nature of the historical realities of

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<sup>187</sup> Barbara Turner and Andreas R. Batlogg, eds., "He Took His Students Seriously: In Conversation with Albert Raffelt - Franz Johna," in *Encounters with Karl Rahner: Remembrances of Rahner by Those Who Knew Him*, trans. Andreas R. Batlogg and Melvin Michalski (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009), 72.

<sup>188</sup> Karl Rahner, *Nature and Grace: Dilemmas in the Modern Church*, trans. Dinah Wharton (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964).

<sup>189</sup> Rahner, "Foreword."

Rahner's life after 1964. This raises the significance of his move to the University of Munich. Munich according to most accounts of those who knew Karl Rahner was a mistake. Hans Rotter SJ recounted:

Then he left Innsbruck. He told us that we had good teachers in dogmatic theology, and that he was not needed. That, of course was his explanation. Fr. Rahner wanted a change and I believe that he wanted it simply because he did not want to teach traditional Scholastic Theology. He was looking for a different challenge. It very much appealed to him to have the chance to succeed Romano Guardini in Munich, but unfortunately that proved, to a certain extent, to be a disappointment. He did not have the same measure of success that Guardini had when he offered a lecture series to all the members of the different faculties. Although he worked very hard and strained to make discussion lively and intellectual, it just was too theological. He also experienced some difficulties with the Theology Faculty, which did not grant him the right (although it had been previously agreed upon) to have doctoral students.<sup>190</sup>

At Munich, Rahner's career once returned towards the philosophical for the first time since he had avoided his fear of a chair in the history of philosophy in the 1930s. As Rotter acknowledges, Rahner was expected to replace a scholar who had been profoundly influential in German philosophy and theology, Romano Guardini. Guardini was fluent in contemporary literature and possessed a rhetorical flourish that even Rahner's close friends conceded that Rahner lacked.

Fr. Rahner was an exceptionally reflective and very pious man, but his knowledge of human nature was limited. That is my impression. His lectures were not as well received as were those of Romano Guardini. Guardini included in his lectures the works of Dostoevsky, Rilke, Holderlin and Pascal, authors whose ideas touched the normal student. Rahner basically taught "a diluted" Dogmatic Theology. At the time the idea for a text, "An Introduction to the Idea of

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<sup>190</sup> Barbara Turner and Andreas R. Batlogg, eds., "Genius but Also Human: In Conversation with Hans Rotter, SJ," in *Encounters with Karl Rahner: Remembrances of Rahner by Those Who Knew Him*, trans. Andreas R. Batlogg and Melvin Michalski (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009), 226.

Christianity,” came to him which later became *Foundations of Christian Faith*, (1976).<sup>191</sup>

The apparent inspiration behind the creation of these lectures, on the philosophical justification of Christianity, was the need to make it both topical enough to replace Guardini’s lectures, while also being sufficient in content. When they first went to Münster, Karl Lehmann his assistant at the time had advised:<sup>192</sup>

We went to Münster in 1967 and the question was what he was going to teach. I recommended to him that he should focus on the relationship between the general and the particular in salvation history, the categorical and the transcendental; to at least deal with the problem if not philosophically, then theologically.<sup>193</sup>

The view that Rahner needed to better focus on the exploration of the relationship between the general and the particular does account for some of the shifts in Rahner’s thought. These were terms he had used from the very beginning, notably in *Hearer of the Word*, and the objective need to refine how the categorical relates to the transcendental had always been there. That said, after the Second Vatican Council, Rahner was increasingly unconcerned with the philosophical concerns. For Rahner, working on philosophical foundations was a waste of time when he had this new and free theology to explore and play with.

It was now 1967-68 a very controversial time. Having a sharp intuitive sense, it became clear to Rahner that he should not remain on the Philosophy faculty in Munich offering courses to students from all fields of study. He did not want to waste time; he wanted to do theology in the midst of the Church and not sit on the sidelines in

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<sup>191</sup> Barbara Turner and Andreas R. Batlogg, eds., “Not a Speculative Academic Theologian: In Conversation with Adolf Darlap,” in *Encounters with Karl Rahner: Remembrances of Rahner by Those Who Knew Him.*, trans. Andreas R. Batlogg and Melvin Michalski (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009), 100–101.

<sup>192</sup> Later Karl Cardinal Lehmann and long-time head of the German Bishops conference.

<sup>193</sup> Turner and Batlogg, “He Was Simply Unique,” 102.

the Romano Guardini chair in philosophy. So he made the decision to switch to theology and accept the call to Münster.<sup>194</sup>

This influence is demonstrated in Rahner's shifting focus towards the locus of eschatology and Christology. More so, Lehmann, one of Rahner's most able assistants, further observed that the move to Münster from Munich also involved some measure of response to Metz's critique that Rahner's foundation was too individualistic.

Also, Metz, whom Rahner considered his most brilliant student, lived close to Münster. Rahner, often in a quiet and subtle way, did revise his foundational thought, albeit within his basic scheme. The guidelines did not fundamentally change, but it is clear that, for example, from 1966-67 on, he tried to respond to Metz and show that his starting point did not deserve Metz's criticism of being too individualistic.<sup>195</sup>

This account of Rahner seeking to respond to Metz's critique is something that must be kept in mind when considering any analysis of a theological shift in Rahner's theology as he grows older. Lehmann's recollection is that Rahner was being challenged by one of his students, that his foundations did not account for the social dimension of the relationship with Christ. By attempting to make his theology read more open to the Church as a means to construct society, Rahner then opens his theology to a misapplication, as a post-modern theology in which the Church itself is entirely constructed by society.

### Nature of Collaboration and its Context

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<sup>194</sup> Turner and Batlogg, 112.

<sup>195</sup> Turner and Batlogg, 113.

Rahner's circumstances at Münster must also be considered. It was at Münster, in Rahner's own lectures that the first visceral split in the interpretation of Rahner materialised. This rupture was so visible, that Metz when interviewed about his experiences with Rahner, remarked on it.

During his time in Münster we worked together closely, but in the seminars, the theological-academic conflicts increased. There was a group those "true to Rahner" people like Karl Lehmann, who was an assistant to Rahner, and there were "my people," representatives of Political Theology.<sup>196</sup>

Rahner was not seeking to shift his theological foundations, but, rather seeking to maintain harmony with his favourite student. The extent to which this approach led to shifts or changes in his theology must be considered if one attempts to demonstrate any repudiation of his earlier work. Among the interviews that Batlogg presented in *Encounters with Rahner*, only Lehmann's revealed any possible shift in his thought. Most other interviews revealed that rather than concede ground, Rahner would have fought tenaciously to demonstrate that his position was always consistent with where he had started.<sup>197</sup> As Franz Cardinal Koenig relays, Rahner always possessed the underlying fear:

He was afraid of being thought of as not as orthodox as he really was. He always wanted to remain faithful to the Church.<sup>198</sup>

A further consideration is the environment that compelled Rahner to write of *Foundations*. Two of Rahner's major interlocutors at Herder Publishing for the last

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<sup>196</sup> Turner and Batlogg, "Intellectual Passion and Spiritual Courage," 114.

<sup>197</sup> Batlogg, Michalski, and Turner, *Encounters with Karl Rahner*.

<sup>198</sup> Barbara Turner and Andreas R. Batlogg, eds., "My Conciliar Theologian: In Conversation with Franz Cardinal Konig, Vienna," in *Encounters with Karl Rahner: Remembrances of Rahner by Those Who Knew Him.*, trans. Andreas R. Batlogg and Melvin Michalski (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009), 54.

twenty years of his life illustrate both the later Rahner's work habits and how these facilitate his writing. An interesting reflection comes from Franz Johna:

It is important to distinguish between scholarly theological reflection and religious existential meditation. He possessed a special gift which gave him the ability to articulate in both genres, and a way of formulating ideas that did not fear to challenging the reader. In the last twenty years of his life he received pressure from many sides to write more books and articles and he seldom found that he could refuse.<sup>199</sup>

Johna acknowledges one of the things which it is quite easy to forget about Karl Rahner, that as an individual he was deeply reserved. This reserve meant that he often would accept a request when he quite possibly should not have. There are anecdotes relating to his personal life fully support the hypothesis that Rahner the man, was not a towering overwhelming intellect, but was, to use the words of Baptist-Metz, "too much of a monk."<sup>200</sup> This inability to say no to requests upon his time led to further consequences. Johna makes this reality clear:

So he paid less and less attention to the editing and his written work became more complicated and difficult to understand. I have already mentioned how in his last years he, after much thought and concentration, would dictate a manuscript. The final, formal, and reader-friendly version Fr. Rahner gladly left to others to prepare.<sup>201</sup>

What this evidence suggests is that textually, the growing divergences between earlier and later theological positions can be explained by the increasing removal of Rahner from his major projects. Indeed, *Foundations* is a curious example of this. In the first

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<sup>199</sup> Barbara Turner and Andreas R. Batlogg, eds., "Only the Little Sister with Whom One Could Not Carry on an Intelligent Conversation: In Conversation with Elisabeth Cremer and Franz Johna," in *Encounters with Karl Rahner: Remembrances of Rahner by Those Who Knew Him.*, trans. Andreas R. Batlogg and Melvin Michalski (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009), 247.

<sup>200</sup> in Turner and Batlogg, "Intellectual Passion and Spiritual Courage," 142.

<sup>201</sup> Turner and Batlogg, "Only the Little Sister with Whom One Could Not Carry on an Intelligent Conversation," 247.

place, according to Wolfgang Seibel SJ, a Jesuit journalist who had edited many of Rahner's contributions to *Stimmen der Zeit*, it was only created at the insistence of Herder Publishing and Rahner was uncomfortable working with its format.

As a rule, Fr. Rahner wrote mostly essays and very few books. *Foundations of Christian Faith* was written under pressure from the Herder Publishing Company. He was put up in a hotel room in Freiburg and a secretary of the publishing house took his dictation.<sup>202</sup>

Further, this aspect of the relationship with Herder warrants some deeper scrutiny.

Alfons Klein the Jesuit who was Rahner's rector in the 1970s communicates a disturbing account that the Herder publishing company was exploiting Rahner.

Because it wanted to make money! The publishers knew that anything new by Rahner would be sold even before it was written. Rahner always lived with this pressure. That's the burden he was under when he cried out: "I am only human. I can't always produce." Unhappy and irritated he said: "I do not write because I want to write or because I have something that I want to say. I write because this stupid Herder demands that I deliver something that it can publish and sell."<sup>203</sup>

To sum up, so far, *Foundations* was directly solicited from Rahner during a period of his life during which he did not pay particular attention to either his editing or the clarity of his expression. Further, it was in a format that was not conducive to Rahner presenting his ideas. Finally, Johna indicates that it was significantly a work of collaboration:

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<sup>202</sup> Barbara Turner and Andreas R. Batlogg, eds., "An Incredible Facility for Language: In Conversation with Wolfgang Seibel, SJ," in *Encounters with Karl Rahner: Remembrances of Rahner by Those Who Knew Him.*, trans. Andreas R. Batlogg and Melvin Michalski (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009), 93.

<sup>203</sup> Barbara Turner and Andreas R. Batlogg, eds., "A True Jesuit: In Conversations with Fr. Alfons Klein, SJ, Munich," in *Encounters with Karl Rahner: Remembrances of Rahner by Those Who Knew Him.*, trans. Andreas R. Batlogg and Melvin Michalski (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009), 217.



The Foundations of Christian Faith was a real problem. Fr. Rahner made several attempts at it, but without success at first. He had various competent people assist him with the preparation of the manuscript.<sup>204</sup>

And this “collaboration” was suspiciously deep. Karl Cardinal Lehmann, Rahner’s assistant while he was teaching at Munich, played a very deep role in his compositions during this time. As Albert Raffelt another editor at Herder Publishing recounts.

My recollection is that Karl Lehmann would be the first person to examine the initial preparatory drafts. Fr. Rahner’s approach consisted of his providing the fundamental ideas and Lehmann doing the exegesis and everything else. That, of course, was somewhat difficult, but in many cases Lehmann did exactly that.<sup>205</sup>

Raffelt and Johna’s accounts create an impression that the material Rahner worked on after the Second Vatican Council was increasingly the product of other parties acting in collaboration with him. As Karl Neumann SJ recounts when asked if Rahner decided how their collaboration would work.

No, I had, repeatedly, to tell him that we had to work on some texts together and that I couldn’t work on all the texts alone. But, he was always on the go – lecture trips mostly – and I had to accomplish my work relatively independently. I tried again to pin him down. I had, although it was not originally planned, to edit volume 12 of *Schriften zur Theologie* (Theological Investigations, vol. 21). He had to be there to answer questions, because it involved older texts and I needed him there to provide that information.<sup>206</sup>

Neumann who worked as Rahner’s assistant from 1971-1973 was also a party to the creation of *Foundations*, he recalled:

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<sup>204</sup> Turner and Batlogg, “He Took His Students Seriously,” 71.

<sup>205</sup> Turner and Batlogg, 71.

<sup>206</sup> Turner and Batlogg, 154.

I had to collect the material for Foundations of Christian Faith which was in eight large three ring binders full of documentation. I had begun to work on a publishable version, but my two years had come to an end.<sup>207</sup>

I can be said that many minds contributed to the product that was finally published as *Foundations of Christian Faith*, and the extent to which these additional minds contributed to the content is worthy of scrutiny.

Lehmann was the intended assistant for the project. According to Raffelt, this was a consequence of several earlier collaborations that had Lehmann doing a substantial portion of the total work.

For example, the article “Jesus Christ” in *Sacramentum Mundi* is primarily Lehmann’s work. Lehmann also contributed greatly to *Mysterium Salutis*. The way they worked was that Rahner would initially prepare the treatise and Lehmann would add the historical research. Rahner, probably, thought that this would work for *Foundations of Christian Faith* as well.<sup>208</sup>

Consequently, it is necessary to consider Lehmann’s contributions to the content of *Foundations*. If Lehmann prepared the research and was engaged significantly in the formation of the context of the argument of *Foundations*, would he not also to some extent have conditioned the findings? Raffelt certainly believes that Lehmann’s contributions were significant. Without Lehmann according to Raffelt, *Foundations* as a project would be impossible.

Furthermore, he was more at home with exegesis than Fr. Rahner. Then in 1968, Lehmann received a call to be Professor of Dogmatic

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<sup>207</sup> Turner and Batlogg, 154–55.

<sup>208</sup> Turner and Batlogg, 71.

Theology in Mainz, so the project *Foundations of Christian Faith* actually died at that time.<sup>209</sup>

Consider the implications of this point. In 1968, when Lehmann was called to the chair of Dogmatic Theology in Mainz, the project called *Foundations* died.

## The Significance of Editors

Johna adds:

I would like to add something, speaking from the perspective of the publishing house. We urged Fr. Rahner to create a large, comprehensive foundational work which would be seen as the crown of his theology and so to complete the *Foundations of Christian Faith*. We were concerned that it proceed on track so that it would actually come to publication. Fr. Rahner was worried about this. He wanted to write something, but knew that he could not do it alone.<sup>210</sup>

This reveals the marketing idea behind *Foundations*. Johna frankly admits that it was Herder who had wanted a systematic foundation stone of Rahner's theology. The question then becomes the extent to which the publisher's desire for a text that would be a "comprehensive foundational work" to act as the "crown of his theology" influenced the production of the work. Considering that Herder also engaged in a deeply aggressive editing practice. Johna further asserts that the transformation of the text came in the last of the three phases of the production process.

The last phase of the preparation for the publication was actually the most fruitful when Albert Raffelt received the manuscript. We had reserved a room for Fr. Rahner in the Karlshotel in Freiburg, which was located not far from the publishing house, and we engaged the services of a secretary, Ms Schwab, who met with Fr. Rahner daily and to whom he dictated the missing parts. Fr. Rahner very much appreciated when he could be alone and work. It was important for

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<sup>209</sup> Turner and Batlogg, 71.

<sup>210</sup> Turner and Batlogg, 72.

him to be able to see that progress was being made and that the project was moving forward. He operated on a very strict work schedule.<sup>211</sup>

As Johna's account reveals, this last phase of production involved a significant contribution between Herder and Rahner. Raffelt by this point had the manuscript in his hand, and Herder determined the need to isolate Rahner to facilitate the completion of the entire text. This was done over the course of a matter of weeks, and on the completion of this phase, production became the responsibility of Raffelt.

Fr. Rahner examined all the material and made some corrections. Ms Schwab retyped whatever was illegible. When it was finished I was given the draft. At first, I was very cautious. Franz Johna and Gerbert Brunner also went over the manuscript and agreed that I had to be more aggressive in the editing. I had to get accustomed to doing that, to deleting the texts of Karl Rahner. The main thing was to have a text that flowed smoothly.<sup>212</sup>

The primary focus of Raffelt's editing in his account was to correct the stylistic quirks that the expedited and divided production process had generated. With the encouragement of his fellow editors, he further comments:

That, of course, changed the style; some sentences needed to be shortened, some conclusions needed to be formulated differently and above all put into subsections. Fr Rahner then read everything one more time.<sup>213</sup>

Raffelt's fixation on correcting the issues with prose does bear some need for mediation. While editing typically aims towards making the meaning of a text clearer, the extent to which one can render a text clearer is determined by the facility of the

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<sup>211</sup> Turner and Batlogg, 72.

<sup>212</sup> Turner and Batlogg, 72.

<sup>213</sup> Turner and Batlogg, 72.

editor. Raffelt had a particular focus on the works of Maurice Blondel, a philosopher for whom Karl Rahner freely admitted to having little time or concern.<sup>214</sup>

It can be concluded that both the production and editorial phases of *Foundations of Christian Faith* consist of events that require deeper scrutiny before they can be regarded as the determinant for the meaning of the Rahnerian project. The consequence of this conclusion is particularly problematic for Kilby's hypothesis. When Kilby asserts that there is a discontinuity in Rahner's theological notions, in which his "latter theology" comes to depart from the definitions of his earlier work, she is implicitly making a judgement as to why this change occurs, and which portion of the opus we should regard as authoritative. As the analysis has shown; *Foundations*; the text that Kilby claims exemplifies Rahner's later theology, has a particularly troubled history and provenance. Considering the radical editing process, the extended and disjointed development cycle, and the extensive contributions of Rahner's assistants, it seems to us to be problematic to call the text the systematic crown of Rahner's theological project. Therefore, when Kilby stresses the discontinuity between *Foundations of Christian Faith* and *Hearer of the Word*, one is left asking the question, in what world would a text with such a troubled history be expected to share anything more than a family resemblance with a work written previously? Indeed, I posit, that if Rahner had written a major theological work after 1976, it would have shown discontinuities with *Foundations* as well.

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<sup>214</sup> See Raffelt's interview as to why he went to Mainz with Lehmann rather than to Münster with Rahner as a PhD student. However, there is some need to critique this notion, especially given the extent to which Rahner was dependent on the works of Maréchal to establish his epistemology, and Maréchal's own dependence on Blondel. Further, Blondel's similarities to Fichte and Hegel also should encourage some reconsideration of this point.

## Section IV: A Solution

### Chapter VIII: Towards “conventions” of theological meanings and language

The previous chapters have explored in some detail several concerns inherent to Kilby’s *non-foundationalism*. I need to stress, however, that I am not entirely dismissive of Kilby’s project. Indeed, like Masson, I appreciate the very pressing need for a means to make Rahner’s theology accessible for the new generations of theologians and theology students.<sup>215</sup> However, as the preceding chapters have attempted to demonstrate, the textualist reading of Rahner possesses several catastrophic flaws. By failing to apprehend the fundamental unity of philosophy and theology in Rahner’s cosmology, this reading incorrectly attempts to favour one over the other. The large-scale ignorance on the part of the English language scholarship to the actual substance of Rahner’s pre-war theological activities further explicates this problem by masking the themes of his earlier work. This increases the difficulty in observing continuity of thought, and/or expression. Finally, the ignorance of the historical act of the construction of each of the utterances in Rahner’s opus means that one can read meanings into individual works on almost specious grounds. It is clear in the light of the evidence presented in this thesis that there is a pressing need for a Rahnerian *Ressourcement*; a significant textual study of the original works of Karl Rahner and of the context from which Rahner wrote each text. This return to the sources would, however, need a proper and dedicated methodology that would enable a proper accounting of the subject matter.

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<sup>215</sup> Masson, “Interpreting Rahner’s Metaphoric Logic,” 386.

I suggest that the methodology deployed to demonstrate the structural insufficiencies in textual approaches to Rahner's theology could similarly be used to generate a new set of interpretations for the key point of his theological development. By isolating, for instance, three major examples of the theological dialogue that Rahner was engaging in, one would have enough evidence to tentatively attempt to chart his theological development. To use a brief example, if one were to choose as the first point of inquiry his interaction with the Neo-Thomists in *Spirit in the World*, his intervention into the nature and grace debates around *Humani Generis*, and finally his debates with Hans Kung over change in the Church, one would have three artificial points, between which we could explore the nature of the change in his theology. By using these three points as case studies, and engaging them comparatively, one would avoid the risk of trying to derive a synthesis of his entire theology.

These entirely artificial points would provide a framework to seek to apprehend Rahner's thought at a particular moment. By apprehending Rahner's thought at multiple points, like plotting coordinates in a graph, it should be possible to apprehend the guiding principles of Rahner's theological mentality and consequently, come to some measure of understanding of what Rahner himself believed himself to be doing in each communicative act of his theology. One could describe this as attempting to present a dynamic and integrated view of Rahner's theological dialectic, rather than the atomistic and disintegrated approach that the *nonfoundationalist* method suggests.

Skinner's objections to the practices of the history of ideas was not an entirely negative project. The goal was not to demonstrate the impossibility or impracticality of any particular analysis or mode of analysis but rather to first demonstrate what had become

errant and then attempt to propose a new way forwards which could be free from the flaws of the original methodology. Similarly, I propose that by understanding how Skinner and his contemporaries in the Cambridge School developed their response to the challenges of intellectual history, one likewise, can provide a new set of precepts, that can be used to engage with Rahner's opus and to avoid the problems that have plagued *foundationalist* and *non-foundationalist* readings alike.

The origins of the Cambridge School are in the linguistic turn of the 1940s and 1950s. This academic shift towards the importance of language was led by several notable philosophers, but of particular relevance to us was the Oxford philosopher J.L. Austin. Austin's project inverted the project of linguistic philosophy. Rather than worrying about the formal rules of how to use language, it instead sought to investigate how we use our language, and from the observation of how we use language to construct the rules that govern it. In particular, Austin observed that language was not as the logical-positivists had asserted, just the descriptor of empirical acts, but rather, there existed an entire category of language that in its utterance was the fulfilment of a requirement of an act in of itself.<sup>216</sup> These *performative acts* stand as a special theory to a general theory of *speech acts*.<sup>217</sup> All acts of speech were for Austin *speech acts*. A speech act is comprised of an illocutionary action, a locutionary action, and these two effects taken together as being either constative or performative in its substance. *Performatives* also contain a third kind of act according to Austin, the perlocutionary

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<sup>216</sup> Austin calls these acts *performatives*. These are actions of speech of which it can be said that they are doing something, rather than describing or informing you of something. J. L. Austin and M. Sbisà, *How to Do Things with Words* (Harvard University Press, 1975), 6. The alternative to the *performative* was the *constative*. The *constative* is the traditional idea of a speech act that describes truth or false declarations.

<sup>217</sup> Austin and Sbisà, 147.



act.<sup>218</sup> Quentin Skinner in his adaption of speech acts theory to the explanation of political utterance further refined these definitions. As Skinner puts it, “To utter any serious utterance is both to say something and do something.”<sup>219</sup> From Skinner’s perspective, all *speech acts* are performative in nature. It is this extension that makes Austin’s theory of speech acts of relevance to the prospect of revitalising the study of Rahnerian theology. With Skinner’s extension of Austin’s *performatives* to include all actions of speech, it can be reliably suggested that the act of writing a particular theological response can be engaged with the three primary acts that comprise the *speech act* in its totality.<sup>220</sup> The locutionary act, the illocutionary act, and the perlocutionary act.

#### The Locutionary Act:<sup>221</sup>

The locutionary act or locution is the physical action of the speech act. In our example, the locutionary act would be the particular theological text, the words that are on the page.

#### The Illocutionary Act:<sup>222</sup>

The illocutionary act, or illocution, or illocutionary force, is the intended force that the particular act of writing the theological treatise desires to cause. When we consider the text *Hearer of the Word* the illocution of this text can be the provision of a general ontology of human historicity as transcendence.

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<sup>218</sup> Austin and Sbisà, 101.

<sup>219</sup> Quentin Skinner, “On Performing and Explaining Linguistic Actions,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 21, no. 82 (1971): 1, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2217566>.

<sup>220</sup> Austin calls the total situation in which the utterance is issued the “total speech-act”. Arguably, the constituent parts of locution, illocution and perlocution can be said together to be the totality of the speech act as they comprise the act in itself, the intention of the act, and the comprehension of the act. Austin and Sbisà, *How to Do Things with Words*, 52.

<sup>221</sup> Austin gives an example of the locution as being “he said to me, ‘You can’t do that’”. Austin and Sbisà, 102.

<sup>222</sup> Austin gives an example of the illocution related to the utterance of ‘You can’t do that’ as being “he protested against me doing it.” Austin and Sbisà, 102.

The Perlocutionary Act:<sup>223</sup>

The Perlocutionary act, or the perlocution, or the perlocutionary effect. This can in our argument be the consequence of the writing of a, particularly theological text. When Joseph Ratzinger made his comment about the consequence of *Foundations of Christian Faith*, that it would outlast much of modern theology, he was commenting on the particular perlocutionary effect that the text had on him.<sup>224</sup> The fact that this particular perlocution can be understood to be well outside of the intended force that the text was supposed to achieve according to Rahner is neither here nor there. A perlocution is what occurred consequent to a text, irrespective of the necessary illocution that motivated or precipitated the act of speech.

Skinner's application of speech act theory required a means by which it could be possible to determine a possible intended illocution. Skinner's answer came from the works of a colleague of Austin's; the philosopher Ludwig von Wittgenstein.

Congruent to Austin's work on the nature of the action of speech, Wittgenstein postulated on the nature of linguistic coherence and the requirement of patterns for the ability to understand language. In *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein postulates the notion of the language game.<sup>225</sup> This idea is that inherently we understand meanings of words not because of any meaning that is intrinsic to the word, but rather because the word has a meaning relative to the structure in which it is presented to us.<sup>226</sup> Thus, we understand words not because of words, but because they are presented to us in sentences that can convey a particular set of relationships between concepts.

Wittgenstein further explores how this relationship of meanings can transform our

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<sup>223</sup> Austin Gives an example of the perlocution related to the utterance of 'You can't do that' as being "He stopped me, he brought me to my senses" or alternatively, "he annoyed me". This demonstrates that the perlocution is not reliant upon the individual who commits the *speech act* but instead upon the subject of the action. Austin and Sbisà, 102.

<sup>224</sup> Kerr, *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians*, 103.

<sup>225</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2009).

<sup>226</sup> Wittgenstein's major example of this is whether words or a consistent use of the same signs or sounds is necessary for language.

ability to understand meaning itself. A further example of this is given by Wittgenstein's invocation of the old notion that, "A French politician once wrote that it was a peculiarity of the French language that its words occur in the order in which one thinks them."<sup>227</sup> This stands in obvious contrast to the learned experience of anyone whose birth tongue is English, and they might happen to know French. We can further exemplify this example by the observations on a deaf-mute, whom in his early youth before he learned to speak had thoughts about God and the world. The mute suggested that in the years before he learned to write, he asked himself the question of how the world came into being. Of this Wittgenstein has his doubts, suggesting that one would like to know if that was the correct translation of the wordless thoughts and that the very fact that one would be inclined to ask the question suggests that an individual would be more inclined to believe a deaf-mute would be mistaken on their thoughts before they had a language. As Wittgenstein concludes:

These recollections are a strange memory phenomenon – and I don't  
what conclusions one can draw from them about the narrator's  
past!<sup>228</sup>

Wittgenstein further elaborates why this is strange by his observation that memory rather than a passive reception, is an active activity:

The words with which I express my memory are my memory  
reaction.<sup>229</sup>

These strange phenomena, in which we begin to see the extent to which the rules that govern the sharing of language, govern not just the words we speak but the

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<sup>227</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 115.

<sup>228</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, 116.

<sup>229</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, 173.

appropriateness of how and when to speak them reflects the true contribution of Wittgenstein to our understanding of communicative actions.

Quentin Skinner takes these two divergent strands of thought to elucidate a theory of convention that can be utilised to recover not just what a particular author was saying in a particular work, but what it is possible to rightly assert that that author could be interpreted as having intended to have meant. This latter notion was the most substantive conclusion of Skinner's method and the one which is most relevant to proposing a new way forward's for the understanding of the Rahner's opus. By binding each work to what it is conceivable he could have intended to have meant at the time of the work's composition, the interpretation of Rahner is restricted to ideas and notions that have a grounding in the reality of his theological thought. Or to use the language of Austin and Skinner, if we look to the *conventions* that Rahner would have been operating within at the time of the particular *locution*, we can attempt to recover the intended *illocution* that Rahner would have wanted to be his recipient's *perlocution*. This prevents us falling into the particularly egregious practice of making Rahner's theology the vehicle of our particular ideological or theological agenda, and as a consequence prevents the misuse and abuse of the "greatest theologian of the twentieth century."

Skinner's innovation was that of the understanding the significance of *conventions* for understanding the possible *illocution*. For Skinner, it is a given fact that no author would publish a work without possessing the underlying intention for us to understand him

The second primary contributor to the Cambridge School alongside Skinner was J. G. A. Pocock.<sup>230</sup> Pocock's work on *tradition* promises us a means to ensure the continuity of our thought with respect to our origins. Pocock has spent much of his later career exploring the extent to which the history of political thought has become a praxis of political thought in its own right.<sup>231</sup> The expansive nature of Pocock's work in relation to how the study of the history of political thought can contribute to political thought is indicative that a similar turn to the study of the history of theological thought would be a fruitful investment for a deepening theology.

If the Cambridge school has provided a mechanism by which we can attempt to recover the intended *illocution* of a particular text in relation to the particular dialogue the text could be seen as contributing to, how can we make these insights communicable in an effective and relevant manner for both theologians with a limited amount of time able to be invested in the study of Rahner's thought, and for students of theology who lack the comprehensive understanding of scholasticism? I posit that an integration of the interpretative priority of the *Historie de Mentalities* might provide a solution.

Alongside the Cambridge School's work, there was a similar body of work done by French scholars connected with the longstanding journal *Annales*. This work culminated in an approach to historical scholarship known as the *Historie de Mentalities*, which had the distinction of being extraordinarily concerned with what

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<sup>230</sup> Mark Bevir has attempted to demonstrate that it is entirely possible for an actor to act with the deliberate intention to be incomprehensible with that intention being recoverable. However, I would suggest that Bevir's contention only holds in so much as you treat Skinner's assumption outside of the context of an academic or philosophical writing context, and hence it is irrelevant. What serious theologian or philosopher would deliberate issue an utterance with the intention to be misunderstood? See Mark Bevir, *The Logic of the History of Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>231</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, "Historiography as a Form of Political Thought," *History of European Ideas* 37, no. 1 (March 1, 2011): 1–6, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.histeuroideas.2010.09.002>.

has been called micro-histories. These micro-histories, such as Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms* and Darnton's *The Great Cat Massacre* rest upon the idea that by grasping the reasonableness of the subject's world when you look at them, you can grasp an insight into their world, to their time, to the conventions and expectations that make their positions reasonable. By appreciating that it is a rare individual who would think their position to be irrational or even wrong, this makes the interpretation rest upon the extent to which you can grasp the cosmos that the individual was living in.

I would suggest that the current state of the English language theological scholarship is such that particular theologians have ceased to seek to understand the reasonableness of the propositions of Rahner's theology. That these theologians have taken as default a textualist interpretation to the Rahner opus and ignored the historical dialogic in which Rahner's theological insight was engaged. Even in *foundationalist* interpretations, certain theologians have made significant errors in their understanding of not just the historical reality of the construction of the individual texts within the Rahnerian opus, but have at times lost appreciation for the extent to which Rahner himself felt comfortably wedded to the scholastic cosmology which formed him. There are of course several reasons for this. Kilby has rightly elucidated a major one. That scholars educated in the Anglo-American tradition are likely to be uncomfortable with the philosophical system to which Rahner's thought was wedded.<sup>232</sup> But this failure to apprehend the correct context in which to situate Rahner's thought hardly seems worth accepting the flaws that are intrinsic to the textualist approaches that Kilby implicitly argues for. I argue that a more valuable project is to try to make possible that the average theologian or student of theology may grasp at least a passing understanding

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<sup>232</sup> Kilby, "Philosophy, Theology and Foundationalism," 130.

of the scholastic ontology, epistemology and cosmology. By focusing on an approach to the presentation of Rahner's theology as I have outlined above, it should be a conceivable task to enable anyone with a passing interest to at least begin to see the world the way that Rahner himself could conceivably be believed to have seen it. This would reap significant benefits in understanding the fraught and divergent tapestry of twentieth-century theology.

Kilby is right that total immersion in Rahner's work is a daunting prospect for a theologian with only a passing interest.<sup>233</sup> While there is an almost instinctive response that this argument is indicative of intellectual laziness, upon reflection, the point must be conceded. That said, I have also gone to some length to show how her solution to the problem, the transposing of Rahner's late period theology into a philosophically agnostic *textualism* possesses its own flaws and systematic problems. In response to the problem Kilby has identified, I would suggest that what is necessary is another look at the presentation of Rahner's theology. That currently much of the theological insight is bound in opaque literature that by virtue of its expansive nature and the publishing practices of Herder is next to impossible to properly apprehend. What is required is an attempt to contextualise a reasonable substance of the literature for the purposes of analysis. By breaking many of the constructed books of essays into a format with a proper contextual exposition on what theological question or pastoral query Rahner himself was responding to, it is possible to recover the utility of Rahner the "practical" theologian. Furthermore, the analysis of different pieces articulating responses on the same theme, it should also be possible to explore the nature of Rahner's theological thought on the theme.

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<sup>233</sup> Kilby, *Karl Rahner*, 1.

The recovery of Rahner as a “practical” theologian would also have the added benefit of helping to break Rahner free of the insufficient narrative that presents him as the progressive counterpart to the conservative Hans Urs Von Balthasar.<sup>234</sup> It is clear that a return to Rahner’s theological opus with the intent of apprehending the theological dialogue would furnish new insights into the nature of the powerful disagreements that divided the great names of twentieth-century Catholic theology. Consequent to such insights might be an explanation for why we are experiencing the nascent formation of two schools of theology, with rival interpretations of the legacy of the Second Vatican Council, and the powerful mouthpiece of an academic journal each.<sup>235</sup>

To briefly summarise then the benefits of a new critical engagement with Rahner’s theological corpus I will return to four key elements. First by taking up Skinner’s understanding of the nature of texts as being constituent parts of an ongoing dialogue, the discontinuities and confusions about the theological terminology of Rahner dissolve. Secondly, by exploring the broader dialogue in which Rahner was deploying his terminology a detailed insight into what it was that Rahner himself thought about particular theological questions and issues can be grasped. Thirdly, by adopting the historiographical agenda of micro-history and presenting the fruits of an intellectual history of Rahner’s theology in highly focused and deeply contextualised case studies. This should make it possible for a theologian or a student with limited time or interest in Rahner to achieve a grasping of his thought without the flaws of a textualist methodology. Finally, by engaging with the dialogic nature of texts the modernist

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<sup>234</sup> Kerr, *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians*, 104.

<sup>235</sup> Tracey Rowland has written on these rival approaches, most recently in her book, Tracey Rowland, *Catholic Theology, Doing Theology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).



tendency to argue that context is the entirety of substance is avoided. The context of this proposed endeavour to recover the Rahnerian project is not what determines the meaning of a particular text, but rather, it elucidates what Rahner himself was seeking to react against. This position, while historicist certainly, does not possess the deterministic tendency which has been rightfully criticised as being harmful to the idea of human freedom. By grounding the interpretation of Rahner in the substance of the thesis to which he was proposing an antithesis, we also provide the proper opportunity for us as the theologian and not merely the historian to propose a synthesis that in its unity would represent a faithful engagement with the theology that has come before us.

## Conclusion: What next?

As I have endeavoured to demonstrate, there is a pressing need for a reappraisal of the historical context of Karl Rahner's theological dialogue. I have briefly explored two primary areas of inquiry, how the history of ideas can contribute to the understanding of theology's history, and how in particular, the intrinsic flaws that the turn to textualism in the scholarship around Karl Rahner's theology prevents the apprehension of Rahner's own thought. As exemplified in my three-fold critique of Karen Kilby's *non-foundationalist* reading, the project of recovering the development in Rahner's thought needs a substantial immersion not just in Rahner's work, but in the surrounding historical dialectic to which Rahner is responding. When Rahner is working on his doctrine of anonymous Christianity we need to be aware that he is responding to pastoral questions posed to him. By engaging with those questions, we find the proper dialectical key to reveal the thesis and antithesis which Rahner's synthesis was in response to. This ensures we have the proper context in which the individual theological doctrine was entirely reasonable.

At the core, Skinner's precepts of reading texts, (the assumptions we must make to be both fair and just to our subject) provides theology with the proper means to comprehend what a theologian is attempting to achieve. Too often, scholars derail their theological narrative by thinking they are correct and consequently by seeing the alternative theologian as being engaged in an unreasonable project. By appreciating the phenomena to which the theological utterance is a response grasp the dialogue that all theological utterances are a contribution to. In this way, the study of the dialogue

becomes part of a contribution to the dialogue, as we inevitably must engage with the dialogue to be able to apprehend it.

What has become clear is that a significant re-engagement with Rahner's thought is necessary if we are to properly utilise the fruits of his theological work. This work would require not just a critical understanding of the Rahnerian opus, but also a proper and detailed engagement with twentieth-century theology that properly accounts for the ongoing dialogue between the major philosophical and theological innovations that occur after the First World War. This project would require an immersion in the philosophical and theological context that gave rise to the potent forces that culminated in the Second Vatican Council, and as a result, would equally stand not just as a theological project, but a significant project of historical significance. As both de-Lubac and Rahner opined, the substance of theology relies deeply upon the facts of its history, and we need to explicate this intrinsic relationship to enable a proper accounting for either of them.

Even more important than a general re-engagement with the Rahnerian opus is the work done to properly locate the dialogic process of Rahner's theology. It is clearly apparent that the dominating narratives of a theology deeply impregnated by a philosophical formation are an inadequate point of departure for any study of Rahner's theology. This relationship is far more intrinsically entwined than many are willing to admit. It is necessary to first come to terms with the scholastic nature of this great enemy of Neo-Scholasticism if we are to appreciate completely his critique.

It is my opinion that the dominating interpretive hermeneutics of Karl Rahner's work in the English language are dangerously wanting for the task of explaining his theology to a new generation of theologians. The reasons I have outlined merely demonstrate how the failure to grasp the foundations of his thought makes it easy to abuse the implications of his thought. I believe a systematic attempt to bring forth the living and dynamic character of Rahner's theology is necessary. This will reveal a theology that attempts to liberate and free individuals from the formalism that characterises the manuals of neo-scholastic theology. Without properly bringing forth this dynamic character, the trajectory for Rahner scholarship appears to be the creation of an edifice as damaging for the legacy of Rahner's theology as the edifice of Neo-Scholasticism has been for the legacy of St Thomas Aquinas.

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